



A STUDY ON THE ATTITUDE OF SCHOOL SCIENCE TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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Abstract

Inclusive Education means education of all students of diverse groups, including the differently challenged, physically and mentally disadvantaged, learn together in the same classroom and the curriculum. Both international and national level, so many commissions, policies focused on inclusive education. Despite these progressive policy frameworks, the successful translation of inclusive ideals into daily classroom practice relies critically on the attitudes of teachers. The present study focused on science teachers only. So, understanding the precise nature of school science teachers' attitudes is a foundational step toward bridging the gap between India's inclusive policy rhetoric and the experiential reality of its classrooms. In this way, the present study is an attempt to know the attitude of school science teachers towards inclusive Education. At first, a five point scale of teachers' attitude towards inclusive education has been developed. On the basis of the scale, the study reveals science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education with respect to gender, area and teaching experiences. Descriptive survey method has been used for this study. The data has been collected from 21 secondary schools of Nadia and Murshidabad districts, West Bengal. Convenience sampling method has been applied. Total number of 215 school science teachers has participated in this study. Non-parametric statistics has been performed for this purpose. The study examined the attitudes of school science teachers towards inclusive education and found that while gender and teaching experience produced no significant attitudinal differences; geographic area emerged as a decisive factor.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.70096/tssr.260404002>

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, Science Teacher, Attitude*

Introduction

Inclusive Education means education of all students of diverse groups, including the differently challenged, physically and mentally disadvantaged, learning together in the same classroom and the curriculum and other facilities are developed in such a way that the diversity of the students can cope with. In such a situation the diverse groups of students have opportunity to interact each other, making relationships, developing friendly environments and a mutual understanding which moves towards the social inclusion of special needs children in mainstream society from the very beginning.

The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the "World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality" (Salamanca Statement, Spain 1994) and was restated at the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal 2000). The Statement solicits governments to give the highest priority to making education systems inclusive and adopt the principle of inclusive education as a matter of policy. The idea of inclusion is further supported by the United Nation's Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Person with Disability Proclaiming Participation and equality for all. At the Jomtien World Conference (1990) in Thailand, the goals for 'Education for All' were set and it was proclaimed that every person (child, youth and adult) shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities which would meet their basic learning needs.

The Government of India has created numerous policies around special education since the country's independence in 1947. One of the earliest formal initiatives undertaken by the GOI was the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme of 1974. The Kothari Commission (1966) which highlighted the importance of educating children with disabilities during the post-independence period. National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) joined hands with UNICEF and launched Project Integrated Education for Disabled Children (PIED) in the year 1987, to strengthen the integration of learners with disabilities into regular schools. Till 1990s, ninety percent of India's estimated 40 million children in the age group- four-sixteen years with physical and mental disabilities are being excluded from mainstream education. The National Policy on

Education, 1986 (NPE, 1986), and the Program of Action (1992) stresses the need for integrating children with special needs with other groups. In late 90s (i.e. in 1997) the philosophy of inclusive education is added in District Primary Education Program (DPEP). Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched to achieve the goal of Universalization of Elementary Education in 2001, is one such initiative. Three important aspect of UEE are access, enrolment and retention of all children in 6-14 years of age. A zero rejection policy has been adopted under SSA, which ensures that every Child with Special Needs (CWSN), irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided meaningful and quality education. National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 has laid down a clear context of inclusive education. NCF-2005 reiterates the importance of including and retaining all children in school through a program that reaffirms the value of each child and enables all children to experience dignity and the confidence to learn. Furthermore, IEDC was revised and named "Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary Stage" (IEDSS) in 2009-10 to provide assistance for the inclusive education of the disabled children at 9th and 10th classes. This scheme now subsumed under Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan(RMSA) from 2013. Again, this commitment has been legally mandated through the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, and strengthened by the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, which explicitly prohibits discrimination and ensures equal educational opportunity for children with special needs. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 further reinforces this vision by advocating for barrier-free, equitable, and inclusive learning environments at all stages of schooling.

