

Attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education: A study on Jammu and Kashmir, India

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Abstract

In regular classrooms, teachers play a crucial part in ensuring the success of inclusive practices for students from a wide range of backgrounds. As children with special educational needs are integrated into regular classrooms, it is important for teachers to maintain a positive attitude towards their students. The main purpose of this study is to examine the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education in Jammu and Kashmir with respect to their gender, locality of schools and educational qualification. A total of 100 teachers were taken from schools from Jammu district as sample of the study through multi-stage sampling procedure. Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test were employed as statistical methods to analyze the collected data. The results of this study indicate that there are no appreciable differences in the attitude of teachers with respect to their gender and locality of school but it has been found that there is significant difference in attitude of teachers with respect to their educational qualification.

Keywords: Inclusive education; Attitudes; Elementary teachers; Jammu and Kashmir

1. Introduction

The term inclusive education refers to an educational reform movement that is taking place all over the globe with the goal of integrating students of varying skill levels into traditional classroom environments (Ahmed et al., 2012). According to Mittler (1995) the school curriculum, teaching techniques, organizational structure, and resource allocation all need to be modified to guarantee that all students, regardless of their ability level, are able to effectively engage in normal educational environments. The Salamanca Declaration UNESCO (1994) described inclusive education as schooling in which all students, including those with severe impairments, have access to normal classes with necessary assistance. Similarly, inclusive education can be defined as the inclusion of all children and young people regardless of any individual differences, including race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, language, or socioeconomic status (Polat, 2011). In today's society, some of the most prominent defining traits are ongoing education and training, social equality, collaboration, the advancement of technology, concern for people and their requirements in terms of advancement, integration, and innovation, and change. As a result, education plays a significant part due to the fact that it is involved in a two-way dialogue with other aspects of society, most notably communities (Devi et al., 2022; A. Mantry et al., 2022; D. A. K. Mantry et al., 2022). It is essential that the educational system provide all students the same opportunity, regardless of the inequalities that exist between them (Unianu, 2012). When seen from a different angle, inclusion is not the same thing as "dumping." Instead, it conveys the notion that everyone is a part of the school, and that everyone is welcome at the school (Ewing et al., 2018). In addition to providing fairness and equality in educational settings, inclusive education is a step towards securing the right to get an education.

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In light of the rapid increase in the world's population and the scarcity of resources that can meet the educational and other needs of all people around the world, inclusive education is an absolute need in today's society. Yet, the success of this approach is wholly dependent on instructors, namely their dedication and attitude towards exceptional children who are to be educated in inclusive settings (Alsolami & Vaughan, 2023; Jury et al., 2023; Kielblock & Woodcock, 2023). It is generally agreed upon that regular classroom teachers' positive attitudes and acceptance of inclusive educational programmes are crucial to the successful implementation of these programmes (Beacham & Rouse, 2012; Bhatnagar & Das, 2013; Das et al., 2013). It is of the utmost importance that teachers have the mental capability to instruct a group of pupils that come from a variety of backgrounds. The academic and social success of all students, including those with special needs, is significantly influenced by the positive attitudes of teachers towards each and every one of their charges, as well as by the overall atmosphere they cultivate in the classroom (Moberg et al., 2020; Saloviita, 2020; Savolainen et al., 2022).

