



## Alhamd Multidisciplinary Research

ISSN 2789-5866

### AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' INSIGHT CONCERNING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF PUNJAB

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**Paper ID:AMRJ10**  
**Volume 02 Issue 02**

#### Keywords:

Inclusion; Secondary School Teachers; Mainstream Schools; Regular Classroom; Special Needs.

#### Abstract

Inclusive education works as a system of education designed to be accessed by both normal and marginalized children under the mainstream schools. The study was intended to highlight secondary school teachers' insight on inclusive education with respect to their attitude, need of inclusive education, their readiness to teach and provision of resources by the schools. Sample of two hundred and thirty seven teachers was drawn out of total 1627 teachers teaching in inclusive schools in two districts of Punjab by simple random sampling technique. A self-designed scale was administered comprising 40 statements. Data were analyzed by using Percentage, Mean Score and t-test. Results revealed a sound insight of teachers for having a positive attitude towards inclusive education. A common consensus of teachers was found over teaching all students in normal schools having disability or not and teachers' strong demand of their training for more positive inclination towards inclusion. Gender based comparison showed slightly more supportive attitude of female teachers as compared to their

	<p>counterparts. It is highly recommended that mainstream schools should welcome inclusion for an inclusive society.</p>
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**Introduction**

Education system has two main streams as in form of general education and special education. If we discuss education for special persons, first thing comes into mind is special education in which, children with incapacabilities and disabilities are placed in special schools established for them. However, studies conducted to highlight the problems of special children in separate schools verified that by placing such children in separate schools has negative effects on overall personality development of these children as society gives them impression that mainstream education is inaccessible for them by restricting them to a special corner of the society (Ainscow, 2020; Zwane & Malale, 2018). Therefore, an intense debate started in academia that which strategy should be opted that may fulfill the special education needs in the best manner (Hornby & Koffman, 2021).

Special children’s inaccessibility to general education gave birth to the idea of teaching them in traditional classroom along with normal children. It was thought appropriate that their interaction and collaboration with normal students can prevent them to be isolated in society. Special children’s this critical need of evading segregation while giving them opportunity to participate with society, presented the idea of inclusion. In this way, inclusion emerged as a volatile phenomenon of academic scenario (Ismailos, Gallagher, Bennett, & Li, 2019).When disabled children are educated and trained, along with normal children in the least hindering instructional setting, it is labeled as inclusive education (Johnstone, 2020). Inclusion, restructure the mainstream schools by accommodating every child without any discrimination of his ability or disability (Hwang, 2011).

In our general population, people with special needs cannot be ignored as they have 10% of population as per report by WHO (Asare, 2019). Inclusive education, accommodates all challenged and normal children in mainstream schools. When this world has become global village, the concept of inclusive education has developed as an international and global phenomenon that targets to hold the variation in learning characteristics of students with and without disabilities in regular classrooms (Chen, Evans & Luu., 2023; Amor, Hagiwara, Shogren, Thompson, Verdugo, Burke, & Aguayo, 2019).

All children irrespective of their ability and disability have equal right to get education and to get quality education is also their ultimate right as per No Child Left Behind Act 2002. State is responsible to provide all the required and prerequisite facilities to their citizens to educate themselves. Keeping in view, this scenario, inclusive schools were established all over the world to meet the target of educating special children (Khan, Sami, & Salahuddin, 2021). Inclusive schools ensure access to education for all children. It is a way forward to curb unfair and discriminatory behavior showed by the society towards special children by socializing new generation to be more welcoming of all forms of miscellany (Kirschner, 2015).

Inclusion has the policy of giving equal chance of education to all children having disability or not. It incorporates all groups even minorities into a single classroom by providing them a contented, conducive and productive academic setting. It is crafted for all children both special and normal by executing a particular curricula which focuses on their social recognition and creating a friendly rapport between both types of children (Haug, 2017). Inclusion works on the principles of democracy as its advocates argue that it creates democratic environment more practically as compared to traditional or conventional classroom which allow only normal children rather deviating assortment found in general population (Kirschner, 2015).

Inclusion works well when all the stakeholders are interested equally and accept it with common consensus. Joint efforts by the standard instructors and specialized curriculum teachers are also required for smooth running of inclusion (Hassanein, Alshaboul, & Ibrahim, 2021). It is evident by various research studies that inclusion is far better in accomplishment of intended learning outcomes (Hunt, Soto, Maier, & Doering, 2003). Collaborative teaming to support students at risk and normal students work together as in inclusive setting students are more cooperative while displaying more productive interaction. In this way, inclusion fosters innovation, creativity and critical thinking in all peers. It not only target the students but also empowers educators to deal smartly with diversity found in inclusive setting (Cook, 2001).

