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Website- www.aarf.asia, **Email :** editor@aarf.asia , editoraarf@gmail.com

DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES IN THE ATTITUDES OF HIGHER/SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Rajni nagpal

Assistant professor,

Shri jairam mahila college of education,

Research & development, lohar majra, kurukshetra

Sangeeta

Professor,

Department of education,

Kurukshetra university kurukshetra

ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is an approach and philosophy that provides all students greater opportunities for academic and social achievement. The study explored the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education in relation to their demographic variables. A total of 300 higher/senior secondary teachers were asked to fill a two part questionnaire. Part one gathered information relating to demographic characteristics of teachers. Part two was 20-item 6-point Likert scale titled "Scale of Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Classroom. Major findings of the study revealed that younger teachers were found to have more positive attitudes towards inclusion than the older teachers. More qualified teachers were found to have more favourable

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attitudes towards inclusion than the less qualified teachers.

KEYWORDS: Attitudes, Inclusive Education, Inclusion, Students with Special Needs

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is an approach and philosophy that provides all students greater opportunities for academic and social achievement. Inclusive education is about making sure that each and every student feels welcome and their unique needs and learning styles are attended to and valued. It implies that regular school curriculum, teaching methods, organization, and resources need to be adapted quite significantly to ensure that every student, regardless of ability or disability, can participate successfully in the mainstream of education.

Inclusive education has profound implications for educators in mainstream settings. They are expected to rise to the challenge of an increasingly diverse classroom, adjust their teaching strategies to accommodate varying learning styles, and to be psychologically and practically prepared to take on the dynamic role of inclusive educator. In the field of education, teachers are viewed as the primary agents in the implementation of the philosophy of inclusive education. Therefore, their perceptions may influence their behaviour towards and acceptance of children with disabilities. Further, the attitudes of mainstream educators may have some bearing on the success of inclusive education programme. Teachers' attitudes are gateways to understand their beliefs, vision, and their likely behavior in inclusive classrooms. The primary condition for successful inclusion of students with special needs in the regular classroom is a change from negative to positive attitudes of regular school teachers towards learners with special needs and their inclusion in the regular classroom. Another necessary condition for the successful implementation of inclusion is continuous support and assistance to teachers by others.

Hwang (2010) investigated the attitudes of general education teachers in the Republic of Korea towards inclusion. The study examined the willingness of teachers to teach students with disabilities, their ideas regarding the positive and negative effects of inclusion. The relationship between demographic variables and

teachers' attitudes and willingness were also considered. The results indicate that Korean general education teachers were divided in their attitudes towards inclusion. While teachers who perceived inclusion positively slightly outnumbered those who perceived it negatively. But actual willingness to teach students with disabilities was lower than these favourable attitudes would indicate. Teachers with positive attitudes towards inclusion could be reluctant to teach students with disabilities in their regular classes.

Results of the study conducted by **Costello & Boyle (2013)** indicated that pre-service secondary teachers held positive attitudes towards inclusive education; however there was a significant decline in positive attitudes through the years of study. Pre-service secondary teachers enrolled in postgraduate programs were more inclusive than those enrolled in undergraduate courses. Attitudes towards training and perceived competence were less positive than other attitude scales for all participants, suggesting a concern regarding training effectiveness

The aim of this study conducted by **Galvoic (2014)** was to examine the attitudes of preschool, primary, secondary and high school teachers towards inclusive education of children with special educational needs. The results showed that, in general, the participants held neutral attitudes towards inclusive education and more positive expectations regarding the outcomes of inclusion. This study also emphasized teaching performance in an inclusive class as a subject of great concern. The high school and preschool teachers as well as the teachers with previous positive experience with working in an inclusive environment reported more positive attitudes towards inclusive education than those from primary and secondary schools and those with negative experiences with the implementation of inclusive practices.

Attitudes and knowledge about inclusive education among student teachers reading pedagogy at the University of Valencia and how these are influenced by participants' age, gender, and which academic programme or year of study they are in, were explored by **Andres et al. (2015)**. The principal results indicated that

attitudes towards inclusive education among student teachers reading pedagogy were highly positive. Regarding the participants of the study, the analysis showed that attitudes towards inclusive education were directly related to age, while gender has no influence over students' attitudes.

