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Perception of Teachers towards Inclusive Education: A Study of Bilaspur District

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Authors

Dr. Varsha Shashi Nath
Assistant Professor, Department of Education

Dr. Beena Singh
Head, Department of Education,
Pandit Sundarlal Sharma Open University
Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, INDIA

Abstract

The concept of inclusive education advocates for integrating students with diverse learning needs into mainstream educational settings, rather than isolating them in specialized institutions (UNESCO, 2020). This study aims to explore the perceptions of teachers in Bilaspur district towards inclusive education, focusing on the factors that shape their perception. This study employs Qualitative research design using survey method. A self-made tool i.e. 5-point Rating Scale was used to collect data from the sample. 200 Government teachers from Government middle schools of Bilaspur District of Chhattisgarh State were taken as sample for this study. The study concluded that the concept of inclusive education is supported by the teachers of Bilaspur district.

Key Words

Inclusive education, Perception of teachers', Students with diversified needs, barriers of inclusive education.

Introduction

Inclusive education has emerged as a central component of global education reforms, aimed at creating equitable learning environments for all students, regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, or socio-economic differences. The concept advocates for integrating students with diverse learning needs into mainstream educational settings, rather than isolating them in specialized institutions (UNESCO, 2020). This approach aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4, which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030 (UN, 2015). Inclusive education is not just a legal requirement in many countries but is also seen as a moral imperative to promote social justice and equal opportunities.

In the Indian context, inclusive education gained legal grounding with the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act in 2009, which guarantees free and compulsory education for all children aged 6 to 14, including those with disabilities. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) further strengthens this mandate by emphasizing the right of children with disabilities to be educated in inclusive environments. Despite these policy initiatives, the practical implementation of inclusive education remains a challenge, particularly in rural areas of Bilaspur district in Chhattisgarh. A significant factor that determines the success of inclusive education is the perception and attitude of teachers, as they are the key facilitators of this approach in the classroom (Sharma et al., 2020).

Teachers' perceptions toward inclusive education are shaped by a range of factors, including their professional training, availability of resources, and the institutional support they receive. Research consistently shows that teachers' positive attitudes towards inclusive education play a crucial role in its successful implementation. Teachers who view inclusive education favorably are more likely to adapt their teaching methods, collaborate with support staff, and make the necessary accommodations to meet the needs of all students (Sharma & Loreman, 2020). However, studies also reveal that many teachers, particularly in rural settings, feel unprepared to teach in inclusive classrooms due to insufficient training, lack of specialized resources, and large class sizes (Kumar & Patra, 2022).

In rural areas like Bilaspur district, where resources are often limited, teachers face unique challenges in implementing inclusive education. The shortage of trained special educators, inadequate infrastructure, and cultural attitudes toward disability further complicate efforts to integrate students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms. Teachers in these settings often have to manage diverse classrooms with limited support, which can lead to frustration and negative attitudes toward inclusion (Chhabra & Singh, 2022). Moreover, socio-economic factors such as poverty and low literacy rates in rural areas can also influence teachers' perceptions of inclusive education, as they may feel overwhelmed by the demands of addressing both academic and social challenges faced by their students (Pandey & Mishra, 2023).

Review of Literature

Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin (2020) explored the impact of professional training on teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in India. Their study found that teachers with formal training in special education or inclusive education exhibited significantly more positive attitudes toward inclusion. However, the lack of comprehensive training programs for many teachers in rural areas remains a significant challenge. They suggested that continuous professional development can enhance teachers' confidence and willingness to implement inclusive practices.

Kumar & Patra (2022) highlighted that while many teachers support the idea of inclusion, they feel constrained by the lack of resources, large class sizes, and insufficient time to address the individual needs of students with disabilities. Teachers reported feeling unprepared due to inadequate training in inclusive teaching strategies.

Chhabra & Singh (2022) examined the barriers to implementing inclusive education in rural India. Their study identified major challenges such as limited access to specialized teaching materials, a shortage of trained special educators, and poor infrastructure. Teachers expressed frustration over the lack of institutional support, which negatively impacted their perceptions of inclusive education.

Singh & Rathore (2021) studied the role of teachers' self-efficacy in promoting inclusive education. They found that teachers with higher self-efficacy were more likely to adopt inclusive practices and positively influence students with diverse needs. The study stressed the importance of building teachers' confidence through targeted training and mentorship programs, particularly in rural settings.