Despite these progressive policy frameworks, the successful translation of inclusive ideals into daily classroom practice relies critically on the attitudes of teachers. As Sharma, Forlin, and Loreman (2008) have argued, a teacher's belief system about disability and diversity is the single most powerful predictor of whether inclusion will succeed or fail, because attitudes directly shape instructional decision-making, classroom climate, and the social acceptance of learners with special needs. As general education classrooms include more and more diverse students, teachers realize the value of accepting each student as unique. In effective inclusive programs, teachers adapt activities to include all students. Inclusive education is highly depends upon the teachers. Teacher in an inclusive school is a key person who is responsible for the success or failure of inclusion. Goods teachers realize that the individual differences, such as ability and personality that make every child unique exist across cultures and disabilities (Okagaki & Diamond, 2000). Within the Indian school landscape, research reveals a complex picture of teacher attitudes that falls short of wholehearted acceptance. Several studies report that teachers hold a generally moderate or even favourable view of the concept of inclusion, yet express significant apprehension when confronted with its practical demands (Sharma et al., 2018). Some studies also reveal teachers' attitude towards inclusive education on the basis of gender (Bansal, 2013; Costello & Boyle, 2013; Kaur & Kaur, 2015; Bhakta & Shit, 2016; Kalita, 2017; Nanda & Jana, 2017; Chanda & Behra, 2018; Pramanik & Barman, 2018), teaching experiences (Bhatnagar and Das, 2014; Sharma, Malik, and Nagy, 2022) and area (Chavhan, 2013; Bindhu & Niranjana, 2014; Kaur & Kaur, 2015; Kumar, 2016; Nanda and Jana, 2017; Bansal, 2018). Several scales are developed to assess teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. But in present context, there need to adapt a scale. Inclusion should not be seen as merely a policy but as a philosophy of the process of education for children with varied needs. Thus, attitude building is one of the very crucial aspects. So, understanding the precise nature of school science teachers' attitudes is a foundational step toward bridging the gap between India's inclusive policy rhetoric and the experiential reality of its classrooms. In this way, the present study is an attempt to know the attitude of school science teachers towards implementation of inclusive Education.

Objectives

1. To adapt Satish (2024) teachers' attitude scale towards inclusive education.
2. To study the school science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education on the basis of gender.
3. To study the school science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education on the basis of area.
4. To study the school science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education on the basis of teaching experience.

Research Hypotheses

- H1: There is a significant difference between male and female school science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education.
H2: There is a significant difference between rural and urban school science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education.
H3: There is a significant difference among school science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education on the basis of their teaching experience.

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey method has been used for this study. The data has been collected from 21 secondary schools of Nadia and Murshidabad districts, West Bengal. Convenience sampling method has been applied for the collection of data. Total number of 215 school science teachers has participated in this study. The numbers of male and female school science teachers are 135 and 80 respectively. On the other side, the numbers of rural and urban school science teachers are 151 and 64 respectively. To assess science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education, Satish (2024) attitude scale has been adapted.

Adaptation of school teachers' attitude scale towards inclusive education

The first step in the adaptation of Attitude Scale is the modification and selection of statements from Satish (2024) attitude scale that are in favour regarding present research context. Some statements have been added on the basis of present research context. Based upon these points, 47 statements have been proposed. The collected items have been edited on the basis of various criteria

suggested by Thustone and Chave (1929) and Likert (1932). These statements have been given to five experts for judging them as a favourable and unfavourable. Thus with the help of the expert opinion, final scale consisting of 38 statements have been prepared for the study. The first draft of the Attitude Scale has been administered upon 90 school science teachers. The purpose of this try-out is to determine the discriminating power of each item for selection of the item in the final scale. Item analysis has been performed. The investigator applied t-test for discrimination (Edward, Diers & Walker, 1962).

