



STUDY OF AWARENESS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Paper Received On: 25 JULY 2021

Peer Reviewed On: 31 JULY 2021

Published On: 1 AUGUST 2021

Abstract

*The purpose of the present study was to investigate the awareness of secondary school teachers towards inclusive education. In the present study, the researcher used a descriptive survey method and quantitative analysis of data. 313 secondary school teachers were considered as a sample of the study. **Tool used for this study:** The Mumthas and Shamina (2011) Inclusive Education Awareness Test is designed to assess teachers' awareness of inclusive education. There are forty statements in the tool. **Scoring:** There are four responses to every question. One mark is awarded for each correct response, and zero for each incorrect response. **Reliability:** It was found to be somewhat reliable for measuring teachers' knowledge of inclusive education, with a value of 0.72. **The results found that** there are differences in secondary school teachers' awareness of inclusive education. The awareness of inclusive education exhibited by male and female educators differs significantly. There is no significant difference in the teacher's awareness of inclusive education based on their designation and the subjects they teach.*

Keywords: Awareness, Inclusive Education and Secondary School Teachers

Introduction

The result of major changes to approaches for organizing and providing assistance to special needs children is inclusive education. Protection to emancipation, wardship to independence, limitation to growth, separation to integration, and exclusion to inclusion are

some of the major changes that have been implemented. Therefore, inclusion refers to the practice of integrating students with special needs into regular classrooms by having them participate more in all cultural activities, co-curricular, educational, and community-based activities. Reducing pressures based on disability, gender, class, family structure, and lifestyle is the goal of inclusive education.

For children with disabilities, there are primarily two approaches that are accepted by society in India. Establishing special schools to educate children with impairments is one way. For the benefit of these students, these schools are equipped with specially qualified trainers, teachers, and teaching and learning resources. These are residential, offering handicapped children boarding and lodging options. However, one drawback is that these children must live apart from their relatives, which is not ideal for a child's normal early growth. However, the number of these schools is quite small. Furthermore, they are not succeeding in integrating disabled children into normal society.

Being aware of inclusive education entails being knowledgeable about its nature and ideas. One may call teachers the backbone of a country. The implementation of an inclusive education system is contingent upon the teachers' awareness of its principles and their commitment and competence in promoting it. An efficient action plan is required to raise teachers' understanding of the various facets of inclusive education. It takes time and effort to cultivate a positive attitude via raising awareness of special needs children and their education; this is something that must be done gradually over time. Public awareness campaigns and other initiatives of a similar nature need to be structured in societies for successful distribution. Accordingly, the researcher believed that via sensitization programmes, instructors may effectively eliminate negative attitudes towards students with special needs and inclusive education while promoting favourable ones.

Rationale for the Study

In addition to organizational changes, the implementation of inclusive education necessitates high levels of teaching ability. To handle a wide range of professional duties and responsibilities and make inclusion a successful endeavour, a whole range of various competencies is required (Poornima, 2012). Primary school teachers will be crucial in helping special needs children comprehend and get early intervention and rehabilitation since doing so will enable them to return to a normal life. The development of attitudes and knowledge towards inclusive education, as well as skills related to teaching and training, intra- and

interpersonal relationships, and research, are made possible by primary school teachers' awareness of special needs children and their educational issues. This awareness may also aid teacher training institutions in providing in-service and pre-service primary teachers with the necessary training to improve inclusive practices in the classroom.

It takes more than just opening doors for students who were previously put in special schools to meet the different requirements of students in regular classrooms. Full educational and social integration of disabled children into society is a challenge that can only be met if teachers are more knowledgeable about disabilities, student attitudes towards disabled children, student abilities, student culture, and student competencies. Since a child's early years are critical for providing intervention, primary school instructors are essential. As such, they must be aware of the issues special needs children experience to recognize them early and provide rehabilitation, as was previously described. In addition to coaching and counselling, the teacher should have certain specialized competencies in assessment and customized lesson design.