Tiwari, Das & Sharma (2021) researched the role of Government support in facilitating inclusive education in rural areas. They found that while national policies like the Right to Education (RTE) Act provide a framework for inclusion, the lack of consistent implementation and resource allocation in rural districts has created a gap between policy and practice. Teachers expressed a need for better support in terms of materials, infrastructure, and access to special education experts.

Pandey & Mishra (2023) investigated the socio-economic factors influencing teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in rural India. They found that teachers in low-income rural areas often struggle with additional pressures such as poverty, lack of parental involvement, and high student-teacher ratios. These factors contribute to negative perceptions of inclusive education, as teachers feel overwhelmed by the extra challenges of accommodating diverse learning needs.

Bala & Gupta (2021) explored teachers' preparedness to handle inclusive classrooms in rural districts of Chhattisgarh. Their findings revealed that most teachers felt underprepared due to insufficient pre-service training on inclusive education. The study emphasized the need for integrating inclusive education modules into teacher education programs to ensure that teachers can meet the diverse needs of their students.

Mishra & Jha (2022) focused on the effectiveness of professional development programs in improving teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. The study found that teachers who participated in workshops and training on inclusive education felt more confident in addressing the needs of students with disabilities. However, access to such training was limited in rural districts, contributing to teachers' feelings of inadequacy.

Rao & Kulkarni (2020) examined the role of school leadership in supporting inclusive education. They found that teachers who received strong support from their principals and school management were more likely to have positive attitudes toward inclusion. Effective leadership was seen as essential in fostering an inclusive school culture.

Verma & Srivastava (2023) found that while teachers are generally in favor of inclusive education, they face significant practical barriers, including insufficient classroom space, lack of teaching aids, and the absence of support staff to assist with special needs students. These challenges often lead to frustration and resistance to inclusive practices.

Rationale of the Study

This study aims to explore the perceptions of teachers in Bilaspur district toward inclusive education, focusing on the factors that shape their perception. The study will investigate teachers' awareness of inclusive education policies, their preparedness to work with students with disabilities, and the level of support they receive from their schools and the Government. By examining these perceptions, this research seeks to identify potential barriers to the effective implementation of inclusive education in rural India and offer recommendations for improving teacher training and support systems.

Understanding the perceptions of teachers is essential for developing strategies that will foster a more inclusive and equitable educational environment in Bilaspur and similar rural regions. Teachers are the key to ensuring that inclusive education becomes a reality, and addressing their concerns is crucial for the success of this transformative approach (Tiwari et al., 2021).

Research Questions

Following research questions leads this research:

1. What perception do the teachers of Bilaspur District of Chhattisgarh State have about inclusive education?
2. What perception do the teachers of Bilaspur District of Chhattisgarh State have about challenges of inclusive education?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this piece of research are:

1. To study the perception of teachers' of Bilaspur District towards inclusive education.
2. To study the perception of teachers' of Bilaspur District towards challenges of inclusive education.

Delimitation

This study was delimited to Government teachers from Government middle schools of Bilaspur District of Chhattisgarh State only.

Methodology

Population, Sample and Sampling

All the Government teachers from Government middle schools of Bilaspur District of Chhattisgarh State constitute the population. The sample was selected by purposive sampling method from the list provided by the District Education Office. The sample for the study included teachers from various schools across urban as well as from rural areas of Chhattisgarh.

Research Design

This study employs Qualitative research design using survey method.