Children with impairments have the right to be taught with their normal peers in general schools irrespective of any discrimination of capacities, potential, religion, ethnicity, race, strength or weaknesses as by developing children without any difference ultimately supports their learning and achievement (Khalid & Othman, 2022). The structure of inclusion is built on four pillars which are crucial for its smooth running. These are prompt response to individual differences, enabling children to be problem solver by using practical tactics and reforms in pedagogy, meeting the needs of all children for a valuable learning experience through unconventional and enriched hands on experiences and granting quality instruction to both challenged and normal students (Frank & Joshi, 2017).

In this regard, Altwerger, Jordan, & Shelton (2007) propose activity-based and experiential learning as effective teaching techniques for the inclusive classroom. For this purpose, teacher should focus on learning by doing. On the other hand, Bartone, Anderson & Antonak (2009) consider peer tutoring as a useful teaching technique because in peer tutoring all class fellows learn from each other's experiences and every one shares his learning with one another. Likewise, cooperative learning was also found to be a workable and expedient learning tactic in inclusive setting as it encourages social aptitude among all peers by opposing disable and non-disable peers in agreeable social gatherings. Such warm attitude improves students' attention span and expand quality social communication (Desalegn & Worku, 2016).

Importance of designing an individualized educational plan in inclusion is undeniable. By designing IEP teachers plan all academic activities of a special child keeping in view his level of understanding and readiness, his sole learning needs and success of plan by forming the social interaction of capable child with his handicap peer (Florian and Rouse, 2009). Indicators of success of inclusion include categorical approval of all patrons by bringing all normal and challenged children into mainstream schools, the dynamic involvement of all children by keeping in view their capacity, being hopeful for all children in terms of their prospective potential, setting goals as per child's capabilities, designing classroom practices for extracting maximum potential of students, having robust leadership skills by the school administrator, keeping up to date professional knowledge by the teachers and partnership of school and parents (Krischler, Powell, & Pit-Ten, 2019).

Inclusive classroom demands teachers to have sound professional knowledge including application of advanced classroom management techniques, latest teaching techniques, individualized and adaptive teaching, specialized knowledge of inclusion and its curriculum and command over assistive technology (Clipa, Mata, & Lazar, 2020). Teachers' these traits can help them to combat the challenges of inclusive classroom management which arise in form of emotional and behavior disorder (EBD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (Cardona & Pickett, 2009).

Assessment of students cannot be ignored in inclusive classroom. Therefore, a teacher should be equipped with special skills to assess both normal and special child simultaneously. A teacher has to maintain all the record as date of admission of special child so that he can compare his progress from the beginning (Batarelo, Kurz, & Novosel, 2016). However, in current scenario, especially in under developed countries, teachers lack appropriate content and

technology tools, training to teach in inclusive classroom, softwares and manipulatives to deal with special children. Therefore, they are reluctant to teach in inclusive classrooms (Johnstone, 2020).

Teachers' positive attitude towards inclusion cannot be ignored while designing an inclusive classroom as teachers' approval, preparation and willingness matter a lot (Dorji, Bailey, Paterson, Graham, & Miller, 2021). Due to above mentioned reasons, few teachers have negative viewpoint towards inclusion. On the other hand, various teachers found to be supportive of inclusion as reported by different research studies. Nevertheless, they demand a robust training program to teach in inclusive classroom. Such training will inculcate a positive attitude in them as by creating personal connection with disability and negotiating dilemma concerning disability be addressed in that training (Dorji et al., 2021). If such training are conducted for teachers, then teachers can favor inclusion more. Thus their willingness play an important role in success of inclusion. If they are well-trained then they can opt more effective teaching and assessment methods for both normal and special children. Therefore, teachers' training and approval be focused by the government to run inclusive school system (Scruggs and Mastropieri, 2006).

With reference to Pakistan, Thakur & Abbas (2017) worked on inclusion concerning its challenges and way forward. They recommended a meaningful coordination among all stakeholders as it will be fruitful for inclusive education in Pakistan. Chen et al. (2023) conducted a study based on teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. The study concluded that teachers need to adopt an inclusive pedagogical framework that considers the diverse educational needs of all students. Teachers as participants of their study had positive attitude towards inclusive education.

To promote inclusive education in Pakistan various efforts were initiated especially at provincial level like a policy was designed by the Special Education Department titled Punjab Special Education Policy (SEP) 2019-2029 which categorized infirmities into four streams as mild, moderate, severe and profound. To promote inclusive education, Government of Punjab launched a pilot project (Punjab Inclusive Education Project) in Bahawalpur and Muzaffargarh Districts. This project targeted mildly disabled children. This project focused on seven themes by providing voucher support to schools. (Hussain, 2022; UNICEF, 2021).

The current study was carried out to bring into light teachers' insight on inclusion in terms of their attitude especially those who are teaching in secondary schools under Punjab

Inclusive Education Project to evoke their willingness and readiness for teaching under inclusion.

