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Original Research Paper

Education

IDENTIFICATION AND MEASUREMENT OF VARIABLES INFLUENCING ATTITUDES, SENTIMENTS, AND CONCERNS OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS AND GENERAL TEACHERS TOWARDS IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Background: Inclusive education is considered vital for achieving an equitable society. General teachers and special educators are important stakeholders, whose attitudes will play a crucial role in implementing inclusive education in mainstream schools. Hence, it is imperative to identify and measure variables that influence such attitudes and accordingly devise remedial measures to mitigate attitudinal barriers.**Purpose:** The research aimed to identify and measure major variables that influence attitudes, sentiments, and concerns of general teachers and special educators towards implementing the inclusive education model. **Method:** A quantitative causal-comparative study was carried out to meet the afore-mentioned purpose. **Results:** The study found age, gender, qualifications, teaching experiences, prior experiences, etc., are major variables that influence the attitudes of teachers and educators. It was further found out that female teachers were more positive than the male teachers, younger teachers were more positive attitudes than older teachers, teachers with bachelor's degree were more positive than teachers with master's degree, teachers with less experience were more positive attitude than those with more experience, teachers with prior experience of teaching children with special needs were more positive, and, teachers with inclusive education training were more positive than those who did not have training. **Discussion and Conclusion:** The study findings have enumerated the major variables that affect the attitudes, sentiments and concerns of both general teachers and special educators. The level of professional qualifications and additional trainings will empower them to embrace inclusivity. In addition, they should be encouraged to develop and use new exercises, good practices and innovative solutions.

KEYWORDS : Inclusive Education, Attitudes, Sentiments, Concerns, Variables, Demographics

INTRODUCTION

Education is singularly the most powerful enabler for promoting social justice and equality. Inclusive education is considered vital for achieving an equitable society (Brig (Dr) Sujay Ranjan Chaudhuri (Retd), 2026b). Although the concept of inclusive education has been widely adopted throughout the industrialised world, many are still grappling with the appropriate framework for implementing it for the benefit of all (Brown et al., 2015). Despite the requisite impetus being provided by policymakers, the pace of implementation remains far from the desired level as mandated by SDG-4.

The transition process has failed to gain necessary traction due to the existence of various barriers, including attitudinal barriers of various stakeholders, including general teachers and special educators. Since the attitudinal barrier is at the core, as observed by (Hussey et al., 2017) positive attitudes have been recognised as a key factor in the successful implementation of inclusion (Florian & Spratt, 2013). Teachers have a critical role in creating an open and inclusive climate in the classroom for all students (Costello & Boyle, 2013). Teachers' attitudes regarding integration or inclusion have been intensively examined for decades due to their importance (Saloviita, 2020). Teachers have generally positive attitudes toward the concept of inclusion, which are heavily influenced by the severity of the child's disability, the level of in-service training received, the degree of prior teaching experience with Children with Special Needs (CwSN), and other environmental factors (Avramidis et al., 2020).

Given that attitudes toward inclusion predict whether or not inclusive behaviours are intended and adopted in mainstream classrooms, it is critical to be able to measure such attitudes toward the inclusion of CwSN to identify and address any barriers to the successful implementation of inclusive education policies (Ewing et al., 2018a). Understanding teachers' attitudes toward inclusion is a critical first step in designing and evaluating interventions to promote attitudes about CwSN (Livneh et al., 2000). Attitudes towards CwSN are multi-faceted (Nowicki & Sandieson, 2002), and, as a result, it is necessary to use a psychometrically sound instrument to test all variables that influence attitudes, sentiments, and concerns

Literature Review

Inclusive education

Inclusive education is a multifaceted notion that involves the celebration and valuing of variety and diversity, as well as the consideration of human rights, social justice, and equity concerns, as well as the social model of disability and a socio-political educational model (Hornby, 2014). According to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act of 2016, inclusive education is a "system of education in which students with and without disabilities learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities" (John, 2020). Inclusive education also means a partnership between students and teachers (Shutaleva et al., 2023).

Attitudes

Attitude is a psychological construct that refers to an individual's disposition toward performing a given activity (De Boer et al., 2011a) while, (Hill et al., 1977) stated that an attitude is the way a person perceives and judges the world, including other people, objects, behaviour, and regulations.

Sentiments

Sentiments are comfort levels of teachers towards individuals with disabilities (Shields, 2020).

Concerns

Concerns include a strong interest or regard for, as well as apprehension or fear about, establishing inclusive educational approaches (Brig (Dr) Sujay Ranjan Chaudhuri (Retd), 2026a).