Data Collection Tool

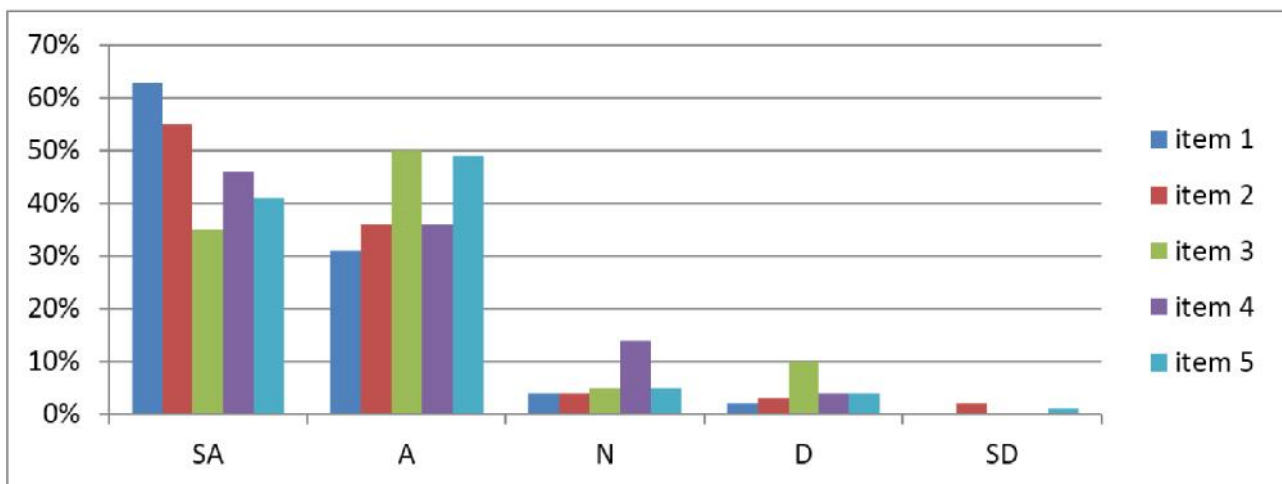
A self-made tool i.e. 5-point Rating Scale was used to collect data from the sample. The tool was developed in Hindi Language and it contains 10 closed ended type items for which responses were recorded in 5-points like Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (DS). There were 5 positive items and 5 negative items in the tool apart from these 1 open ended item was framed to collect the responses from the teachers' about the challenges of inclusive education. Content validity of the tool is assured by the relevant subject expert.

Data Analysis

1. Analysis of Objective 1. To study the perception of teachers' of Bilaspur District towards inclusive education.

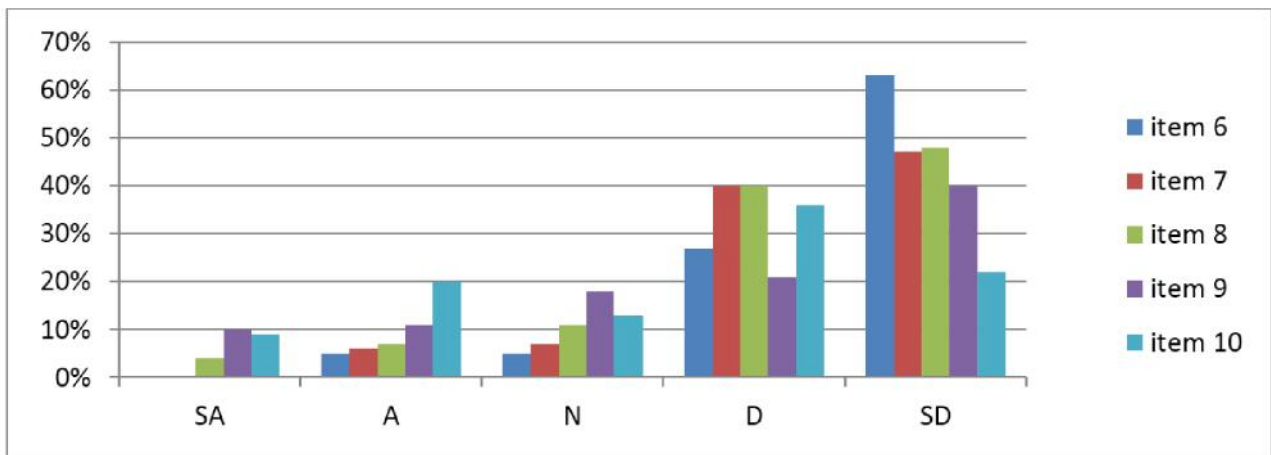
To get clear picture of perception of teachers' towards inclusive education the data obtained were presented in the form of bar graph.

Graph 01: Perception of teachers for positive items



The data represented in the graph indicates that for all the 5 positive responses the teachers responded positively as they opted the Strongly Agree and Agree options the most. The responses recorded for Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree were almost negligible. This means that the teachers' of Bilaspur District were in strong favor of Inclusive education in inclusive setting rather than that of exclusive setting.