### **Research Objectives**

The study was conducted to meet the following objectives

- To find out teachers' insight on inclusion with respect to its utility, challenges and provision of resources
- To compare difference of opinions of teachers based on gender

### **Review of Literature**

Inclusive classroom is open and hospitable for all students with impairment in general schools. Its main target is to foster their overall psycho-social development. Therefore, inclusive classroom is always heterogeneous in which students with miscellaneous needs enjoy all the benefits of normal classroom. Success of inclusion is highly dependent on prudent designing of activities those should be formulated for the active and productive participation of all disable and special students. These activities and classroom practices accept diversity of students found in classroom (Mouchritsa, Romero, Garay, & Kazanopoulos, 2022). Inclusive education can be run smoothly by the government if all the needed facilities are provided to such schools, teachers are trained and their attitude is changed towards inclusion (Hadidi & Al Khateeb, 2015).

Inclusion is not only for disable students as its scope welcomes talented, creative and gifted students as well. Therefore, across the world, a more inclusive approach of education was initiated. United States and Italy especially took the 1<sup>st</sup> step for the inclusive education movement in 1994. Previous laws and policies were converted into more practical laws such as No child Left Behind. Such laws and practices emphasized on increased participation of special children along with raising the quality of education in inclusive schools (Philips, 2021). Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 is fortified by the provision of quality inclusive education for all children, including children with disabilities and special talents (Chen et al., 2023).

The rudiments of inclusive classroom are acceptance of multiplicity found in all students by the teachers and authorities, eradication of exclusion of all the discrimination and practices, mutual working of teachers and school authorities. To meet the criteria of inclusion,

a school has to incorporate these rudiments as sole placement of a child with special education needs in mainstream classroom is not the real spirit of inclusion (Mouchritsa et al., 2022).

Teachers' role and belief in inclusive education is always crucial as he has to deal with students. Their firm belief in inclusion motivates them to opt for inclusive practices. Teachers' insight for the promotion of inclusion has remarkable place in education as it can maintain this system and even at the other end can design policies, assessment techniques and meet the needs for the suitable inclusion of students (Schmidt and Ksenja, 2015). Teachers' enlightened insight can alter their decision and attitudes for inclusion. This insight takes priority over other domains of teaching (Lautenbach & Heyder, 2019). Numerous studies have been conducted to reveal teachers' insight on inclusive education and they reported both positive and negative perception of teachers (Asera, 2019).

Mouchritsa et al. (2022) assert that only teachers can make the inclusion successful by their productive involvement and it is probable when they have positive attitude towards this stream of education. Their positive attitude is vital for the overall development of students with assorted needs. Teachers' style of interaction with students is reflection of their standpoint for the students. Resultantly, if they have special students in their class, certainly their thought affect their behaviors with such students. Teachers' positive and welcoming attitude for special students, compels them to design effective teaching strategies for them.

Chen et al. (2023) propose teachers to opt Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a pedagogical framework as it prompts teachers to proactively eliminate barriers to achieve high-quality education for all. Universal design for learning (UDL) is an inclusive pedagogical framework that develops instructionally rich, barrier-free educational environments and accessible lessons for all students with and without disabilities. This framework provides scaffolds, supports and flexibility in curriculum development and lesson planning.

Various research studies worked on teachers' perceptions and attitude regarding inclusive education. In this regards, Khalid and Othman (2022) presented teachers' perception regarding inclusive education with reference to Pakistan. The study found lack of training as the major reason behind teachers' negative attitude towards inclusion. Study results by Cretu and Morandau (2020) concluded that co-education of all students whether special or normal in traditional school systems gives birth to idea of an inclusive society. However, their respondents showed concern for effective execution of inclusive practices. Kern (2006) emphasized teachers' training for successful implementation of inclusive education. He also recommended that for the sustainability of this system, teachers' attitude be changed along with

development of their firm belief in diversity. Teachers of inclusive classroom should work on innovation, flexibility, advanced instruction and classroom management techniques.