Major influencing variables

Teachers' attitudes toward the concept and practice of inclusive education are influenced by a variety of factors, including perceived availability and quality of resources and support, teachers' perceptions of their own competence in facilitating an inclusive classroom learning environment, and CwSN behaviour (Forlin et al., 2008); (Goodman & Burton, 2010); (Monsen et al., 2014). Teachers hold unique societal norms and values (Hellmich et al., 2019); (Schwab et al., 2022), and these values affect their attitudes (Büssing et al., 2019); (Pit-ten Cate & Glock, 2019b). Various variables that influence

attitudes of teachers are appended in the succeeding paragraphs.

Gender

In terms of gender, previous research has often showed that female teachers (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002); (De Boer et al., 2011b), when compared to their male colleagues, had more favourable opinions regarding inclusive education. It is consistent with other studies that show that female teachers are more positive about inclusive education than their male counterparts (Agavelyan et al., 2020). However, some studies have revealed that men had a more favourable attitude than women, while others have found no significant differences (Dominguez & López,2010, (Sparkes et al., 2019); Morenoetal 2006) or consider women to be above the average and men, below (Martinez & Bilbao, 2011).

Age

Several studies suggested that younger teachers are slightly more positive than the older ones (Saloviita, 2020). García & González (2021) in their earlier research, also observed that attitudes turned out to be more positive among younger teachers.

Educational qualifications

While few researches discovered a substantial difference in attitudes toward the integration of CwSN needs in mainstream schools between teachers with a bachelor's degree and those with a master's degree or higher. Research, on the other hand, found no statistically significant differences between educators with college degrees and those with at least a bachelor's degree, as well as (Engelbrecht & Savolainen, 2018) which found those teachers' educational backgrounds did not have any effect on attitudes (Supriyanto, 2019).

Teaching experience

Teachers with more experience had more positive attitudes than teachers with less experience (Emam & Mohamed, 2011). While rural school teachers are more positive about inclusion than their urban counterparts (Agavelyan et al., 2020). Another study discovered that early childhood and primary school instructors have a more optimistic attitude than secondary school teachers (Collado-Sanchis et al., 2020). Teachers that have a good attitude toward inclusion are more willing to change their ways in order to help all learners with a variety of learning needs (Supriyanto, 2019).

Teaching experience with CwSN

Avramidis et al., (2000) discovered that teachers with more relevant teaching experience have a more positive attitude toward inclusion than those with no teaching experience. Opoku et al., (2021) found that teachers with few or many experiences were more likely to have positive views than those with no experience. This finding is consistent with prior research indicating that teaching CwSN improves teachers' knowledge, teaching, attitudes, and preparedness to promote inclusion (Hoskin et al., 2015); (O'Toole & Burke, 2013). Prior experiences with diverse students and communities also shape teacher attitudes (Lindblom et al., 2020).

Inclusive education training

Taking inclusive education courses has been shown to influence teachers' attitudes toward educating students with disabilities (Gigante & Gilmore, 2020;Hoskin et al., 2015;Kraska & Boyle, 2014). Teachers who had attended inclusive education courses, in particular, exhibited more positive attitudes regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities than those who had not (Nketsia, 2016). Teachers who received more in-service training had more positive sentiments toward children with social and emotional disorders than teachers who received less in-service training (Supriyanto, 2019).

Other studies, on the other hand, have found that inclusive education courses did not improve or influence teachers' attitudes (De Boer et al., 2012). The role of teacher education is crucial in developing fully inclusive educational environments (Tristani & Bassett-Gunter, 2020). It may be argued that good inclusive education training would be supported by a solid understanding of what inclusive education actually is (Costello & Boyle, 2013).

Research Methodology

Research Aim

The research aimed to identify and measure major variables that influence attitudes, sentiments, and concerns of general teachers and special educators towards implementing the inclusive education model in India.

Research design

A quantitative causal-comparative study was conducted to determine factors that influence attitudes, sentiments, and concerns of general teachers and special educators towards implementing inclusive education.

Instrument used

A two-part questionnaire was used to collect and measure data for the quantitative study. The first section of the instrument collected demographic data (Opoku et al., 2021). Teacher group (general teachers or special educators); years of teaching experience; experience working with CwSN; age group; gender; education level; and any special education or inclusion training were among the descriptors.

The second part comprised the Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education (SACIE-R) scale (Forlin et al., 2011). Data was collected online using Google Forms, a cloud-based data management tool for designing and developing web-based questionnaires. Google Inc10 provides this tool, which is freely available on the web for anyone to use and construct web-based questions (Raju et al., 2018).