Despite the fact that elementary education has made significant strides in the Northern region of India over the course of the last one or two decades, there is still a significant portion of the population that is not able to reap the rewards of these advancements. Moreover, inclusive education is now a component of the majority of countries' current educational strategies. On the other hand, the success of inclusive education is heavily dependent on its stakeholders, which include educators, communities, policy makers, and so on. However, a movement that challenges the policies and practises of exclusion that are prevalent in general schools has developed into what is now known as inclusive education. The core tenet of inclusive education is that all of the students, to the get extent feasible, study and work together, despite the fact that they may have varying degrees of difficulty and characteristics. It is a well-established truth that ordinary schools and the atmosphere of regular classrooms are sometimes unable to meet the educational requirements of a great number of pupils, particularly those pupils who have impairments. Because of this, a significant number of children and teenagers who have impairments do not attend conventional schools. It is difficult to make the case for inclusive education given that unit normal schools have gained the competence to provide for the needs of these students. The shifting responsibilities and perspectives required of normal classroom teachers constitute one of the most significant obstacles standing in the way of accomplishing this objective. The education of all different kinds of youngsters depends heavily on the efforts of their respective teachers. A favourable and constructive attitude on the part of instructors towards students with disabilities is an essential component of the teaching-learning process, as well as an important factor in the expansion and maturation of students with disabilities who are educated in an inclusive setting. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine the attitude of primary school teachers in the Jammu area towards inclusive education with respect to their gender, locality of the school, and educational qualification.

2. Literature review

Chopra (2008) carried out a study on practices and attitudes towards inclusive education among elementary teachers of west Golaghat district of Assam. The descriptive survey method was used for the study. 120 elementary teachers were selected as sample randomly and data was collected by using self-developed questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed that the attitude towards inclusive education is positive among elementary school teachers. Bansal (2013) investigated on attitude of primary school teachers towards inclusive education. The descriptive survey method was used for this study. The findings of this study concluded that 1) There was a positive attitude of teachers on inclusive education. 2) The attitude of urban teachers is positive than the rural teachers. 3) There was no difference exist among the attitude of primary level teachers in relation to their experiences. 4) The attitude of private teacher is higher than the attitude of Govt. teacher towards inclusive education. Kaur & Kaur (2015) carried out a topic relating to attitude of high school teachers towards inclusive education. The descriptive research method was used for the study. Stratified-random sampling technique was adopted for the selection of 200 teachers. It is found that 1) Teachers of secondary school have positive attitude than the teachers from primary school on inclusive education. 2) There was no difference among the attitude of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education with respect to gender. 3) On the basis of location there was a significant difference between the teachers from secondary school. Singh & Mehta (2015) undertake a study on "Attitude of primary school teachers towards inclusive education". The researcher was used descriptive survey method for the study. The researcher was used simple random sampling for stating the sample for research work. For the collection of data the researcher was used self-developed likert scale. It reveals the attitude of male teachers was positive than their counterparts. Bansal (2016) carried out a study on "Attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in relation to their professional commitment". The descriptive survey method was used for this study. The investigator adopted simple-random sampling technique for the selection of sample. The study concluded that-1) Teacher attitude towards inclusive education is significantly differ on the basis of 36 type of the school. 2) Professional commitment level of teacher of private school is average when the teacher of Govt. school is below average. 3) There was a significant positive correlation exist among the attitude of teacher towards inclusive education. Bhakta & Shit (2016) taken over a research topic on "Assessment of attitude of school teacher towards inclusion of special education need children in regular classroom". The investigator used descriptive research design for the