The purpose of this study conducted by Al-Zyoudi (2006) was to investigate teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Jordan, and the factors that influenced such attitudes. The results of this study showed that teachers' attitudes were found to be strongly influenced by the nature and severity of the disabling condition presented to them, the length of teaching experience, and training.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The study was planned with the following objectives:

1. To find out the differentials in attitudes of teachers towards inclusion due to variation in age.
2. To study the differentials in attitudes of teachers towards inclusion in relation to their educational qualifications.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey method was employed because of its high degree of representativeness and the ease in which a researcher could obtain the participants' opinion.

The locale of the study was Haryana state. A multistage sampling procedure was used to draw a sample from the population. At the first stage, 10 districts were selected purposively on the basis of geographical location i.e. two from each zone-east, west, north, south and centre of Haryana. Three higher and senior secondary schools were taken randomly by lottery method from each of the 10 districts. Thus, 30 schools were selected at the II stage. Finally, ten general and special teachers from each of 30 schools (Where the scheme of Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) is running) were selected purposively on the basis of their availability and

willingness to cooperate. Hence, 300 teachers finally constituted the sample for the study.

TOOLS USED

The following tools/measures were used to collect data:

- a) A 'Demographic and Professional Profile' Scale to assess the demographic and professional attributes of teachers developed by the researcher herself.
- b) Scale of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Classrooms (STATIC) by Cochran (1998).

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

In the study, SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) program was used for inputting, coding and analyzing the data.

Analysis of data was done by using the following statistical techniques:

1. Descriptive statistics: Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation (Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation)
2. Inferential statistics: t-test, Analysis of Variance (F-test)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results were analyzed by taking dimension wise ('Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education', 'Professional Issues Regarding Inclusive Education', 'Philosophical Issues Regarding Inclusive Education', 'Logistical Concerns of Inclusive Education') attitudes scores, and overall attitudes scores of teachers with regard to inclusion.

DIFFERENTIALS IN THE ATTITUDES OF TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSION DUE TO VARIATION IN AGE.

TABLE 1.1
SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE AMONG DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS OF TEACHERS ABOUT THEIR ATTITUDES REGARDING ‘ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION’

Group	N	Mean	S.D	F	Significance
20-30 Years	49	22.31	1.93	13.00	.000
30-40 Years	112	21.38	2.01		
40-50 Years	104	20.37	2.53		
Above 50 Years	35	20.27	1.97		
Total	300	21.10	2.32		

Significant difference if $p \leq .05$

Significant difference ($F=13.00$, $p \leq .05$) was found to be observed among different age groups of teachers about their attitudes regarding advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education. The table also shows that attitudes of teachers regarding advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education become less favourable with increase in the age of teachers. The teachers in the age group of 20-30 years ($M=22.31$) have more favourable attitudes regarding advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education than the other age groups. The teachers in the age group of above 50 years (20.27) have least favourable attitudes regarding advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education as compared to other age groups. Thus, it can be interpreted that younger teachers have more positive attitudes regarding advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education than the older teachers.

TABLE-1.2**SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE AMONG DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS OF TEACHERS ABOUT THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS ‘PROFESSIONAL ISSUES REGARDING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION’**

Group	N	Mean	S.D	F	Significance
20-30 Years	49	13.98	3.07	26.86	.000
30-40 Years	112	11.57	3.69		
40-50 Years	104	9.58	2.39		
Above 50 Years	35	9.83	1.89		
Total	300	11.07	3.37		

Significant difference if $p \leq .05$

Table 1.2 indicates a significant difference ($F=26.86$, $p \leq .05$) in the attitudes of teachers towards professional issues regarding inclusive education among different age groups of teachers. Comparison of mean scores of different age groups of teachers indicates that teachers in the age group 20-30 years with highest mean score value (13.98) have more favourable attitudes towards professional issues regarding inclusive education than the other age groups. The teachers in the age group of 40-50 years with least mean score value (9.58) have least favourable attitudes towards professional issues regarding inclusive education as compared to other age groups. Thus, it can be interpreted that younger teachers (20-30 years followed by 30-40 years) have more positive attitudes towards professional issues regarding inclusive education than the older teachers (Above 50 years).

TABLE-1.3**SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE AMONG DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS OF TEACHERS ABOUT THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS ‘PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES REGARDING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION’**

Group	N	Mean	S.D	F	Significance
20-30 Years	49	13.97	1.09	3.05	.029
30-40 Years	112	13.85	1.11		
40-50 Years	104	13.57	1.46		
Above 50 Years	35	13.45	1.25		
Total	300	13.70	1.21		

Significant difference if $p \leq .05$

The data from table 1.3 indicates a significant difference ($F=3.05$, $p \leq .05$) in the

attitudes regarding philosophical issues of inclusive education among different age groups of teachers.. Comparison of mean scores reveals that teachers in the age group 20-30 years with highest mean score value (13.97) have more favourable attitudes towards philosophical issues regarding inclusive education than the other groups. The teachers in the age group of above 50 years with least mean score value (13.45) have least favourable attitudes regarding philosophical issues of inclusive education as compared to other age groups. Thus, it can be interpreted that younger teachers have more favourable attitudes towards philosophical issues regarding inclusive education than the older teachers.