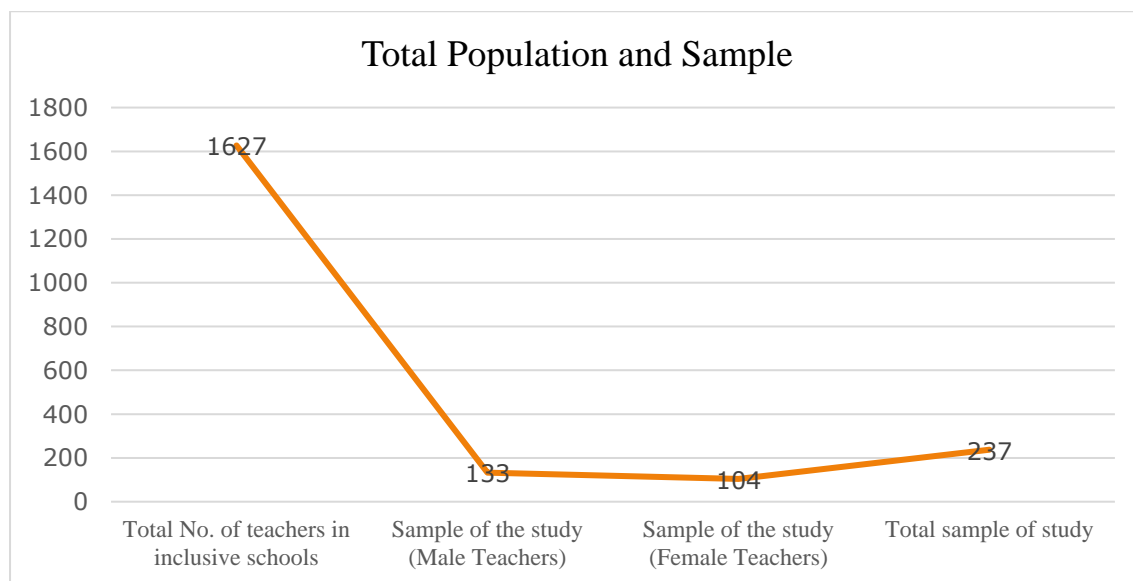
**Material and Methods**

The study design of the present work was descriptive in nature. However, a survey was administered over the study participants. Survey has always been found suitable to explore attitude regarding any phenomena as it directly inquires and collects respondents’ perceptions and insights (Asera, 2019). Total population of this study was comprised of 1627 teachers, teaching in two districts of Punjab out of which by opting simple random sampling technique 237 teachers were selected.

Following graphs are representative of strength of study participants in terms of demographics as gender and respective district

**Graph 01**

*Total Population and Sample of Study*

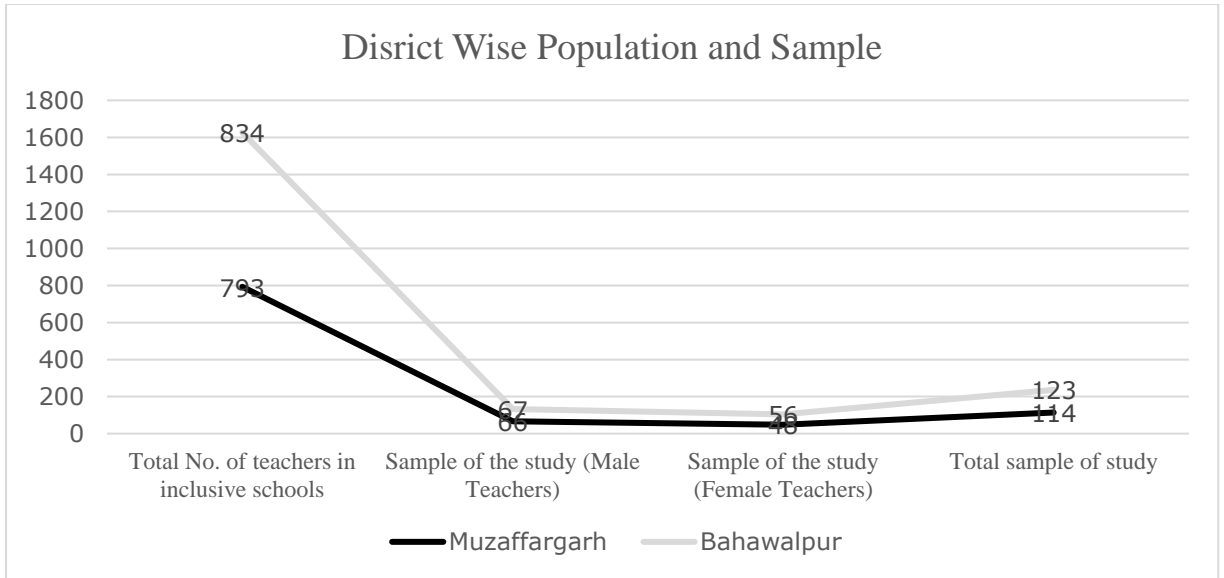


Graph 01 shows total number of teachers and sample of study. There are 1627 total teachers and sample included 237 teachers.