research .TASIE scale was used by the investigator. Different statistical method like Mean, SD was adopted for the analysis of data. The study observed that 1) The teacher's attitude on inclusive education is moderate favourable .2) The attitude of teacher do not differ significantly in relation to gender. 3) Medium of instruction creates the difference among the attitude of teacher. 3) There was a significant difference exist among the attitude of teacher with respect to type of school. Kalita (2017) studied on the "Attitude of primary school teachers towards inclusive education". Through this study it was noticed that t most of the teachers have moderate attitude towards inclusive education and not a single teacher's attitude towards inclusive education is under extremely favorable. Male teachers' attitude towards inclusive education is higher than the female teachers. Experience teachers' attitude towards inclusive education is slightly higher than the less experience teachers. Parmanik &Berman (2018) conducted a study on " Attitude of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education ". Descriptive survey method was used for the study. The study revealed that 1) The attitude of high school teacher is moderate in Purulia district 2)There was no differences exist among the attitude of male and female teachers in Purulia District.3) The teacher's attitude from rural and urban background differ significantly on inclusive education. Mohanty (2019)investigated on " Attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education ".Descriptive survey design was used by the investigator for data collection. The outcomes of the study led the researchers to the following conclusion: 1) Male educators with more years of experience are more likely to have a good attitude towards inclusive education. 2)When compared to the male instructors, the female teachers showed a more optimistic attitude about the concept of including children who have behavioural issues in the classroom. 3) There is a discernible divide in mentality between elementary school instructors working in rural and urban settings. Tahseen &Bano (2019) conducted a study on "Attitude of school teachers and students towards inclusive education at secondary level". Survey method was used for the study. Self -made questionnaire was developed by the researcher to explore the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education The study revealed that the teacher and student responses on inclusive education is positive. Ghosh (2020) conducted a study on "Attitude of primary school teachers towards inclusive education" .The researcher used descriptive survey method for his research work. The findings of this study was 1)The attitude of more number of teacher towards inclusive education is positive.2)Young teachers have more positive attitude towards inclusive education than aged teachers.3)Urban teacher have favourable attitude than rural teachers towards inclusive education.4) The attitude of male teacher is positive towards inclusive education than rural teachers. San Martin et al (2021) examine on educators' mindsets and preparedness for inclusive classrooms. The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of inclusion among active Chilean teachers, as well as their confidence in and motivation for implementing inclusive practices in their own classrooms. Secondary objectives included exploring the relationship between teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy and the effect of segment of the population and professional characteristics on these constructs. Researchers discovered a strong connection between teachers' positive outlooks and their own sense of competence in the classroom. There was no correlation between teacher certification and inclusive attitudes, but there was a negative correlation between certification and inclusive teacher beliefs regarding student learning. Teachers with higher levels of education were less confident in their ability to provide an inclusive learning environment than those in lower levels of education. Teachers' confidence in their own skills seemed to be strongly influenced by the kind of school they worked in. However, according to the review of related literature it has been found that there is no such differences of attitude of teachers with respect to their gender, locality and educational qualification towards inclusive education. Therefore, following hypotheses are proposed as:

- **H₀₁**: There is no significant difference in attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to gender.
- **H₀₂**: There is no significant difference in attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to locality of school.
- **H₀₃**: There is no significant difference in attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to educational qualification.

3. Material and method

The present study adopted the descriptive survey type of research. The population of the present study is constituted with all the secondary school students of Jammu district. In the present study, a sample of 100 teachers was taken from schools from Jammu district. Both the male and female elementary teachers from Government schools were taken. However, multi-stage sampling procedure was used to draw a sample from the population. At the first stage, a district of Jammu was selected purposively on the basis of their geographical location. At the second level of sampling, 15 elementary schools were taken randomly by convenient sampling method. Finally, 7-8 teachers from each school were selected purposively on the basis of their availability and willingness to cooperate. Hence, 100 teachers (44 Male and 56 Female) finally constituted the sample for the study. The researcher used the Teacher Attitude Scale towards Inclusive Education developed by Dr. Vishal Sood and Dr. Arti Anand in 2014 consists of four dimensions such as psychological behavioural, social& parent related, curricular & co-curricular and administrative , to collect the required

data. For analysing the assembled data, the following statistical techniques such as: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test were employed.