Although many scales have been developed to measure attitudes, the Sentiments, Attitudes and Concerns about Inclusive Education scale (SACIE-R) by (Forlin et al., 2011) was adopted in the present study. The SACIE-R scale's validity was confirmed by 542 pre-service teachers from nine institutions in four countries: Canada, Hong Kong, India, and the United States. The SACIE-R was reliable, with a Cronbach alpha value of .74 (Forlin et al., 2011). Ewing et al., (2018b), in a review study, recognized the SACIE-R as a suitable tool with adequate psychometric qualities to measure attitude toward inclusive education (Opoku et al., 2021).

The original scale had 15 items that were grouped into three categories: sentiment, attitudes, and concerns (Opoku et al., 2021). The first element (Sentiments) assesses attitudes toward CwSN in interactions or contact; the second factor (Attitudes) assesses acceptance of these kids; and the last factor (worries) assesses worries regarding inclusive education (Loreman et al., 2007). Questions 2, 5, 9, 11, and 13 were included in the sentiment (factor 1) category. The attitudes (factor 2) questions were 3, 6, 8, 9, 12, and 15. Concerns (factor 3) questions were 1, 4, 7, 10, and 14. The instrument was designed for participants to respond to each question a four-point Likert-scale with one of the following choices: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree.

Psychometric characteristics of instrument

The SACIE-R scale's validity was confirmed by 542 pre-service teachers from nine institutions in four countries: Canada, Hong Kong, India, and the United States. The SACIE-R was reliable, with a Cronbach alpha value of .74 (Forlin et al., 2011).

Table 1 displays the psychometric characteristics for the three scale scores. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ranged from α= .73 to α= .76, which were calculated using following formula:

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1}\left(1 - \frac{\sum V_i}{V_t}\right)$$

Table 1. The Cronbach's alpha values

Variables	Description	Values	Internal Consistency
Sentiments			
k	Number of items	5	Acceptable
∑Vi	Sum of item variance	1.741536191	
Vt	Variance of total score	4.179252442	
α	Cronbach's alpha	.73	
Attitudes			
k	Number of items	5	Acceptable
∑Vi	Sum of item variance	1.709651144	
Vt	Variance of total score	4.140767608	
α	Cronbach's alpha	.73	
Concerns			
k	Number of items	5	Acceptable
∑Vi	Sum of item variance	1.972055332	
Vt	Variance of total score	5.078257601	
α	Cronbach's alpha	.76	

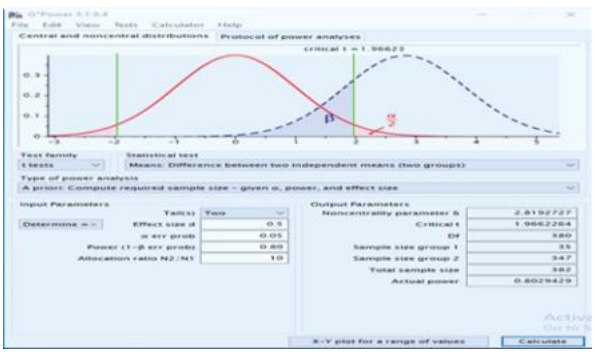
Selection of participants

This study was conducted in 31 schools representing all regions of India, viz., geographically spread from Amritsar to Trivandrum, and, from Bhuj to Shillong.

Sample size

G*Power calculated a sample size of 382, as given in figure 1.

Figure 1. Calculation of sample size for quantitative study



There were initially 1205 participants, who began the survey, and all of them completed the survey in its entirety, which is a completion rate of 100%. However, after data cleaning and removing univariate outliers, the final sample population number of usable surveys for the statistical analysis was 1175 (N = 1175). This number was more than the estimated a priori G*Power sample size of 382. This sample size is same as obtained in the published table for determining sample size as given in table 1 under:

Table 1. Sample Size for ±3%, ±5%, ±7%, and ±10% Precision Levels where Confidence Level Is 95% and P=.5.

Size of Population	Sample Size (n) for Precision (e) of:			
	±3%	±5%	±7%	±10%
500	α	222	145	83
600	α	240	152	86
700	α	255	158	88
800	α	267	163	89
900	α	277	166	90
1,000	α	286	169	91
2,000	714	333	185	95
3,000	811	353	191	97
4,000	870	364	194	98
5,000	909	370	196	98
6,000	938	375	197	98
7,000	959	378	198	99
8,000	976	381	199	99
9,000	989	383	200	99
10,000	1,000	385	200	99
15,000	1,034	390	201	99
20,000	1,053	392	204	100
25,000	1,064	394	204	100
50,000	1,087	397	204	100
100,000	1,099	398	204	100
>100,000	1,111	400	204	100
α = Assumption of normal population is poor (Yamane, 1967). The entire population should be sampled.				