For inclusive education courses for kids with a range of needs to be successful, the physical and intellectual environments must be thoughtfully planned and arranged. The whole school is involved in fulfilling the unique needs of kids with a range of skills and impairments as part of the supportive system. Here, the teacher's role is crucial not only for instruction and learning but also for planning classroom activities, offering support to colleagues, giving parents intensive guidance and counselling, and helping the kids overcome social and academic challenges. Regardless of whether they work in a regular classroom, a special education classroom, or an integrated school, an effective teacher must possess a thorough understanding of the nature and concept of inclusive education, as well as the causes and characteristics of children with diverse needs, identification and assessment procedures, teaching and training methods, and providing guidance and counselling to parents and children with disabilities and abilities. With this information and comprehension, they may cultivate constructive attitudes towards kids with talents and impairments, which helps them acquire or improve the competencies needed to deal with them.

Review of the Related Literature:

The impact of awareness campaigns on elementary school female teachers' awareness of inclusive education was investigated by **Kalita (2019)**. The results demonstrated that after receiving certain interventions, female elementary school teachers' understanding of inclusive

education increased. **Amjad et al. (2020)** investigated Punjabi teachers' knowledge of inclusive education. The survey found that instructors had a modest level of general IE awareness. Their degree of knowledge of the significance of IE implementation was greater than their level of awareness regarding the policies and programmes associated with IE. Unexpectedly, 67.8% of participants were unfamiliar with the phrase "IE." Nearly the majority of the instructors (99%) had never attended an IE-related workshop or lecture. Yet 99.5% never received any instruction on how to instruct inclusive pupils.

Statement of the Problem

The title of the present research is “Study of Awareness of Secondary School Teachers Towards Inclusive Education”.

Operational Definitions

- A. **Awareness:** The condition or capacity of seeing, feeling, or being cognizant of things, events, or sensory patterns is known as awareness. Observations at this level of consciousness can validate sense data.
- B. **Inclusive Education:** An approach to teaching and learning known as inclusive education makes sure that all students, regardless of their origins, skills, or differences, have equal opportunity to study in the same classroom or educational environment. It places a strong emphasis on meeting the needs of a wide range of students, encouraging tolerance and acceptance of individual differences, and building a feeling of community and belonging among all students.
- C. **Awareness of Inclusive Education :** In general, awareness refers to the perception or understanding of a circumstance or reality. In this study, secondary teachers' perceptions of the notion of inclusion, its policies, initiatives, rights, and constitutional provisions for children with disabilities are referred to as their awareness of inclusive education.
- D. **Secondary School Teachers:** The teachers who are employed by the Andhra Pradesh Board of Secondary Schools to instruct pupils in grades 6 through 10 are referred to in this research as "Secondary School Teachers."

Objectives of the Study:

The following objectives were formulated for the present investigation.

1. To find out the level of awareness of inclusive education among secondary school teachers.

2. To study the impact of the following variables on secondary school teachers' awareness of inclusive education.
 - a) Gender
 - b) Designation
 - c) Subject taught at School

Hypotheses of the Study:

The following hypotheses were formulated to test the stated objectives.

1. Secondary school teachers do not differ in their levels of awareness of inclusive education.
2. There is no significant difference in the secondary school teachers' awareness of inclusive education in relation to the following variables.
 - a) Gender
 - b) Designation
 - c) Subject taught at School

Delimitations of the study:

1. The only geographically covered section of the research was West Godavari, one of Andhra Pradesh's thirteen districts.
2. The current study's focus is restricted to educators employed by the WG district's Bhimavaram Educational Division in secondary schools.
3. The current survey only included 40 secondary schools.
4. The current study's focus is restricted to Bhimavaram as a single educational division, which has 4 mandalas.
5. Only government, municipal, and private unaided secondary schools in the Bhimavaram educational division are included in the research.
6. The investigation's science disciplines included biological and physical science subjects.