Table 1: Selection of items; t-test for discrimination

Item no.	Items	T-Value	Status
1.	I believe that students from all castes should not be enrolled in the same school.	2.43*	Selected
2.	In my opinion, students with disabilities should study in regular classrooms alongside all other students.	2.54*	Selected
3.	Boys and girls should be provided with equal education by offering them equal opportunities.	1.40	Rejected
4.	I believe that girls should not be included in sports.	2.81*	Selected
5.	People of my caste are superior; therefore, while teaching, I pay more attention to children from my own caste.	3.30*	Selected
6.	I believe that teachers should interact with students based on their region and encourage only people from their own region to advance.	5.21*	Selected
7.	Teachers should not encourage students to acquire knowledge about various festivals.	3.39*	Selected
8.	In the classroom, additional attention should be given to students with disabilities according to their specific needs.	0.49	Rejected
9.	Boys and girls should sit together in the classroom.	3.67*	Selected
10.	I believe that separate schools should be opened for students of all religions.	6.02*	Selected
11.	I believe that girls should not be taken on educational tours.	3.78*	Selected
12.	Teachers should not have lunch with students.	1.49	Rejected
13.	Children in the class who come from wealthy families should be seated at the front.	5.17*	Selected
14.	Teachers should not take students with disabilities on educational excursions.	3.84*	Selected
15.	Separate activities should be organized for boys, girls, and transgender students in schools.	3.28*	Selected
16.	Teachers should have lunch with students with disabilities.	3.51*	Selected
17.	Teachers should pay special attention in the classroom to the religion of the students who are in the majority.	5.45*	Selected
18.	Schools should not enroll students who are transgender.	1.22	Rejected
19.	Teachers should not pay special attention to students with disabilities in school.	1.34	Rejected
20.	Having lunch together will have a negative impact on the behavior of teachers and students.	3.95*	Selected
21.	There should be a provision for separate classrooms for students with disabilities in schools.	2.86*	Selected
22.	In my opinion, transgender students should sit at the back of the classroom.	6.87*	Selected
23.	Students with disabilities should sit in a separate classroom at school.	2.73*	Selected
24.	Teachers should speak specifically about only one religion in the classroom.	3.09*	Selected
25.	I believe that teachers should have lunch with students on a rotational basis.	4.06*	Selected
26.	We could arrange for only the differently-abled individuals to be taken on the educational tour.	5.19*	Selected
27.	In my opinion, students should not be segregated in schools on the basis of religion.	3.02*	Selected
28.	During an educational tour, students with disabilities should sit at the back of the bus.	5.61*	Selected
29.	In our country, India, there should not be schools based on religion.	1.86	Rejected
30.	Students from lower-class backgrounds should not be seated at the front of the classroom.	3.12*	Selected
31.	Attendance registers in schools should be maintained based on students' caste and religion.	8.21*	Selected

32.	One should not speak about a religion in the classroom if there is not a single child belonging to that religion present.	5.57*	Selected
33.	Students with disabilities should not be encouraged to participate in sports.	4.20*	Selected
34.	Teachers should not interact with transgender students in school.	2.88*	Selected
35.	There should be separate playgrounds for boys, girls, and transgender students in schools.	5.55*	Selected
36.	There should be separate schools based on gender.	4.30*	Selected
37.	Teachers in schools should not provide uniform education.	2.12*	Selected
38.	In the classroom, a teacher should not pay attention to slow learners.	1.00	Rejected

't' value of all the 38 items have been calculated by using SPSS. All the items, which are significant at 0.05 level have been selected for the final scale. In this way, only 31 items have been selected for the final form of the scale. The reliability of the final attitude scale has been determined by Cronbach's alpha method. It was found to be 0.74. The items have been rearranged for the final study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The normality of the data on school science teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education have been examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. The results indicate that the distribution significantly deviate from a normal curve.

Table 2: Test of Normality; Kolmogorov-Smirnova & Shapiro-Wilk test

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Science Teachers' attitude towards inclusive education	.069	215	.014	.976	215	.001

Note, level of significance $p > 0.05^*$

As both p-values are well below the conventional .05 threshold, the null hypothesis of normality has been rejected, confirming that the attitude scores are not normally distributed. Given this evidence, non-parametric statistics have been selected for subsequent analysis (Field, 2008).

School science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education on the basis of gender

Mann-Whitney U test has been performed for this purpose. The corresponding Null Hypothesis (H_01) is, "There is no significant difference between male and female school science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education".

Table 3: Result of U-test; school science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education on the basis of gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean Rank	U	z	p
Teachers' attitude towards inclusive	Male	135	114.17	4383.5	1.892	0.059
	Female	80	97.59			

Note, level of significance $p < 0.05^*$

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference between male and female science teachers regarding their attitude towards inclusive education, because "z" value is not significant at 0.05 level. So, it is clear that male and female science teachers of schools are identical.

School science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education on the basis of area

Mann-Whitney U test has been performed for this purpose. The corresponding Null Hypothesis (H_02) is, "There is no significant difference between rural and urban secondary school science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education".

Table 4: Result of U-test; school science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education on the basis of area

Variable	Area	N	Mean Rank	U	z	p
Teachers' attitude towards inclusive	Rural	151	99.03	4383.5	2.034	0.042*
	Urban	64	121.01			

Note, level of significance $p < 0.05^*$

Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference between rural and urban science teachers regarding their attitude towards inclusive education, because "z" value is significant at 0.05 level. So, it is clear that rural and urban science teachers of schools are not identical.

School science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education on the basis of teaching experience

Kruskal Wallis test has been performed for this purpose. The corresponding Null Hypothesis (H_02) was, "There is no significant difference among secondary school science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education on the basis of their teaching experience".