Note: *Adapted from Determining Sample Size* (Morse, 2000)

Data collection methodology

Data were collected using online Google Forms, which is a cloud-based data management tool used for designing and developing web-based questionnaires. This tool is provided by Google Inc10. and is freely available on the web to anyone to use and create web-based questionnaires. Once the participants opened the link, they first viewed a statement of voluntary participation, an explanation of risks, and assurance of confidentiality. The demographic survey, as well as the responses to the SACIE-R scale was collected electronically.

Coding of quantitative data

After the collection of data, the researcher coded the data to numerical values. For example, responses to teacher groups were coded 1 for general teachers and 2 for special educators. For years of teaching service 0-4 years, 5-9 years, 10-14 years, 15-19 years, and above 20 years were coded as 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively. The higher the score, the more positive the sentiment, attitude, and concern toward inclusion. For any SACIE-R question that was worded negatively, reverse coding was used to reflect viz., Strongly Agree was coded as 1, Agree as 2, Disagree as 3, and Strongly Disagree coded as 4. While the items in the attitude subscale were positively worded, those in the sentiment and concern subscales were negatively worded and, thus, reverse coded in the analysis. Higher scores above the midpoint rating (2.5) on the scale suggest a favorable disposition toward teaching students with disabilities (Opoku et al., 2021).

Test for normality of quantitative data

The data were checked for normality by using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and the Shapiro-Wilk tests. Results of the Kolmogorov test and Shapiro-Wilk tests showed a significance departure from the normality indicated that there is a significant difference from the normal distribution. Table 2 displays the normality tests for scale scores.

Table 2. *Normality Test for Scale Scores (N=1175)*

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Statistics				Shapiro-Wilk	
Scales	Statistics (D)	Statistics (K)	p	Statistics (W)	P
Sentiments	0.1316	4.5117	2.22e-16	0.9736	8.171e-14
Attitudes	0.1648	5.6493	3.331e-16	0.9543	0
Concerns	0.1247	4.2761	6.661e-16	0.9708	1.177e-14

Factor structure of the SACIE-R data

Confirmatory factor analysis to test for data fit of the expected factor structure of the SACIE-R scale was carried out by using SPSS 26 and AMOS 26. The model fit summary is as under (refer table 3): -

Table 3. Model fit summary

Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.064	.058	.069	.000
Independence model	.169	.164	.174	.000

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	33	500.741	87	.000	5.756
Saturated model	120	.000	0		
Independence model	15	3621.538	105	.000	34.491

RMR, GFI

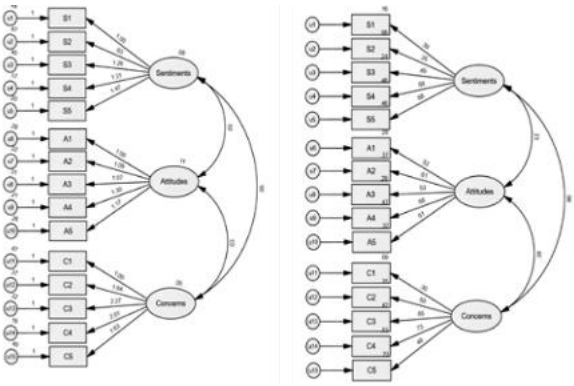
Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.022	.941	.918	.682
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	.090	.588	.529	.514

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.862	.833	.883	.858	.882
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

The results for the CFA model indicated that overall, it is an acceptable model fit since GFI (.941) being more that .90 indicates a good fit (Kline 2005) as also RMSEA value (.064) is less than 0.07, which indicates an adequate data fit (Steiger, 2007). Even values of CFI (.882) and TLI (.858) are considered barely adequate. The Confirmatory factor analysis of the model is as given figure 2 under.

Figure 2. Confirmatory factor analysis of the model



Data Analysis

Demographic information of sample

The data analysis showed that of the 1175 participants, 43 (3.66 %) were special educators and the remaining 1132 (96.34 %) were general teachers. The teachers' years of service ranged from 0 to 4 years (19.66 %) to 20 years and beyond (18.38 %). There were 519 (44.17%) teachers with experience working with CwSN. The age groups ranged in size from 20 to 29 years (14.98 %) to 50 to 60 years (17.02 %). There were more female teachers (80.60 %) than male teachers (19.40 %). Seventy-nine percent of the respondents had at a Masters' degree. The frequencies and percentages for inclusive education or special education training were (n = 443, 37.70 %). Table 4 displays the frequency counts for variables.