Methodology of the Study:

- A. **Method of study:** Since it is the most appropriate technique for the current study, the normative survey methodology was employed in this inquiry.
- B. **Population:** The population under research for this study includes around 9064 secondary school teachers who work in the Bhimavaram educational division, which covers four mandalas in the AP state of West Godavari.
- C. **Sample:** Using a basic random selection approach, a sample of 313 secondary school teachers from 40 different government, local body, and private schools located in the Bhimavaram educational division of the West Godavari District was selected.

D. Tool used: The Inclusive Education Awareness Test (**ATIE**) is designed by Mumthas and Shamina (2011) to assess teachers' awareness of inclusive education. There are forty statements in the tool. These aspects of special education awareness, inclusive education initiatives and policies, and various teaching and assessment techniques employed in an inclusive education system were all included in the declarations.

Scoring: Forty questions in the inclusive education awareness test cover many facets of inclusive education. There are four responses to every question. One mark is awarded for each correct response, and zero for each incorrect response. This exam yields a minimum score of zero and a maximum score of forty.

Reliability of ATIE: The product-moment correlation, or "r," or reliability index between two tests, was used to determine the scale's reliability using the test-retest approach. It was found to be somewhat reliable for measuring teachers' knowledge of inclusive education, with a value of 0.72.

E. Statistical Techniques Used

Mean, Standard Deviation, Critical Ratio, and ANOVA were used in the study to analyse the data.

Analysis of Data and Interpretation of Results

H₁: Secondary school teachers do not differ in their levels of awareness of inclusive education.

The procedure that follows is utilized to confirm this hypothesis. The sample mean and standard deviation were computed for the inclusive education scale awareness. The mean and SD that were computed are 19 and 5, respectively. The entire sample was categorized as having high (above $M + 1SD$), moderate (between $M - 1SD$ and $M + 1SD$), and low (below $M - 1SD$) awareness of inclusive education groups based on the mean and standard deviation.

Table 1: Classification of the Whole Sample on Awareness of Inclusive Education of Secondary School Teachers

Range	N	%	Classifications
14 and below scores	076	24	Low
Between 15 and 23 scores	166	53	Moderate
24 and above scores	072	23	High
Total	314	100	

Table 1 shows that around 24% of the sample teachers are not well aware of inclusive education. Of the sample, fifty-three per cent had a moderate awareness of inclusive education, while the remaining twenty-three per cent had a high level of awareness. This

study unequivocally demonstrates that there are differences in secondary school teachers' awareness of inclusive education.

H₂: There is no significant difference between the male and female secondary school teachers' awareness of inclusive education.

Table 2: Means, SD and CR values for Secondary School Teachers' Awareness of Inclusive Education in Relation to Gender

Gender	N	M	SD	D	σ_D	CR
Female	180	19.48	5.01	1.85	0.61	3.03***
Male	134	17.63	5.60			

*Sig. at 0.05 level

Table 2 demonstrates that the derived CR value (3.03) surpasses the 2.58 table value. It is therefore significant at the 0.01 level. Consequently, the null hypothesis is disproved. The awareness of inclusive education exhibited by male and female educators differs significantly. The average difference (0.82) favours teachers who are female. Compared to their male colleagues, it might be assumed that female teachers are more aware of inclusive education.

H₃: Designation makes no difference in the secondary school teachers' awareness of inclusive education.

Table 3: Means, SD values and Result of One-way ANOVA for Secondary School Teachers' Awareness of Inclusive Education in Relation to Designation

Designation	N	M	SD	F -Value
Head Master	042	17.95	5.42	0.50*
School Assistant	156	18.72	5.35	
Secondary Grade Teacher	116	18.91	5.32	
ANOVA Analysis				
Source of variation	SS	df	MS	
Between groups	28.752	002	14.376	
Within groups	8,895.696	311	28.604	
Total	8,924.448	313		

*NS at 0.05 level

Table 3 reveals that the F-value (0.50) for df 2 and 313 is lower than the 3.03 CV. Thus, at the 0.05 level, it is not significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis is retained. It demonstrates that there is no significant difference in the teacher's awareness of inclusive education based on their designation. There is no attempt to investigate further to find

disparities in the designated groups of teachers' awareness of inclusive education since the F-value is not significant at the 0.05 level.