TABLE-1.4

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE AMONG DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS OF TEACHERS ABOUT THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS ‘LOGISTICAL CONCERNS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION’.

Group	N	Mean	S.D	F	Significance
20-30 Years	49	12.71	1.29	1.22	.304
30-40 Years	112	12.79	1.46		
40-50 Years	104	12.49	1.34		
Above 50 Years	35	12.40	1.58		
Total	300	12.63	1.41		

Significant difference if $p \leq .05$

It can be evinced from table 1.4 that there is no significant difference ($F=1.22$, $p \geq .05$) in the attitudes regarding logistical concerns of inclusive education among different age groups of teachers. Comparison of mean scores of different age groups of teachers also indicates that difference in the mean score values is not significant. Thus, it can be interpreted that there is not much difference in the attitudes of different age groups of teachers regarding logistical concerns of inclusive education.

TABLE-1.5**SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE AMONG DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS OF TEACHERS IN THEIR OVERALL ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

Group	N	Mean	S.D	F	Significance
20-30 Years	49	62.98	4.73	27.18	.000
30-40 Years	112	59.79	5.63		
40-50 Years	104	55.97	4.92		
Above 50 Years	35	55.84	4.39		
Total	300	58.49	5.74		

Significant difference if $p \leq .05$

It can be observed from table 1.5 that there is significant difference ($F=27.18$, $p \leq .05$) among different age groups of teachers in their overall attitudes towards inclusive education. Comparison of mean scores of different age groups of teachers reflects that teachers in the age group 20-30 years with highest mean score value (62.98) have more favourable attitudes towards inclusive education as compared to other age groups. The teachers in the age group of above 50 years with least mean score value (55.84) have least favourable attitudes towards inclusive education as compared to other groups. Therefore, it can be concluded from the above analysis that younger teachers have more favourable attitudes towards inclusive education than the older teachers. Thus, hypothesis that *younger teachers have more positive attitudes towards inclusive education than the older teachers* is accepted.

DIFFERENTIALS IN THE ATTITUDES OF TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSION IN RELATION TO THEIR EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**TABLE-2.1****SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE AMONG DIFFERENT QUALIFICATION GROUPS OF TEACHERS ABOUT THEIR ATTITUDES REGARDING 'ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION'**

Qualification Group	N	Mean	S.D	F	Significance
Graduate	41	19.83	2.32	8.60	.000
Post-Graduate	238	21.24	2.31		
M.Phil/Doctorate	21	22.00	1.48		
Total	300	21.10	2.32		

Significant difference if $p \leq .05$

It can be seen from the table 2.1 that a significant difference ($F=8.60$, $p\leq.05$) exists among different qualification groups of teachers in their attitudes regarding advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education. The mean score values of different qualification groups indicate that the teachers who have done M.Phil/Doctorate degree ($M=22.00$, $SD=1.48$) have most favourable attitudes regarding advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education followed by post-graduate ($M=21.24$, $SD=2.31$) and graduate teachers ($M=19.83$, $SD=2.32$). Thus, it can be interpreted that more qualified teachers have more positive attitudes regarding advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education than less qualified teachers.

Table-2.2

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE AMONG DIFFERENT QUALIFICATION GROUPS OF TEACHERS TOWARDS ‘PROFESSIONAL ISSUES REGARDING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION’

Qualification Group	N	Mean	S.D	F	Significance
Graduate	41	9.22	2.34	8.04	.000
Post-Graduate	238	11.29	3.43		
M.Phil/Doctorate	21	12.09	3.30		
Total	300	11.07	3.37		

Significant difference if $p\leq.05$

It can be observed from the table 2.2 that there is significant difference ($F=8.04$, $p\leq.05$) among different qualification groups of teachers in their attitudes towards professional issues regarding inclusive education. The mean score values of different qualification groups indicates that the teachers who have M.Phil/Doctorate degree ($M=12.09$, $SD=3.30$) have most favourable attitudes regarding professional issues regarding inclusive education followed by post-graduate ($M=11.29$, $SD=3.43$) and graduate teachers ($M=9.22$, $SD=2.34$). Thus, it can be interpreted that more qualified teachers have more positive attitudes regarding professional issues regarding inclusive education than less qualified teachers.