Table 4. Frequency Counts for Variables (N=1175)

Variable and category		%
Teacher Group		
General Teachers	1132	96.34
Special Educators	43	3.66
Years of Teaching Service		
0-4 years	231	19.66
5-9 years	286	24.34
10-14 years	265	22.55
15-19 years	177	15.06
Above 20years	216	18.38
Experience with CwSN		
Yes	519	44.17
No	459	39.06
Maybe	197	16.77
Age Group		
20-29 years	176	14.98
30–39 years	415	35.32
40–49 years	384	32.68
50–60 years	200	17.02
Gender		
Male	228	19.40
Female	947	80.60
Education		
Bachelor's degree	209	17.79
Master's degree	925	78.72
M Phil	17	1.45
Doctorate	24	2.04
Inclusive Education/ Special Education Training		
Yes	443	37.70
No	732	62.30

Methodology adopted for analysis

(a) Calculation of mean of overall sentiments, attitudes, and concerns.

(b) Mann-Whitney test for variable with two levels e.g., scale scores based on category of teachers, gender and whether special education training have been imparted or not.

(c) Kruskal-Wallis test for scale scores variables with three or more levels e.g., age, teaching experience, educational qualifications etc.

(d) In addition to tests mentioned above, ANOVA test were also carried out for variables like age, teaching experiences, and teaching experiences with CwSN. The reason for carrying out ANOVA was based on recommendation of the software to consider use of more powerful ANOVA test in those cases.

(e) The bivariate relationships between the predictor variables were explored using Spearman's correlation.

RESULTS

In the present study, the general attitude towards inclusive education among teachers has been found to be positive (M=2.89) (see table 5). The subscale of sentiments (M=3.00) is the most important, which shows that teachers are not afraid to interact with CwSN (M=2.856), they are not afraid to look them straight in the eyes (M=3.055), they are almost neutral meeting with people with severe physical disabilities (M=2.627). However, they are not frightened by the thought about the possible presence of disability in oneself (M=3.044).

The smallest value is the attitudes subscale (M=2.557), that is teachers are barely ready to accept students in their class who require communication technologies. Teachers are more ready to accept students in their class who find it difficult to express their thoughts verbally (M=2.620), as well as students who often have difficulty in examinations (M=3.011). These results conform more or less with earlier research carried out by (Agavelyan et al., 2020). However, it was surprising to discover that teachers are prepared (M=3.144) to allow

students in their regular classes who need an individualized curriculum.

The subscale of concerns has an average value of 2.84. Teachers are concerned that their workload will increase in an inclusive classroom (M=2.552). But, at the same time, they are least concerned that they will get stressed (M=3.029) if they have CwSN in their classes. The teachers believed that they possess requisite knowledge and skills that are required to teach students with disabilities (M=2.927). Teachers also felt that they will be able to give appropriate attention to all students in the inclusive classroom (M=2.746). The most positive outcome was when teachers stated that CwSN will be accepted by their peers (M=2.955). These results are in sync with the outcome of the qualitative study on peer acceptance and preparedness of general teachers.

Table 5. Means and standard deviations for scores on the SACIE-R Scale

Item	Mean	Standard deviation
The Sentiments subscale	3.00	.718
I am afraid to look a person with a disability straight in the face	3.055	.723
I tend to make contacts with people with disabilities brief and I finish them as quickly as possible	2.856	.710
I find it difficult to overcome my initial shock when meeting people with severe physical disabilities	2.627	.724
I dread the thought that I could eventually end up with a disability	3.422	.554
I would feel terrible if I had a disability	3.044	.615
The Attitudes subscale	2.84	.650
Students who frequently fail exams should be educated in regular classes	3.011	.720
Students who havedifficultyexpressingtheirthoughtsverballyshouldbeeducatedinregular classes	2.620	.703
Students who are inattentive should be educated in regular classes	2.870	.740
Students who need an individualized academic program should be educated in regular classes	3.144	.585
Students who require communicative technologies (for example Braille and sign language) should be educated in regular classes	2.557	.724
The Concerns subscale	2.84	.731
I am concerned that I will be more stressed if I have students with disabilities in my class	3.029	.622
I am concerned that students with disabilities will not be accepted by the rest of the class	2.955	.587
I am concerned that my workload will increase if I have students with disabilities in my class	2.552	.662
I am concerned that I do not have knowledge and skills required to teach students with disabilities	2.927	.628
I am concerned that it will be difficult to give appropriate attention to all students in an inclusive classroom	2.746	.635
Total SACIE-R	2.894	.324

Bivariate relationships between the predictor variables

The bivariate relationships between the predictor variables were explored using Spearman's correlation (Agavelyan et al., 2020). Table 6 provides a statistically significant correlation of demographic factors as gender, and professional factors as educational qualifications etc with SACIE-R subscales.