H₄: Subjects taught by secondary school teachers make no difference in their awareness of inclusive education.

Table 4: Means, SD values and Result of One-way ANOVA for Teachers' Awareness of Inclusive Education in Relation to Subject taught at School

Subject taught at school	N	M	SD	F -Value
Languages	074	18.58	5.19	
Mathematics	083	19.47	5.63	
Science	080	18.54	5.11	
Social studies	077	18.12	5.40	
ANOVA Analysis				0.91*
Source of variation	SS	df	MS	
Between groups	78.208	003	26.069	
Within groups	8844.497	310	28.531	
Total	8922.705	313		

*NS at 0.05 level

Table 4 indicates that the F-value (0.91), for df 3 and 311, is less than the 2.64 CV. Therefore, at the 0.05 level, it is not significant. The null hypothesis is so accepted. It demonstrates that secondary school teachers' awareness of inclusive education is unaffected by the subjects they teach. Since the F-value is not significant at the 0.05 level, no additional investigation is conducted to find variations in the attitude of secondary school teachers' awareness of inclusive education across the subjects taught at school groups.

Major Findings of the Study:

1. Around 24% of the sample teachers are not well aware of inclusive education. Of the sample, fifty-three per cent had a moderate awareness of inclusive education, while the remaining twenty-three per cent had a high level of awareness. This study unequivocally demonstrates that there are differences in secondary school teachers' awareness of inclusive education.
2. The awareness of inclusive education exhibited by male and female educators differs significantly.

3. There is no significant difference in the teacher's awareness of inclusive education based on their designation.
4. Secondary school teachers' awareness of inclusive education is unaffected by the subjects they teach.

Educational Implications:

1. Regular teachers should treat students with disabilities as other students first, regardless of their condition. It implies that a student with a disability participates in both the teaching and learning processes in the classroom.
2. Adapting the curriculum is essential for academic achievement. As a result, curricular modifications should be possible for secondary school instructors to accommodate the unique requirements of students with special needs.
3. Teachers in secondary schools should provide a supportive environment in their classrooms.
4. Teachers in secondary schools must be able to adapt their instruction to the varying learning styles and rates of their students through the use of various teaching strategies, such as peer tutoring, collaborative teaching, team teaching, and so on.
5. A greater emphasis is placed on equity and equality in inclusive education. Thus, where it is feasible, primary school instructors ought to provide kids with disabilities with equal chances to engage in all school activities.
6. One effective management strategy for inclusive education is the appropriate placement of chairs and tables appropriately. Therefore, secondary school instructors ought to be qualified to assign students with special needs to seats that suit their needs.
7. All secondary school teachers ought to possess the tolerance and empathy necessary to work with students who have special needs.
8. Conclude the instruction and learning process is a test. To support inclusive education in the classroom, teachers should make an effort to modify their testing procedures properly.

Suggestions for Further Research:

The results of this study indicate that the following recommendations for more research are consistent with the findings of the current study:

1. It is possible to collect parents' and special school teachers' awareness for the next research projects.
2. Students' awareness can potentially be used for research in the future.
3. A comparable study might be conducted with additional and other factors.
4. Anywhere in India or other AP state districts might host research of a comparable nature.
5. Only students with hearing impairments were included in this study. Students with many types of disabilities, such as those with vision impairment, learning problems, autism, cerebral palsy, locomotor disabilities, etc., might participate in research comparable to this one.

Conclusion: Teachers are unquestionably essential to inclusive education, hence research aimed at revealing important truths and important details about inclusive education should always be encouraged. Studies will always contribute to a more effective teaching and learning process for students who struggle with learning. These studies provide new insight

into the difficulties and offer suggestions and best practices that result in classroom transformations. Students are empowered to reach their full potential in the inclusive learning environment, which is regularly refined via discoveries and interventions, laying the groundwork for a bright future. The study also made clear the necessity of improving inclusive education's assessment practices and protocols. It is sincerely anticipated that the results will pave the way for more research that will improve the learner-friendliness of inclusive education courses.

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