4. Results

Table 1 Levels of attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education (N=100)

S. No.	Levels of attitude	Number of teachers	Percentage
1.	Highly favorable (above 122)	60	60%
2.	Average favorable (between 112 to 103)	28	28%
3.	Low level or unfavorable (Below 103)	12	12%

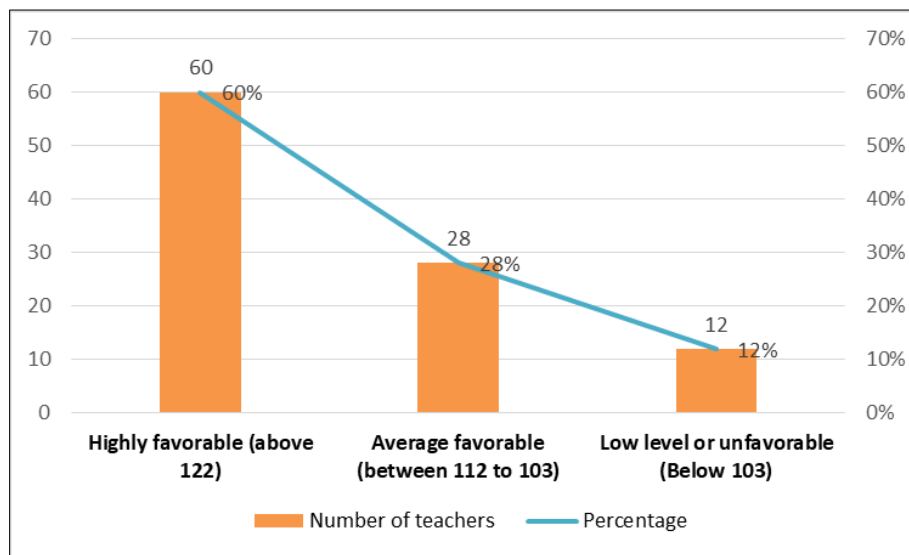


Figure 1 Levels of attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education

Table .1 and figure. 1 indicates the different levels of attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education. Out of 100 teachers, 60% of the participants' response showed that they were having highly favorable attitude towards inclusive education whereas 12% of the respondents were having low level or unfavorable attitude. Twenty-eight percentage of the teachers' response denoted that they were having average favorable attitude towards inclusive education. From the analysis of the data, it is found that 60% of the teachers were found to have highly favourable attitude towards inclusive education. It can be assumed that teachers might have got adequate sensitization about the concept and significance of inclusive education and also may be realized the responsibility of the teachers towards all the pupils. 28% of the teachers were found to have average level of favourable attitude towards inclusive education.

4.1.1. H01: There is no significant difference in attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to gender

Table 2 and figure. 2 shows the attitude score of elementary school teachers on various dimensions of scale with regard to gender. It is inferred from the Table that the obtained 't' values of gender on dimensions of psychological, social & parents related, curricular & co-curricular and administrative related aspects of attitude scale is less than the critical value at 0.05 levels (1.96). This indicates that there does not exist significance difference between the attitude of male and female of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education. Hence, it is concluded that there is no significance difference between the attitudes of male and female of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Table 2 Attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to gender

Dimensions	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Psychological /Behavioural	Male	44	24.41	3.357	0.506	1.11
	Female	56	25.21	3.808	0.509	
Social & parent related	Male	44	29.86	3.145	0.474	1.43
	Female	56	31.18	5.411	0.723	
Curricular &co-curricular	Male	44	29.27	3.731	0.563	0.81
	Female	56	29.86	3.445	0.460	
Administrative	Male	44	27.77	3.382	0.510	0.25
	Female	56	27.61	3.189	0.426	
Total	Male	44	111.32	9.378	1.414	1.30
	Female	56	113.86	9.917	1.325	