Table 6. Spearman's Corre l aPon 3eN n Pradrctorr. and S4CIE-R Subxal

	Category of Teachers	Teaching experience	Experience working with special students	Age	Gender	Educational qualification	Inclusive education training	Sentiments	Attitudes	Concerns
Category of Teachers	1.000									
Teaching experience	.461	1.000								
Experience working with special students	.470	.021	1.000							
Age	.481	.839	.051	1.000						
Gender	.714	.269	.436	.269	1.000					
Educational qualification	.677	.286	.355	.322	.518	1.000				
Inclusive education training	.534	.161	.333	.213	.456	.441	1.000			
Sentiments	.488	- .090	- .022	- .062	.212	.233	.073	1.000		
Attitudes	.516	- .063	.018	- .024	.280	.261	.057	.172	1.000	
Concerns	.484	- .130	- .052	- .110	.262	.239	.018	.532	.310	1.000

Variables that influence sentiments, attitudes, and concerns

For mean test scores, Mann-Whitney tests were conducted for variable with two levels and Kruskal-Wallis test for scale scores variables with three or more levels (see Table 7). The results are as under.

Table 7. Summary of impact of variables on sentiments, attitudes, and concerns

Categories	n	%	Sentiment	Attitude	Concern
Gender					
Female	947	80.6	3.019 (.411)	2.847 (.428)	2.844 (.447)
Male	228	19.4	2.925 (.421)	2.822 (.461)	2.825 (.468)
rs			.212	.280	.262
U			122912	108542.5	111060
z			3.290	0.129	0.681
p			.001	.897	.496
Decision			Significant	Not significant	Not significant
Age					
20-29 years	176	15.0	3.106 (.395)	2.914 (.463)	3.011 (.469)
30-39 years	415	35.3	3.018 (.444)	2.873 (.427)	2.858 (.443)
40-49 years	384	32.7	2.969 (.386)	2.789 (.432)	2.797 (.438)
50-60 years	200	17.0	2.935 (.406)	2.817 (.418)	2.737 (.469)
rs			- .062	-.024	-.110
H			20.3574	13.166	39.5306
η2			0.015	0.0087	0.031
p			.0001	.004	1.34e-8
F			6.480250	4.483464	13.800074
Decision			Significant	Significant	Significant
Educational Qualification					
Bachelors	209	17.8	3.0325 (.426)	2.8727 (.416)	2.8699 (.488)
Masters	925	78.8	2.9948 (.411)	2.8311 (.434)	2.8329 (.439)
M Phil	17	1.4	2.9765 (.484)	2.7059 (.515)	2.7882 (.572)
Doctorate	24	2.0	2.9833 (.441)	3.0833 (.490)	2.9167 (.490)
rs			.233	.261	.239
H			1.5333	8.9607	1.9028
2			- 0.0013	0.0051	-0.00094
p			.6746	.02982	.5928
Decision			Not significant	Significant	Not significant
Teaching Experiences					

0-4 years	231	19.7	3.088 (.415)	2.878 (.460)	2.942 (.464)
5-9 years	286	24.3	3.017 (.424)	2.884 (.466)	2.896 (.465)
10-14 years	265	22.6	2.984 (.409)	2.885 (.388)	2.821 (.412)
15-19 years	177	15.1	3.008 (.400)	2.762 (.410)	2.797 (.446)
>20 years	216	18.4	2.901 (.404)	2.760 (.420)	2.719 (.435)
rs			-.09	-.063	-.130
H			24.6591	19.6491	33.2321
2			0.018	0.013	0.025
p			.00005	.0006	.000001
F			6.028422	5.218622	8.726442
Decision			Significant	Significant	Significant
Teaching Experiences with CwSN					
Yes	519	44.2	3.0667 (.421)	2.8933 (.440)	2.9195 (.444)
No	459	39.1	2.9447 (.395)	2.7843 (.422)	2.7747 (.439)
Maybe	197	16.8	2.9594 (.425)	2.8406 (.433)	2.7858 (.465)
rs			-.022	.018	-.052
H			21.8607	15.1983	31.1139
2			0.017	0.011	0.025
p			.000018	.0005	1.753e-7
F			11.927665	7.740391	14.636664
Decision			Significant	Significant	Significant
Inclusive Education Training					
Yes	443	37.7	3.056 (.433)	2.916 (.449)	2.939 (.465)
No	732	62.3	2.968 (.401)	2.797 (.419)	2.781 (.431)
rs			.073	.057	.018
U			181972.5	186946.5	194369.5
z			3.561	4.477	5.776
p			0	<0.0001	<0.0001
Decision			Significant	Significant	Significant
Teacher Group					
General teachers	1132	96.3	2.994 (.410)	2.827 (.429)	2.833 (.448)
Special educators	43	3.7	3.195 (.502)	3.223 (.424)	3.042 (.487)
rs			.49	.52	.48
U			17709	12370.5	18204
z			3.071	5.574	2.837
p			.002	2.482e-8	.004
Decision			Significant	Significant	Significant

Gender

In terms of gender, there were significant differences between the female (M=3.019) and male teachers (M = 2.925) as far as Sentiments are concerned. The female teachers were more positive than the male teachers. Even on attitudes and concerns, the female teachers were more positive than the male teachers. However, the differences were not significant.

