



ATTITUDES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS OF KERALA (INDIA) TOWARDS PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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ABSTRACT The present study aims to find out the attitudes of primary school teachers towards persons with disabilities. A normative survey method using the Attitudes toward disabled persons (ATDP) Scale, Form O was adopted to collect data from a random sample of 200 primary school teachers across Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam districts of Kerala. The study results point out that the teachers have moderate attitudes towards persons with disabilities. Also, it was found that there was no significant difference between the attitudes of primary school teachers from Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam Districts of Kerala.

KEYWORDS Primary school teachers, Attitudes towards persons with disabilities

INTRODUCTION
Attitudes of teachers towards children with special needs especially towards those with disabilities contribute a lot to the effectiveness of inclusivity in education. Acceptance of a special needs child into a general classroom marks the beginning of inclusiveness in the society. Teachers and principals in regular schools have a pivotal role to play in order for inclusion to work in practice by accepting children with special needs and harbouring positive attitudes towards them and their inclusion.

RATIONALE
Teachers' attitudes towards students with disabilities have a significant impact on their educational experience. Teachers with negative attitudes towards children with special needs tend to ignore them or maltreat them in the inclusive settings, hindering opportunities for their optimum development. Taking into account the importance of attitudes of teachers towards people with disabilities in fulfilling the assumptions of inclusion, it was made a part of the present research work and the relationship between the district of school where the teachers teach and their attitudes was also explored.

OBJECTIVES
a) To find out the attitudes of primary school teachers towards persons with disabilities.
b) To compare the attitudes of primary school teachers based on the district of school where they teach.

METHODOLOGY
Normative survey method was used for data collection. The tool used was Attitudes toward disabled persons (ATDP) Scale, Form O (Yuker, Block & Campbell, 1960). The investigator estimated the reliability of the ATDP for the present study on a pilot group of 25 primary school teachers and got the Cronbach's alpha coefficient as 0.770 and hence proceeded with the tool for data collection.

POPULATION
All the primary school teachers of Kerala form the population of this study

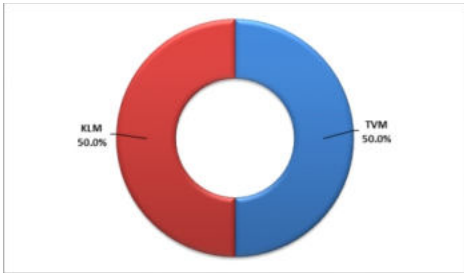
SAMPLE
The sample of the study comprises of a random sample of 200 primary school teachers across Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam districts of Kerala. Out of which 100 were from Thiruvananthapuram and 100 from Kollam.

TABLE 1
Frequencies and percentages of primary school teachers based on the district of school

District	Frequency	Percent
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM (TVM)	100	50.0%
KOLLAM (KLM)	100	50.0%

Out of 200 teachers taken for the study, half of the teachers were from Thiruvananthapuram and the other half were from Kollam.

FIGURE 1: Pie chart showing percentage distribution of primary school teachers according to the district of school



ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATION

TABLE 2: Descriptive Statistics of primary school teachers' attitudes towards people with disabilities

MEASURES	ATTITUDE SCORES
Mean	58.35
Median	59
Mode	62
SD	7.807
Minimum	29
Maximum	79
Skewness	-0.386
Kurtosis	1.218

The average score in the attitude scale was found to be 58.35 with standard deviation 7.807. The values of median and mode for the attitude scale were 59 and 62 respectively. The minimum score noted in the attitude scale was 29 and the maximum was 79 with the possible range of scores being 0 to 120. The distribution of attitude scores was found to be symmetric as the skewness was close to zero. The kurtosis below 3 confirms that the distribution of attitude scores is symmetric (mesokurtic).

COMPARISON OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES BASED ON THE DISTRICT OF SCHOOL

TABLE 3: Mean values, standard deviations and t value of primary school teachers' attitude scores with respect to the district of school

District	Mean	SD	t - value
TVM	59.27	8.380	1.683NS
KLM	57.42	7.111	

NS → The relationship is not significant.

Here the p-value is greater than the significance level 0.05; the relationship between attitudes and districts is not significant. The table shows that the attitude scores of teachers from Thiruvananthapuram (59.27 ± 8.380) and Kollam (57.42 ± 7.111) districts are almost same.

CONCLUSIONS BASED ON FINDINGS

- a) Primary school teachers have moderate attitudes towards persons with disabilities.
- b) There is no significant difference between the attitudes of primary school teachers from Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam districts towards persons with disabilities.

IMPLICATIONS

The study results which reveal that primary school teachers have moderate attitudes towards persons with disabilities point to the urgent need for teacher training for transforming teacher attitudes. Improving teacher attitudes is important because teachers with positive attitudes become in time the best sources for propagating positive attitudes towards special needs children among their peers as well as others in the society. Teacher education is recognized as important in developing positive attitudes for successful inclusion. It is found that formal educational training is one of the main factors that promote an inclusive attitude.

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