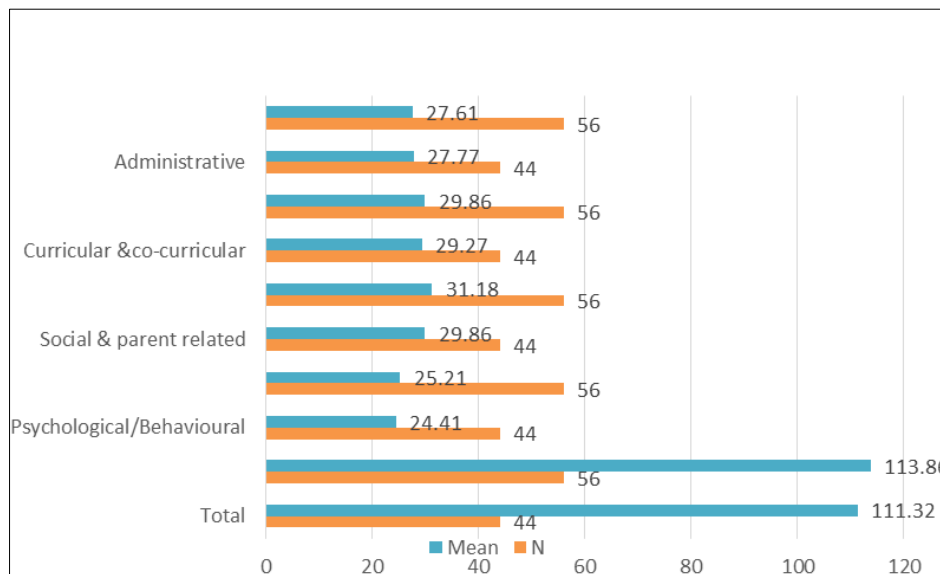


Figure 2 Attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to gender

4.1.2. H02: There is no significant difference between the attitudes of rural and urban of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education

Table.3 and figure. 3 shows the attitude scores of elementary school teachers on various dimensions of scale with regard to their locality. It is inferred from the Table that the obtained 't' values of elementary school teachers on dimensions of psychological, curricular & co-curricular and administrative related aspects of attitude scale is less than the critical value at 0.05 levels (1.96). It showed that there is no significance difference in the attitude of rural and urban elementary school teachers towards inclusive education. In case of dimension of social & parents related, the t-value is greater than the critical value at 0.05 levels (1.96). It denotes that there is significance difference in the attitude of rural and urban elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Table 3 Attitudes of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education with respect to their locality

Dimensions	Locality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Psychological /Behavioural	Urban	44	24.73	4.066	0.613	0.32
	Rural	56	24.96	3.264	0.436	
Social & parent related	Urban	44	31.75	5.755	0.868	2.27
	Rural	56	29.70	3.162	0.423	
Curricular &co-curricular	Urban	44	29.91	3.595	0.542	0.77
	Rural	56	29.36	3.560	0.476	
Administrative	Urban	44	27.61	2.927	0.441	0.18
	Rural	56	27.73	3.524	0.471	
Total	Urban	44	114.00	10.097	1.522	1.15
	Rural	56	111.75	9.381	1.254	