Age

In terms of age, there were significant differences between younger (20-29 years) (M=3.106) and older teachers (50-60 years) (M=2.935), with the former showing more positive attitudes than the latter, and the differences were significant. The results showed that age is negatively correlated, i.e., lesser the age more positive are the teachers, and the differences are significant for sentiments, attitudes, and concerns.

Educational qualification

As regards, educational qualifications, teachers with a doctorate had more positive attitudes (M=3.0833) and concerns (M=2.9167) than others. Teachers with master's and bachelor's degrees constituted almost 96% of the total sample. The result showed teachers with bachelor's degree (M=3.0325) (M=2.8727) (M=2.8699) were more positive than teachers with masters (M=2.9948) (M=2.8311) (M=2.8329) in all three factors of sentiments, attitudes, and concerns.

Teaching experiences

Teaching experience, as per the results, showed a negative correlation with all three factors of SACIE-R. Teachers with less than 15 years of experience had more positive attitude than teachers with more than 15 years of experience. Teachers in the lowest bracket of 0 to 4 years of experience were more positive in sentiments (M=3.088) and concerns (M=2.942) than others. These results were in contravention to other research wherein, teachers with more experience had more positive attitudes than teachers with less experience (Emam & Mohamed, 2011).

Teaching experiences with CwSN

Teachers with prior experience of teaching CwSN were more positive on all counts i.e., sentiments (M=3.0667), attitudes (M=2.8933) and concerns (M=2.9195). The differences were significant too. Opoku et al., (2021) indicated in their research that those teachers indicating few, and many experiences were more positive on attitudes than those who indicated that they had had no experience.

Inclusive education training

The present study showed that participants who had taken training on inclusive education were more positive (M=3.056) (M=2.916) (M=2.939) than teachers who had not taken any training (M=2.968) (M=2.797) (M=2.781) in all three factors of sentiments, attitudes, and concerns. The role of teacher training is critical in realising and achieving truly inclusive education environments (Tristani & Bassett-Gunter, 2020). These findings resonate with earlier research by (Supriyanto, 2019) who opined those teachers who attended more in-service training held more positive feelings than teachers who attended less.

Overall findings

Based on quantitative research, following emerged: -

(a) The female teachers were found to be more positive than the male teachers.

(b) The younger teachers with lesser teaching experience had more positive outlook towards inclusivity than elder teachers with more teaching experience.

(c) The same sentiments were resonated, wherein; teachers with Bachelor's degree were found to be more positive than teachers with Masters or M Phil degree.

(d) Teachers with prior experience of teaching CwSN and/ or, having been received training on inclusive education were found to be more positive than others, who did not have prior experience or training.

DISCUSSION

Based on this research, it has emerged that attitudes of both general teachers and special educators towards implementing inclusive education are positive. They are ready to allow CwSN in their regular classrooms less those children, who need communication technologies, etc. They believed that they possessed requisite knowledge and skills to teach as also provide adequate attention to the needs of CwSN. When teachers have positive attitudes, they are more likely to include students with disabilities (Aiello & Sharma, 2018); (Sharma & Nuttal, 2016); (Taylor & P. Ringlaben, 2012); (Yuknis, 2015).

As regards, variables that influence attitude, sentiments, and concerns; female teachers were found to be more positive than their male counterpart. The differences were significant for sentiments and not significant for attitudes and concerns. Most studies suggest that female teachers have more positive

attitude towards inclusive education than their male counterparts (Agavelyan et al., 2020). Previous research has often showed that female teachers (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; (De Boer et al., 2011b) tend to hold more positive attitudes towards inclusive schooling, as compared to their male counterparts.

In terms of age, the results showed that age is negatively correlated, i.e., the lower the age, the more positive the teachers, and the differences were significant for sentiments, attitudes, and concerns. This finding resonates with most of earlier researches that found younger teachers to be slightly more positive than older ones (Saloviita, 2020). Sparkes et al., (2019), in their earlier research also observed that attitudes turned out to be more positive among younger teachers.