**Graph 02**

*District wise Population and Sample of Study*





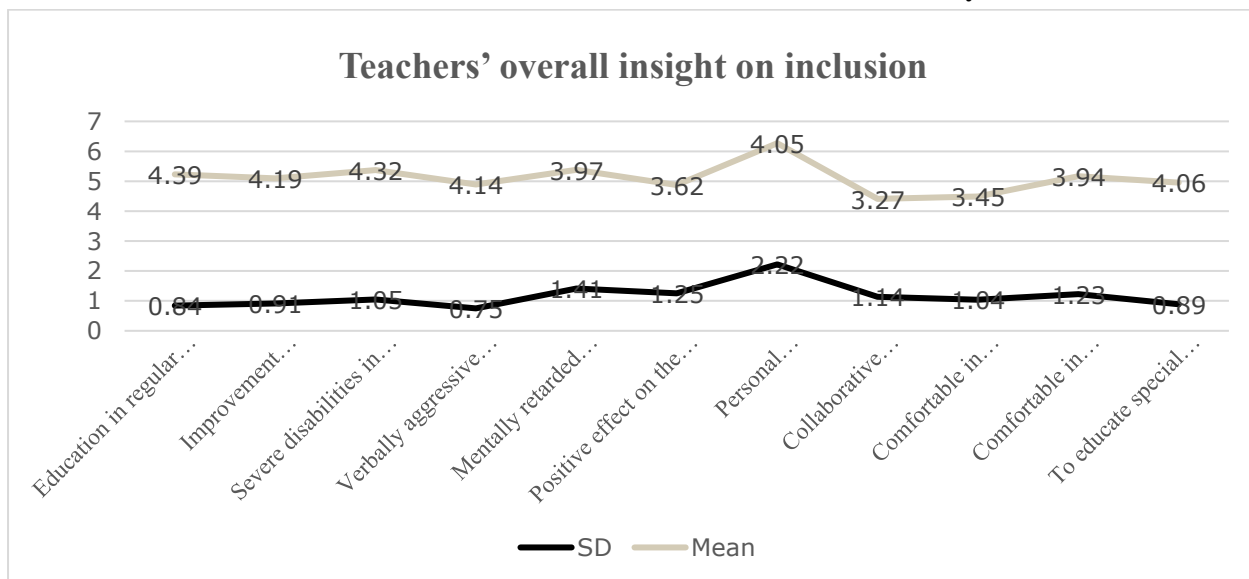
Graph 02 shows district wise population and sample of study. There were 114 teachers from Muzaffargarh district and 123 teachers from Bahawalpur district included in sample of study.

A self-designed, theme based Likert type scale comprising 40 items and five levels of response extent was designed for this study. Various themes reflected teachers’ insight on usefulness of inclusion, readiness of teachers to teach, cooperation by the school authorities and provision of resources. Validity of the scale was ensured by the opinions of experts of the field of scale development. Reliability of the tool was also calculated through Cronbach’s Alpha that is 0.72 which is quite reasonable for any scale. Study participants were ensured regarding confidentiality of their response. For the analysis of data, both descriptive (Percentage, Mean Score) and inferential statistics (t-test) were employed.

**Results**

**Graph 03**

*Teachers’ overall insight on inclusion*

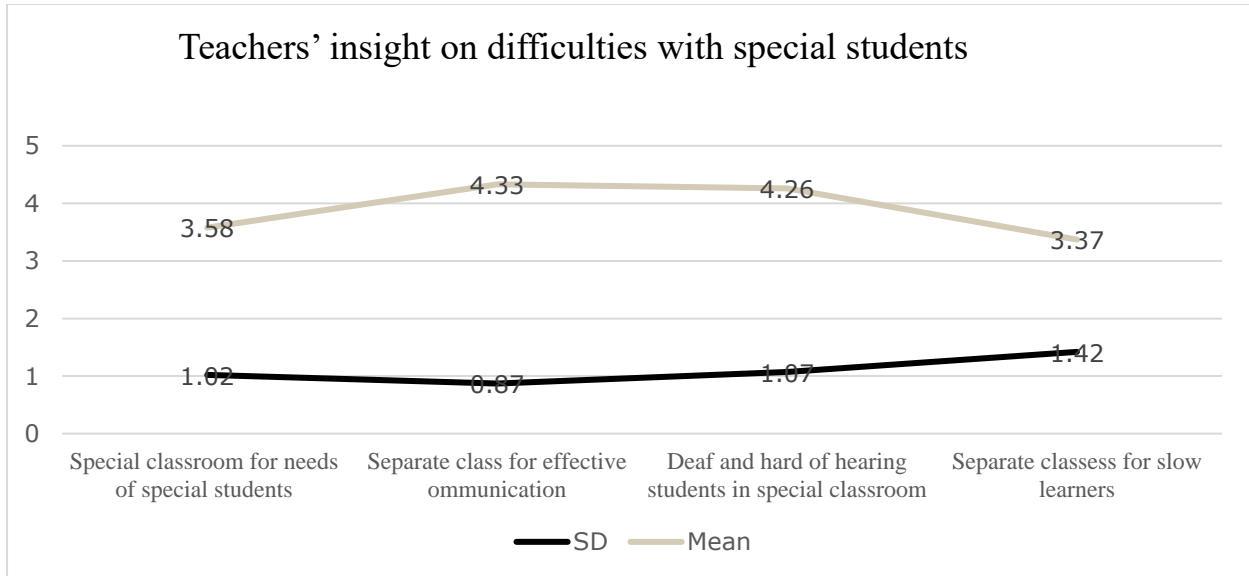


(Overall mean = 3.94)