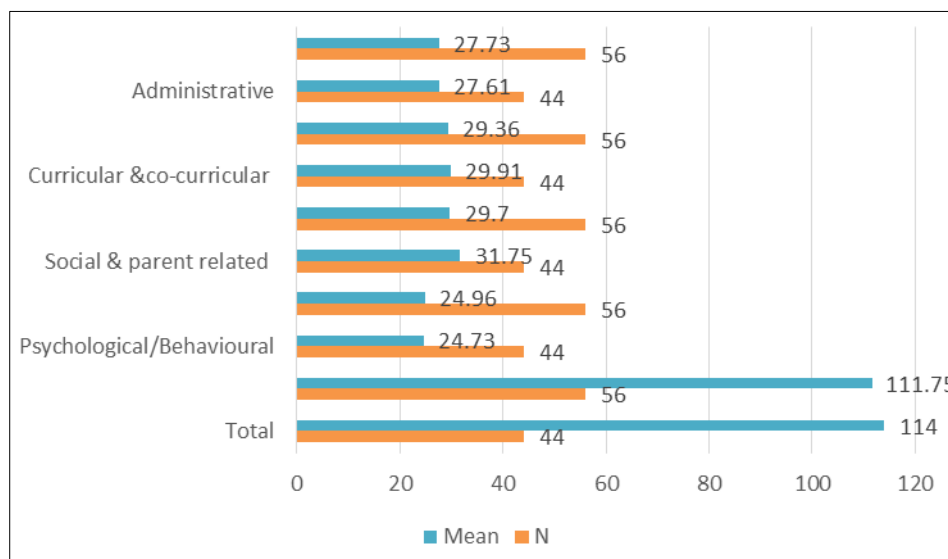


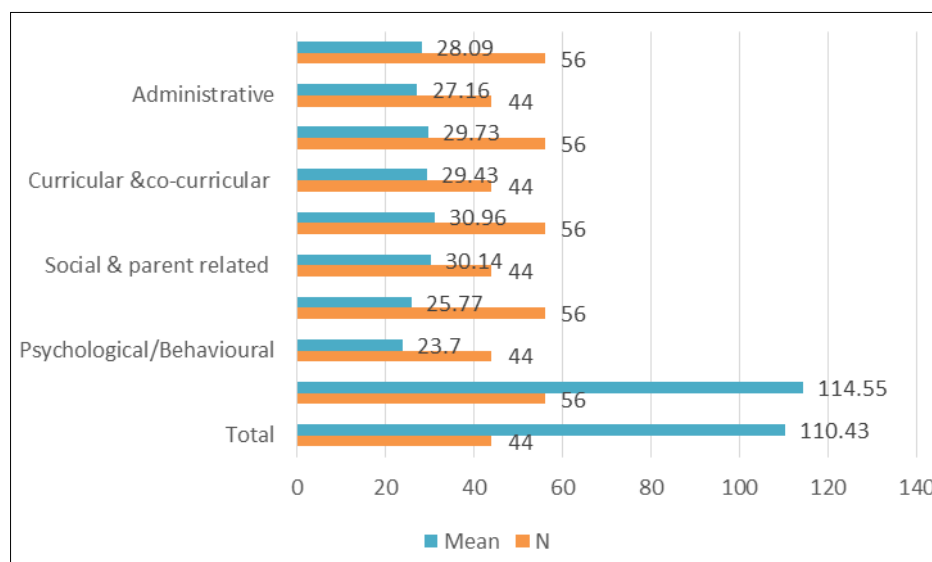
Figure 3 Attitudes of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education with respect to their locality

4.1.3. H03: There is no significant difference between the attitudes of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education with regard to their educational qualifications

Table .4 and figure. 4 shows the attitude scores of Mean, SD and T-values of elementary school teachers on various dimensions pertaining to their educational qualifications. Out of four dimensions of attitude scale scores, the T-value of psychological/ Behavioral (2.94) dimension is greater than the critical value (1.96) at 0.05 level which is significant. It signifies that there is significance difference in attitude of elementary school teachers those who possessed the qualifications of under graduation and post-graduation. It can be understood that obtaining of higher qualifications may be the reason for the variation between the teachers who possessed graduation and post-graduation qualifications in terms of attitude towards inclusive education.

Table 4 Attitudes of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education with regard to their educational qualifications

Dimensions	Qualification	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value
Psychological /Behavioural	UG	44	23.70	3.909	0.589	2.94
	PG	56	25.77	3.122	0.417	
Social & parent related	UG	44	30.14	3.152	0.475	0.89
	PG	56	30.96	5.450	0.728	
Curricular &co-curricular	UG	44	29.43	3.579	0.540	0.42
	PG	56	29.73	3.585	0.479	
Administrative	UG	44	27.16	3.102	0.468	1.42
	PG	56	28.09	3.348	0.447	
Total	UG	44	110.43	9.446	1.424	2.14
	PG	56	114.55	9.624	1.286	

**Figure 4** Attitudes of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education with regard to their educational qualifications

5. Discussion

The study examined the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education, considering variables such as gender, locality of the school, and educational qualification. The results indicated that there was no significant difference in the attitude towards inclusive education between male and female elementary school teachers. This finding is consistent with previous studies conducted by (Boyle et al., 2013; Sandhu, 2017; Singh et al., 2020). Which also reported no significant gender differences in teachers' attitudes.