TABLE-2.3**SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE AMONG DIFFERENT QUALIFICATION GROUPS OF TEACHERS ABOUT THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS ‘PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES REGARDING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION’**

Qualification Group	N	Mean	S.D	F	Significance
Graduate	41	13.46	1.38	2.49	.084
Post-Graduate	238	13.77	1.14		
M.Phil/Doctorate	21	13.28	1.58		
Total	300	13.70	1.21		

Significant difference if $p \leq .05$

It can be seen from the table 2.3 that there is no significant difference ($F=2.49$, $p \geq .05$) among different qualification groups of teachers in their attitudes towards philosophical issues regarding inclusive education. Comparison of mean scores of different qualification groups also indicates that difference in the mean score values is not significant. Thus, it can be interpreted that there is not much difference in the attitudes of different qualification groups of teachers about philosophical issues regarding inclusive education.

TABLE-2.4**SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE AMONG DIFFERENT QUALIFICATION GROUPS OF TEACHERS ABOUT THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS ‘LOGISTICAL CONCERNS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION’**

Qualification Group	N	Mean	S.D	F	Significance
Graduate	41	12.49	1.58	.241	.786
Post-Graduate	238	12.65	1.37		
M.Phil/Doctorate	21	12.67	1.56		
Total	300	12.63	1.41		

Significant difference if $p \leq .05$

It can be seen from the table 2.4 that there is no significant difference ($F=.241$, $p \geq .05$) among different qualification groups of teachers in their attitudes regarding logistical concerns of inclusive education. The mean score values of different qualification groups (Graduates, Post-Graduates, M.Phil/Doctorate) are 12.49, 12.65, and 12.67 respectively. Comparison of mean scores of different age groups also indicates that difference in the mean score values is not significant. Thus, it can be

interpreted that there is not much difference in the attitudes of different qualification groups of teachers regarding logistical concerns of inclusive education.

Table-2.5
SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE AMONG DIFFERENT QUALIFICATION GROUPS OF TEACHERS IN THEIR OVERALL ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Qualification Group	N	Mean	S.D	F	Significance
Graduate	41	54.90	4.84	10.22	.000
Post-Graduate	238	58.98	5.73		
M.Phil/Doctorate	21	60.04	5.14		
Total	300	58.49	5.75		

Significant difference if $p \leq .05$

The table 2.5 indicates that significant difference ($F=10.22$, $p \leq .05$) exists in the overall attitudes among different qualification groups of teachers towards inclusive education. The data from table 4.6.3.5 also shows that the values of mean of qualification groups i.e. Graduate; Post-Graduate; M.Phil/doctorate are 54.90, 58.98, and 60.04 respectively. Comparison of mean scores of these groups indicates that overall attitudes of teachers become more favourable towards inclusive education with increase in the qualifications of teachers. The teachers who have M.Phil/Doctorate degree ($M=60.04$) have more positive attitudes towards inclusive education followed by post-graduate ($M= 58.98$) and graduate teachers ($M=54.90$). It can be interpreted that qualification has significant positive relationship with overall attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education. Highly qualified teachers have more positive attitudes towards inclusion than the less qualified teachers. Therefore, the hypothesis that *highly qualified teachers have more positive attitudes towards inclusion than less qualified teachers* is accepted.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education in relation to their demographic variables i.e. age and qualifications of teachers. Results of the study reported that younger teachers were found to have more positive attitudes towards inclusion than the older teachers. More qualified teachers were found to have

more favourable attitudes towards inclusion than the less qualified teachers.

The teachers appear accepting and positive of inclusionary programs, There remain some concerns about implementing inclusive education in the mainstream classroom. Implications of the present study lie in providing suggestions to the teachers, administrators, and professionals, educational planners and policy makers for making improvement in some of the areas that can help in effective implementation of inclusive education practices. Educational planners and policy makers should incorporate practical and effective instructional techniques that would be useful in the inclusive classroom, into teacher preparation programs and professional development programs.

The availability of highly qualified teachers with broad competencies to offer diverse instructional strategies is essential to improved results in inclusive services. But, teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward students with disabilities are the most important issues that influence collaborative efforts between special and regular educators in inclusive classrooms. Positive attitudes and beliefs are the foundation for successful inclusion.

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