Graph 03 explains teachers' overall insight for inclusion. Minimum value of mean is 3.27 and maximum value for mean is 4.39. Similarly minimum value for standard deviation is 0.75 and maximum value for standard deviation is 2.22. Overall, mean for teachers' insight for inclusion is 3.94. Most of the teachers agreed that special students can be improved academically in inclusive classrooms and hostile students can also be placed in regular classrooms. But mentally retarded students should be taught in special settings. Inclusion is helpful in social and emotional development of special students. Teachers' personal experiences and their consensus towards regarding collaboration helped them in teaching special students.

**Graph 04**

*Teachers' insight on difficulties with special students*

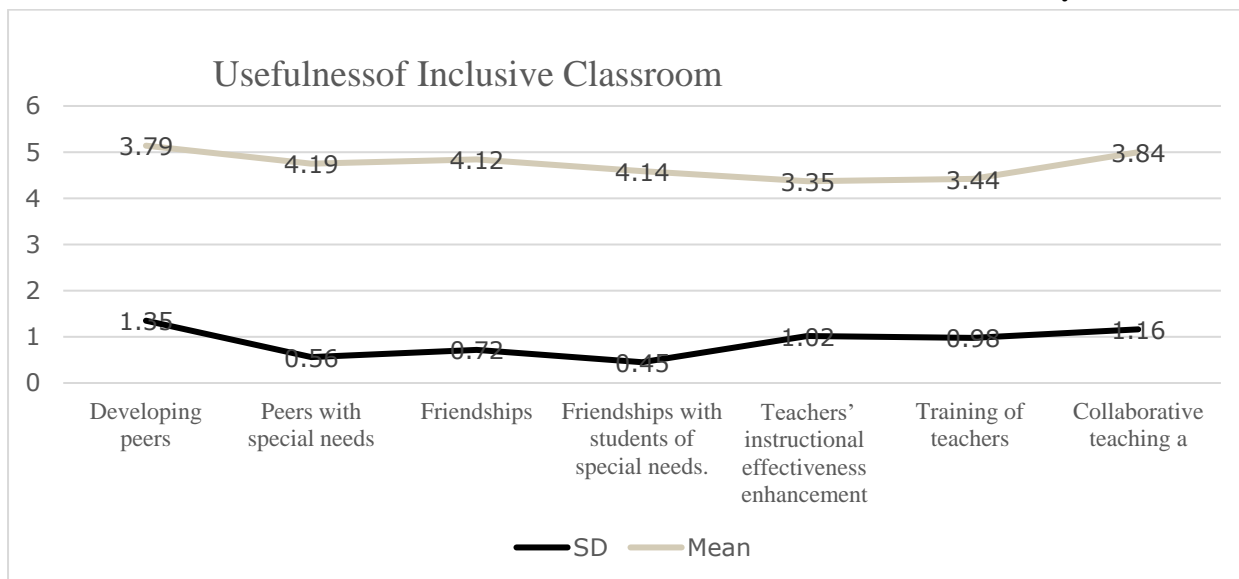


(Overall mean = 3.87)

Graph 04 portrays insight of educators about challenges and difficulties faced when teaching special students in regular classroom. Minimum value of mean is 3.37 and maximum value for mean is 4.33. Similarly, minimum value for standard deviation is 0.87 and maximum value for standard deviation is 1.42. Overall, mean for teachers' insight on difficulties is 3.87. Most of teachers want that special students problems and disabilities can be addressed in special and separate classroom to deal with deaf and dumb students' communication problems and issues of slow learners.