Additionally, the study revealed different levels of attitude among elementary school teachers towards inclusive education. Among the 100 participants, 60% of teachers displayed a highly favorable attitude, while 12% exhibited a low or unfavorable attitude. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions and professional development programs to address the negative attitudes of a minority of teachers and promote a positive and inclusive educational environment.

Furthermore, the study found a significant difference in the attitudes of rural and urban elementary school teachers towards inclusive education. This suggests that teachers' attitudes may be influenced by the context in which they work, such as the characteristics and needs of students in their respective areas. Understanding these contextual factors can help in designing effective strategies to improve teachers' attitudes and their ability to implement inclusive practices.

Moreover, the study identified a significant difference in the attitudes of elementary school teachers based on their educational qualifications. This finding implies that teachers with different levels of education may possess varying levels of knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to inclusive education. It underscores the importance of providing comprehensive training and support to enhance teachers' understanding and implementation of inclusive practices, particularly for those with lower educational qualifications.

6. Conclusion

The study examined the attitudes of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education, considering variables such as gender, locality of the school, and educational qualification. The results indicated that there were no significant differences in attitudes between male and female teachers, aligning with previous research findings. However, it was found that a minority of teachers displayed a low or unfavourable attitude towards inclusive education, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions and professional development programs. Furthermore, the study revealed significant differences in attitudes based on the locality of the school, with rural and urban teachers displaying varying attitudes towards inclusive education. Additionally, teachers with different educational qualifications exhibited differing attitudes, indicating the potential influence of education levels on inclusive practices. The findings underscore the importance of addressing negative attitudes, considering contextual factors, and providing comprehensive training and support to enhance teachers' understanding and implementation of inclusive education. By promoting positive attitudes and fostering inclusive environments, schools can better meet the diverse needs of all students.

Educational implications of the study

This research was carried out with the intention of gaining insight into the perspectives held by primary school teachers in the Jammu area on inclusive education. According to the findings of the research, elementary school teachers have different degrees of positive and negative attitudes about inclusive education. The responses of sixty percent of the participants, out of hundred teachers, indicated that they had a very favourable attitude towards inclusive education. It is reasonable to presume that teachers have received sufficient training on the essence of inclusive education, as well as its idea and relevance, and that they are aware of their professional responsibilities with regard to inclusive education. According to the findings of the current research, teachers are already aware of the desirability of including impaired students in normal classroom settings; nevertheless, there is still a need to increase knowledge about inclusive education in regular classroom settings. In order to cultivate positive attitudes among teachers, the obstacles that stand in the way of inclusive education must be removed. These obstacles include inadequate funding, physical infrastructure, curriculum, specially trained teachers, effective policies, and organisations of the education system etc. In-service training for teachers should be structured to provide general classroom teachers with the appropriate training and opportunities to grow their skills, enabling those teachers to be ready for the inclusion of children with disabilities when it is actually put into practice. It is the responsibility of administrators and policy makers to design laws and policies that ensure disabled children have access to the greatest number of opportunities available, as well as the financial resources necessary to put these policies into practice.

Limitations and future scope

Further research in the area of inclusive education is crucial in the current scenario. Despite the finding of the study provides various valuable insight for the development of inclusive education. This study has some limitations such as the present study was limited to only 100 teachers so in future research can be conducted on a larger sample size for better understanding. Furthermore, similar research can be conducted on primary and secondary school teachers to understand their perspectives on inclusive education. It would also be interesting to conduct comparative studies on the effectiveness of private and government school teachers in implementing inclusive education. Additionally, a descriptive study could be undertaken to identify the barriers to inclusive education for all categories of children with special needs and their specific needs. Such research would help in understanding the challenges faced in implementing inclusive education and could guide the development of effective policies and strategies to promote inclusive education in schools.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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