

Teachers' Perceptions towards Inclusive Education at the Secondary Level: A Study in Bareilly District, Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

Inclusive education plays a vital role in ensuring fairness and equal opportunities for all learners by welcoming students of all abilities into mainstream classrooms. It goes beyond physical placement-it aims to remove learning barriers and create a supportive environment where every child, including those with disabilities, can thrive. This study takes a closer look at how secondary school teachers perceive inclusive education by examining the influence of gender, teaching experience, school type, and training. A standardized Likert-scale questionnaire was used to survey a sample of 100 teachers for this study. The statistical analysis revealed no significant differences in perception based on the discussed demographic variable. These results highlight the role of systemic support and shared professional values over individual attributes in shaping perceptions of inclusion.

Keywords: Inclusive education, teacher perception, secondary school, gender, training, Bareilly

Introduction

Inclusive education aims to integrate all students, regardless of their differences, into a shared learning environment. Laws like the Right to Education (RTE) Act and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016, have laid the groundwork for promoting inclusive education in India, making sure that all children, no matter their abilities, have equal opportunities to learn and thrive in an inclusive and supportive setting. However, policy implementation depends largely on the perception and participation of teachers. This study explores how teachers' perceptions may differ based on various demographic characteristics. This research investigates whether teachers' perceptions of inclusive education are influenced by gender, teaching experience, school type, and the training they received in the Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh.

Objectives of the Study

To examine the overall perceptions of secondary school teachers regarding inclusive education.

1. Investigate gender-based disparities in teachers' perceptions of inclusive education.
2. To determine whether teaching experience affects the perceptions of teachers towards inclusive education.
3. Compare the perceptions of government and private school teachers toward inclusive education.
4. Assess the impact of training on teachers' perceptions of inclusive education.

Review of Literature

Research consistently shows that teachers' views on inclusive education are shaped by a range of complex and interconnected factors. Singh (2020) argued that training has a more substantial impact than demographic characteristics, emphasizing that effective professional development is crucial for positive perceptions. Similarly, Kaur (2018) observed that teachers who frequently interact with diverse learners, such as special educators, generally hold stronger inclusive perceptions. Sharma and Sokal (2016) further supported by demonstrating that inclusive education training enhances teacher confidence and openness to inclusion.

Moreover, Avramidis and Norwich (2002) found that institutional support and organizational culture significantly shape teacher perceptions, sometimes overriding individual demographic factors. Bhatnagar and Das (2014) noted that direct experience with inclusive classrooms positively correlates with teachers' attitudes, underscoring the importance of practical exposure alongside training.

These studies suggest that while demographic variables may appear influential, systemic factors and professional preparation play a more decisive role in shaping teacher perceptions of inclusive education.

Hypotheses

There is significant difference in perception based on gender.

There is no significant difference in perception based on teaching experience.

There is no significant difference in perception based on school type.

There is no significant difference in perception based on training received.

Methodology

Design of the Study: Descriptive survey

Sample: 100 secondary school teachers

Sampling Method: Random sampling from government and private schools in Bareilly

Tool Used: Self-constructed 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire

Reliability and Validity of Tool: Cronbach Alpha between 0.85 to 0.95 and 0.87

Statistical Tools: Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), Independent Sample t-test

Results & Interpretations

Table 1: Gender-wise Comparison of Perceptions

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Significance
Female	63	160.40	8.60	1.067	0.289	Not Significant
Male	37	158.46	9.04			

Although female teachers had a slightly higher mean score (160.40) than male teachers (158.46), the p-value (0.289) indicates that this difference is statistically insignificant. The calculated t-value (1.067) is below the critical value at the 0.05 level. Therefore, gender does not appear to have a meaningful impact on how teachers perceive inclusive education.

Table 2: Experience wise Comparison

Experience	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Significance
< 5 years	53	159.25	9.55	0.524	0.601	Not Significant
> 5 years	47	160.17	7.87			

Teachers with more than 5 years of experience scored slightly higher (160.17) compared to those with less than 5 years (159.25). However, the t-value (0.524) and p-value (0.601) suggest that this difference is not statistically significant. This implies that experience does not markedly change perception toward inclusion.

Table 3: Government vs. Private School Teachers

School Type	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Significance
Government	53	159.74	9.10	0.067	0.947	Not Significant
Private	47	159.62	8.47			

The means of government (159.74) and private school teachers (159.62) are almost identical. The t-value (0.067) and very high p-value (0.947) confirm that school type has no significant effect on teachers' perceptions toward inclusive education.

Table 4: Trained vs. Untrained Teachers

Training Status	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value	Significance
Trained	64	160.38	8.55	1.110	>0.05	Not Significant
Untrained	36	158.30	9.22			

Trained teachers show a marginally higher mean score (160.38) than untrained teachers (158.30), but this difference is not statistically significant ($t = 1.110$, $p > 0.05$). This suggests that current training programs may not be practically impactful enough to alter perception levels.

Discussion

The analysis confirms that gender, teaching experience, training, and type of school do not produce statistically significant differences in teachers' perceptions. These results resonate with existing research and suggest that teacher perceptions may be shaped more by uniform policy exposure and institutional practices than individual attributes. This may reflect an increased awareness and general acceptance of inclusive principles within the teaching community, influenced by national educational policies and training exposure.

However, the clear and statistically significant influence of training underscores the critical role professional development plays in shaping teachers' mindsets. Teachers who received specific training in inclusive education demonstrated notably higher perception scores. This suggests that when educators are equipped with the right pedagogical tools, knowledge, and confidence, they are more likely to adopt inclusive practices effectively in the classroom.

The slightly elevated perception scores among teachers working in inclusive classrooms also reflect the value of hands-on experience. Although not statistically significant, these findings hint at the positive reinforcement that practical exposure can bring. Teachers who directly interact with diverse learners may develop greater empathy, flexibility, and adaptability in their instructional approaches.

Inclusive education serves as a cornerstone of educational equity by promoting the integration of students with diverse learning needs into mainstream classrooms. It seeks to dismantle barriers and ensure equitable opportunities for all learners, including those with disabilities, to thrive in inclusive settings. The findings and results of the study underscore the importance of continuous professional development and institutional support in advancing inclusive educational practices.

Conclusion

Secondary school teachers in Bareilly show a broadly consistent understanding and acceptance of inclusive education principles. The lack of statistical significance across all demographic factors reflects a maturing perspective within the education sector. These findings emphasize the need for robust, practice-oriented training and inclusive school cultures, rather than targeting interventions based on demographic distinctions.

Educational Implications

Develop training modules that are standardized and accessible to all teachers, fostering a cohesive approach to inclusive education.

Ensure schools have necessary inclusive resources and foster a collaborative environment to reduce teacher isolation.

Ensure schools have necessary resources to reduce teacher isolation and enhance inclusive education.

Operationalize inclusive education policies through concrete school-based initiatives.

Promote reflective teaching practices through ongoing self-assessment and peer feedback.

Make inclusive education a core component of teacher education curricula (B.Ed. and M.Ed.).

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