Graph 02: Perception of teachers for Negative items

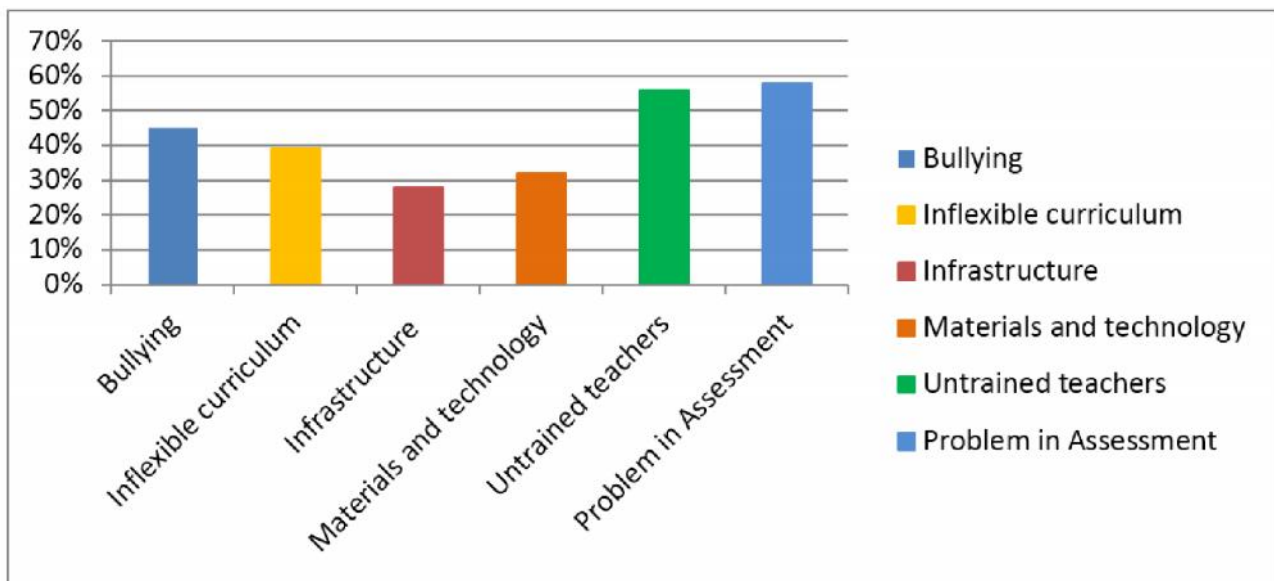


For Negative items the perception of teachers’ as drawn from the graph specifies that the teachers selected the options Strongly Disagree and Disagree for the most which shows that they were not in favor of exclusive education and exclusive setting.

Analysis of Objective 2. To study the perception of teachers’ of Bilaspur District of Chhattisgarh State about challenges of inclusive education

For analyzing the perception of teachers’ about challenges of inclusive education an open ended item was provided in the tool. In this item various responses were obtained from the respondents which were then classified and grouped into common themes.

Graph 03: Perception of teachers for Challenges of Inclusive Education



From the above graph it is depicted that around 60% of the teachers reported that availability of untrained teachers and problem in assessment of such children are the major challenges of inclusive education. Bullying and inflexible curriculum are the second most challenge which were selected by almost 40-45% of teachers of Bilaspur district. Around 28% of teachers stated that infrastructure plays an important role thus lacking in proper infrastructure facilities was also a challenge of inclusive education. 32% of teachers are in a view that non- availability of suitable materials and technology are the essential challenge of inclusive education.

Discussion

The findings drawn from the analysis of objective 1 i.e. perception of teachers' of Bilaspur district about inclusive education indicates that the teachers of Bilaspur district have more positive perception as compared to that for negative items. This finding is supported by Bala & Gupta (2021) with the condition that inclusive education modules should be integrated into teacher education programs. However Verma & Srivastava (2023), Chhabra & Singh (2022) and Kumar & Patra, 2022 disparte the findings of this research work.

Lack of Untrained teachers is a great challenge as depicted by this research work and is also sustained by Kumar & Patra, 2022, Chhabra & Singh (2022), Bala & Gupta (2021) and Mishra & Jha (2022). Tiwari, Das & Sharma (2021), Chhabra & Singh (2022) and Verma & Srivastava (2023) are in favor of Lack of materials and technology for supporting inclusive education. Whereas Chhabra & Singh (2022), Pandey & Mishra (2023) and Verma & Srivastava (2023) conflicting the finding that inclusive education is not an extra burden for the teachers.

Conclusion

Inclusive education is a wide terminology which means accommodating various diversified students into the classroom irrespective of their race, caste, creed, culture, IQ level and learning disability. As teachers' perception and attitude play an important role in making this concept fruitful hence it is needed to assess their inclination.

From the findings culminated by this research work it can be concluded that the concept of inclusive education is supported by the teachers of Bilaspur district provided that the teachers should be well trained to accommodate the needs of diversified students as well as to assess them accordingly, well equipped with the necessary materials and technology and furnished with appropriate infrastructural facilities.

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