**Graph 05**

*Teachers' insight on usefulness of inclusive classrooms*

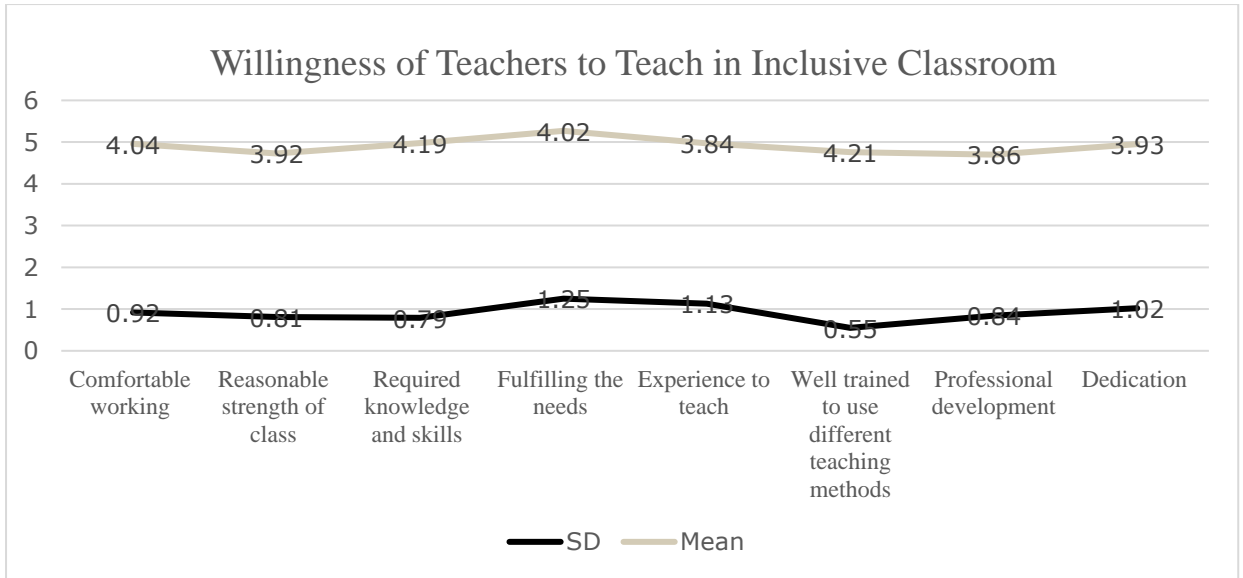


(Overall mean = 3.84)

Graph 05 clarifies teachers' insight usefulness of inclusive education. Minimum value of mean is 3.44 and maximum value for mean is 4.19. Similarly minimum value for standard deviation is 0.45 and maximum value for standard deviation is 1.35. On the whole, mean for teachers' insight on benefits and need of inclusive education is 3.84. Most of teachers were agreed that inclusive education is beneficial for developing interpersonal relation of normal and special peers. Teachers' instruction is more effective and there is collaborative teaching in class but there is need to train teachers to be more effective and proactive in inclusive classroom.

**Graph 06**

*Teachers' Insight on their willingness to teach in inclusive classrooms*

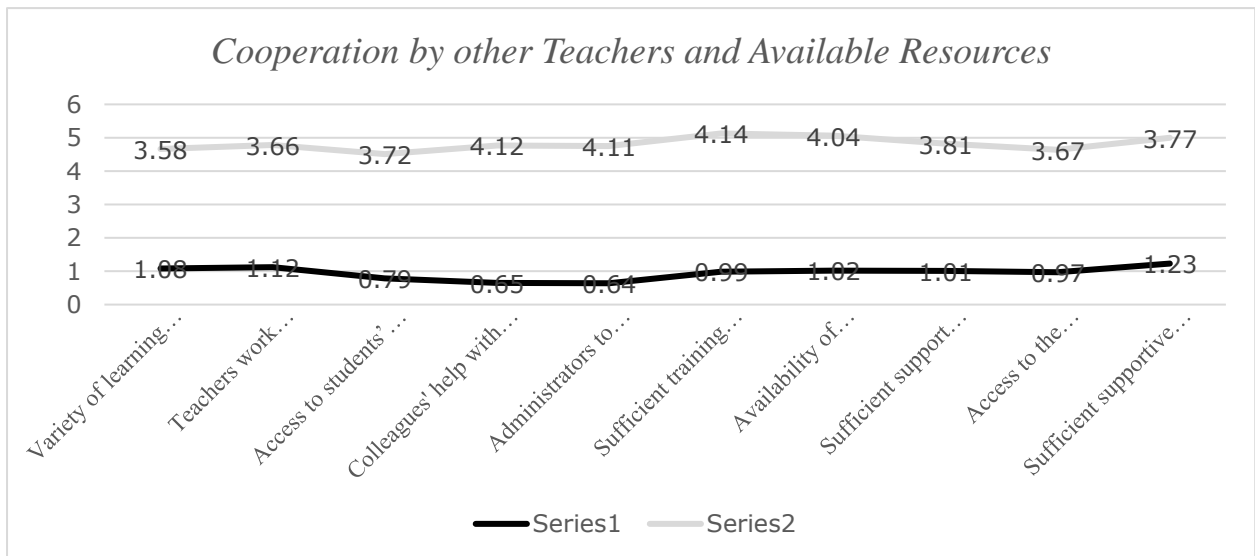


(Overall mean = 4.01)

Graph 06 explains the phenomenon about preparedness of teachers for inclusive classroom for effective teaching. Minimum value of mean is 3.84 and maximum value for mean is 4.19. Similarly, minimum value for standard deviation is 0.55 and maximum value for standard deviation is 1.25. Overall, mean for teachers' preparedness for effective teaching in inclusive education is 4.01. Most of teachers were agreed that they are relaxed with class size

**Graph 07**

*Teachers' insight on cooperation and provision of resources to teach in inclusive classrooms*



Graph 06 clarifies about teachers’ insight on cooperation and available resources. Minimum value of mean is 3.58 and maximum value for mean is 4.14. Similarly minimum value for standard deviation is 0.64 and maximum value for standard deviation is 1.23. Overall mean for teachers’ preparedness for effective teaching in inclusive education is 4.01. Most of teachers were agreed that a diversity of activities are being offered in inclusive classroom and satisfied resource teachers are cooperating with class teachers, class teachers have access to reworking of documents and are encouraged by the school authorities to participate in symposiums regarding inclusion. They are offered to attend training programs. They have access to the teaching resources and professional pedagogies in regular school to opt inclusion in a more effective manner.