Table 5: Result of Kruskal Wallis test: school science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education on the basis of teaching experiences

Variable	Teach. Ex. (Years)	N	Mean Rank	χ^2	df	p
	0 - 7	48	109.67	1.084	2	0.582

Teachers' attitude	>7 - <14	62	113.20
towards inclusive	>14	105	103.20

Note, level of significance $p < 0.05^*$

Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference in the attitude of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education with respect to their teaching experience as obtained ' χ^2 ' value is not significant at 0.05 level. It is clear from the table that the experience does not affect the attitude of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Findings and Discussion

The study reveals school science teachers' attitude towards inclusive education across three demographic variables. Owing to the non-normal distribution of the data, non-parametric inferential statistics are employed. The study examined the attitudes of school science teachers towards inclusive education and finds that while gender and teaching experience produced no significant attitudinal differences; geographic area emerged as a decisive factor.

The analysis reveals no statistically significant difference between male and female school science teachers in their attitudes towards inclusive education. This finding corroborates with some researches that reports gender-neutral attitudes, such as the study by Costello & Boyle, 2013; Kaur & Kaur (2015), Bhakta & Shit (2016), Chanda & Behra (2018) and Paramanik and Barman (2018), which found no significant disparity between male and female teachers in Bihar. However, it diverges from investigations like that of Chavhan (2013), Nanda & Jana (2017), Sharma & Kumari (2019), which documented significantly more positive attitudes among female teachers. On the other side, studies like Bansal (2013), Guria & Tiwari (2016), Kalita (2017), Singh (2018), Dash et al. (2019), which revealed more positive attitudes male teachers. A critical interpretation of this null finding suggests that gender, in isolation, may not be a reliable determinant of inclusive attitudes among science teachers. Both male and female teachers may be encounter identical institutional constraints, similar in-service training and comparable classroom challenges.

A significant difference emerged between rural and urban school science teachers. Urban science teachers exhibit more positive attitudes towards inclusive education. This outcome aligns with several Indian studies, including Chavhan (2013), Kaur & Kaur (2015), Kumar (2016), Nanda and Jana (2017), Bansal (2018), Paramanik and Barman (2024), which reported significantly more favourable attitudes among urban secondary teachers. However, it diverges from investigations like that of Bindhu & Niranjana (2014), which did not found any significant difference between urban and rural teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. A critical interpretation of this present study suggests that the urban advantage can be critically attributed to the structural inequities. Urban schools generally offer better access to continuous professional development, special educator support, assistive technology and exposure to inclusive policy mandates like the NEP 2020. Conversely, rural science teachers frequently grapple with multi-grade classrooms, severe material shortages and lack of assistive technology which collectively erode inclusive optimism. However, this urban-rural divide is not deterministic. Mishra (2024) found no significant area-based difference among elementary teachers in Odisha, suggesting that targeted rural interventions can mitigate geographical disparities.

Contrary to the assumption that greater teaching experience fosters resistance to inclusive practices, the study found no significant difference in attitudes based on years of teaching experience. This result corroborates the null findings of Kar and Chishi (2023) in Tripura and Sharma, Malik, and Nagy (2022) in higher education settings, yet it contrasts with Bhatnagar and Das (2014), who observed that less experienced secondary teachers in New Delhi were significantly more positive. A critical reading of this finding suggests that teaching experience operates in a nuanced, non-linear manner. Veteran teachers, despite potential initial resistance, may have accumulated practical coping strategies, witnessed successful inclusion cases or undergone recent in-service training that stabilises their attitudes, bringing them in line with their less experienced colleagues. Simultaneously, novice teachers, often presumed to be more ideologically receptive, might lose some of their initial enthusiasm when confronted with the systemic barriers of under-resourced classrooms. Crucially, the absence of a comprehensive inclusive education component in most pre-service and in-service science teacher training programmes may produce a uniformly cautious attitude across all experience in brackets. Therefore, the non-significant result highlights that systemic exposure to inclusive pedagogy, rather than mere years of service.

The findings compel policymakers to move beyond one-size-fits-all interventions and invest in area-specific capacity-building, particularly in rural schools where infrastructural deficits, lack of assistive technology and socio-cultural stigmas remain entrenched. The generalisation of these results due to the use of a convenience sample limited to science teachers may not represent the broader teaching population. Future research should employ mixed-methods designs to unravel the qualitative nuances behind these attitudes and investigate additional contextual variables such as institutional leadership, training quality, and disability-specific preparedness. Ultimately, fostering genuine inclusive mindsets requires systemic, equity-driven reforms that reach the most underserved educational settings.

Acknowledgment: No

Author's Contribution Sourav Biswas: Data Collection, Literature Review, Methodology, Analysis, Drafting, Referencing; Dr. Chandra Prabha Pandey: Literature Review, Methodology, Drafting

Funding: No

Declaration: The authors have given consent for the publication.

Competing Interest: No

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