Teaching experience, as per the results, showed a negative correlation with all three factors of attitude, sentiments, and concerns. Teachers with less than 15 years of experience had more positive attitude than teachers with more than 15 years of experience. These results were in contravention to other researches, wherein, teachers with more experience had more positive attitudes than teachers with less experience (Emam & Mohamed, 2011).

Teachers with prior experience of teaching CwSN were more positive on all counts i.e., sentiments, attitudes and concerns, and the differences were significant. These results are consistent with those of Avramidis & Kalyva, (2007), (Avramidis et al., 2000) who found that those teachers with more relevant experience in teaching have a more positive attitude towards inclusion than those without experience in teaching.

(Opoku et al., 2021) also indicated, in their research, that those teachers indicating few, and many experiences were more positive on attitudes than those who indicated that they had had no experience. This finding is consistent with previous findings noting that experience teaching students with disabilities improves teachers' knowledge, teaching, attitudes, readiness to practice inclusion (Hoskin et al., 2015); (O'Toole & Burke, 2013). Prior experiences with diverse students and communities also shape teacher attitudes (Lindblom et al., 2020). However, teaching experience, attitudes, and knowledge can either promote or hinder efforts towards inclusion (Mónico et al., 2020).

The quality of inclusive education depends primarily on the level of professional qualification and also on the skills needed in the field of social and emotional networking. As regards, educational qualifications, teachers with a doctorate degree, had more positive attitudes and concerns than others. Teachers with masters and bachelor's degrees constituted almost 96% of the total sample. The result showed teachers with bachelor's degree were more positive than teachers with masters in all three factors of sentiments, attitudes, and concerns. Many studies have reported on the critical role of teacher education in the development of teachers' inclusive skills, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs (Nketsia & Saloviita, 2013).

While few researchers found significant difference in their prejudices towards the integration of CwSN needs in mainstream schools among teachers holding bachelor's degree qualification and others holding Master or above degree qualification. Conversely, a study indicated no significant differences between educators with college degrees and those with at least a bachelor's degree, as well as (Engelbrecht & Savolainen, 2018) which found those teachers' educational backgrounds did not have any effect on attitudes (Supriyanto, 2019).

The present study showed that participants who had taken training on inclusive education were more positive than teachers who had not taken any training in all three factors of sentiments, attitudes, and concerns. The role of teacher training is critical in realizing and achieving truly inclusive education environments (Tristani & Bassett-Gunter, 2020). These findings resonate with earlier research by (Supriyanto, 2019), who opined those teachers who attended more in-service training held more positive feelings than teachers who attended less.

Taking courses in inclusive education has been found to impact teachers' attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities (Gigante & Gilmore, 2020);(Hoskin et al., 2015);(Kraska & Boyle, 2014). Specifically, teachers who had taken courses in inclusive education had more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities than those who had not (Nketsia, 2016). The findings of other studies suggest that the preparation of teachers for inclusive education is perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education (Nketsia et al., 2016).

CONCLUSION

The growth of civic democracy requires inclusive education (Brig (Dr) Sujay Ranjan Chaudhuri (Retd), 2026b). Its mission is to turn schools into places of excellence and equality for all students (Stepaniuk, 2019). Teachers play a fundamental role in implementing an open and inclusive environment for all children in the classroom (Costello & Boyle, 2013). Because of their importance, teachers' attitudes towards integration or inclusion have been studied extensively for decades (Saloviita, 2020). Various research studies have identified teachers' roles as critical to the success of inclusive education implementation and education system transformation around the world (Hooijer et al., 2021). The study's goal was to identify and measure major variables that influence attitudes, sentiments, and concerns of general teachers and special educators towards implementing the inclusive education model in India.

The study findings have enumerated the major variables that affect the attitudes, sentiments and concerns of both general teachers and special educators. The level of professional qualifications and additional trainings will empower them to embrace inclusivity. Teachers should be encouraged to develop and use new exercises, good practices and innovative solutions (Magyar et al., 2020). They do, however, require adequate external support to assist in providing appropriate approaches for learners with special needs. As a result, the success of inclusion is contingent on the support provided to these teachers (Supriyanto, 2019).

Limitations of the study

The study was conducted in schools run by the army only. Hence, the opinions expressed may be influenced by inherent ethos and culture being practiced in those institutions which are distinct from other schools.

Implications for future research

Although the current study makes no claims for generalizability, the findings are crucial to understand the variables that affect the attitudes, sentiments, and concerns of teachers and educators and similar studies may be undertaken in other schools.

Consent

Necessary consent from the participants was obtained before undertaking the study.

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Declaration of conflicting interests

The researcher declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

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