**Table 01**

*Gender based Comparison of Opinions of Teachers*

Category	N	Mean	SD	T	sig
Male	133	3.86	0.19	-	0.006
Female	104	3.93	0.23	2.703	

p=0.05

The above table explains that t-test was applied to analyze gender wise attitude. At 0.05 level of significance, the calculated value is less than table value showing insignificant difference between male and female teachers of inclusive school. But slightly greater mean score (3.93) of female teachers than mean score (3.86) of male teachers proves more positive attitudes of female teachers towards teaching in inclusive classroom.

**Table 02**

*District Wise Comparison of Opinions of Teachers*

Districts	N	Mea	SD	t	Sig
	n			value	

	Muzaffargarh	11		0.1			
h	4		3.88	9	-	0.00	
	Bahawalpur	12		0.2	3.003	4	
	3		3.96	2			

p=0.05

The above table explains that t-test was applied to analyze district wise. At 0.05 level of significance the calculated value is less than table value showing insignificant difference between teachers of both districts. But slightly greater mean score (3.96) teachers of Bahawalpur district than mean score of (3.88) teachers of Muzaffargarh district proves more positive attitudes of teachers of Bahawalpur district towards teaching in inclusive classroom.

### **Discussion**

The current endeavor was conducted to highlight teachers’ attitude in form of their insight on inclusion in classroom. The study results revealed positive attitude of teachers as overall, majority of the respondents were found to be favorable in terms of incorporating inclusive practices with minor alterations and improvements in mechanism of inclusive classroom practices. Results of present work were found to be aligned with other studies conducted on similar pattern as to present teachers’ views and beliefs regarding inclusive education like AlMahdi and Bukamal’s (2019) work also exposed teachers’ positive attitude as the study participants were teachers like present study who had promising beliefs regarding opting inclusive practices. Study participants of Mouchritsa et al. (2022) also found to be positive in their belief as of teachers of present study. They showed their willingness to teach challenging students in normal schools. Study respondents of Singh, Kumar, & Singh (2020) also showed a moderate to high level agreement towards inclusion. The results of the study are in line with study result carried out by Chen et al. (2023) as teachers who also happened to be of secondary schools like present study were found positive towards inclusive education.

Asare (2019) conducted a qualitative study to explore teachers’ attitude. A least majority of his study participants were found to be reluctant for the complete inclusion especially to teach students with impairments as they were found to be indecisive. However, overall, they were supportive for various aspects of inclusion. The present study surveyed a gender based comparison also in which female teachers were more positive in their attitude as compared to male teachers. The results are in line with study results by Mouchritsa et al. (2022) and Boyle,

Topping, & Jindal-Snape, (2013). In both studies, female teachers showed their more approval for inclusive education as compared to male teachers. They were supportive of incorporating inclusive practices for students with impairment and gifted in general schools.

### **Conclusion**

In a nutshell, it can be concluded that teachers of this study were supportive of inclusion in classroom, however, their sole preparedness and susceptibility to approve inclusion is not adequate for the success of this system of education. The key to open doors of inclusion for special children is to invest in robust training of teachers, for generating resources by initiating a mindful, solid and firm public policy (Mngo & Mngo, 2018). Generally, teachers feel them unable to teach special children as they lack proper training to teach in inclusive classroom (Asare, 2019). In this regard, teacher training institutes can play their role who can train teachers. Training of teachers is crucial to shape up teachers' attitude to teach both normal and special students under the same roof. The teachers' most significant approach is to identify the most suitable technique to deal and teach each child. Furthermore, teacher is expected to adjust his pedagogical steps according to that child's level of understanding, developmental needs, and interests.

### **Recommendations**

Following recommendations were devised on the basis of results of the study.

1. Teachers may enable themselves to detect problems of students with impairment and then a prompt measure be taken by them to address that problem.
2. Teachers be trained in sign language and Brail system to communicate with deaf and dumb and blind students. For this purpose, a teacher assistant can also be appointed to help class teacher.
3. Special education department play its role by conducting training programs on regular basis. Follow up studies be conducted to collect feedback by the teachers and parents.
4. Awareness seminar be arranged to spread awareness among teachers and parents regarding latest syndromes and disorders and the way forward to deal with them.

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