

Unveiling the Hurdles in Promoting Inclusive Culture within the Classroom: Insights from Teachers at Government Primary Schools

Muazmma Batool¹, Syeda Tehmina Naz Bukhari², Samina Akhtar^{*3}, Samra Naseer⁴

¹PhD Scholar, Department of Education, Bahudin Zikaraya University Multan, Punjab, Pakistan.

² Assistant Professor, Department of Education, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan.

^{3*} Assistant professor, Department of Education, The Women University, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan.

⁴ PhD Scholar, Department of Education, The Women University, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan.

Corresponding author: samabdullah33@hotmail.com

Keywords: Hurdles, Promoting, Inclusive Culture, Insights, Teachers, Primary Schools

Article History

Date of Submission:
25-08-2023

Date of Acceptance:
29-09-2023

Date of Publication:
30-09-2023

DOI No:

<https://doi.org/10.56976/rjsi.v5i3.134>

4

Inclusive education strives to provide all students with equal opportunities irrespective of their capacities or learning requirements. However, the success of inclusive education relies on understanding teacher perspectives, as they play a central role in this new approach. The objective of the current quantitative research study was to assess the hurdles that primary teachers encounter when trying to foster an inclusive culture in mainstream government primary schools in the district of Multan. To ensure a representative sample, a multistage sampling technique was employed to select participants for the study. The findings of the study revealed a range of hurdles and issues faced by teachers in promoting inclusive practices within the classroom, including insufficient training, limited availability of resources, and a lack of support services. This research might contribute valuable insights to policymakers, administrators, and educational stakeholders, enabling them to design targeted interventions and support mechanisms that effectively address these challenges.

1. Introduction

Inclusive classrooms are becoming more common in today's educational landscape; this is a concept that has gained increasing recognition in recent years. In this context, Sarao (2016) and Musacchio et al. (2023) asserts that nobody can deny the importance of education because it is a fundamental right of every child, irrespective of one's caste, religion, ethnicity, or any other family background. According to Ainscow and Miles (2008) and Eikeland and Ohna (2022) inclusive education is recognized in the twenty-first century as a fundamental right for every child, ensuring their participation within mainstream society. However, Walton (2023) highlighted that "the problem of educational exclusion is not new, nor has it been ignored by academics and policy makers. One of the educational reform movements of the twentieth century, mobilized to address exclusion in and from schools, is inclusive education" (p .2).

Following this, Naz et al. (2022) also emphasized the human rights perspective on inclusive education, positing that peer acceptance should be regarded as a core purpose of schooling. They argue that fostering peer acceptance is crucial for promoting self-esteem and improving the overall quality of life for individuals with diverse abilities. Furthermore, Ehsan (2018) aptly described in this context that "it is generally accepted that "inclusion" means inviting those who have been historically locked out to "come in" (p. 41). In this context , Basit et al. (2022) pointed out that "social fairness is at the heart of inclusion" (p.1426).

Moreover, according to Carrington (1999) and Graham et al. (2023) inclusive education recognizes that every student has unique abilities and needs, and it strives to create an environment where all students can learn and thrive. This approach is about creating a more just and equitable society where everyone has the chance to reach their full potential. This notion supports breaking down barriers and promoting understanding among students of different races, cultures, and abilities. Inclusive education also helps to ensure that all students have access to the same opportunities for learning and growth, regardless of any physical or cognitive challenges they may face. In addition to this, Fisher et al. (2002) and Chernikova et al. (2020) described that the fundamental concept of inclusive education is the belief that every student has an inherent right to an education tailored to their specific requirements. This approach to learning is centered on the fundamental belief that diversity in the classroom is not an issue that needs to be addressed, but rather a virtue to be celebrated. This multi-dimensional approach to inclusion is crucial for creating an environment where all students feel valued and supported. On the other hand, Bailey and du Plessis (1997) believe inclusion means that students with disabilities are not segregated or isolated from their peers, but rather is included in the same classrooms and activities as their non-disabled peers. Additionally, Savolainen et al. (2012) described that in recent years, on an international level, there has been a growing emphasis on the importance of inclusion in mainstream schools. Moreover, this shift in policy and planning is a positive step towards breaking down barriers and promoting greater understanding and acceptance of individual differences (DE Matthews et al., 2021).

In Pakistan, the concept of inclusive education has gained recognition and importance in recent years. However, as highlighted by Srivastava et al. (2013) in their review of the alarming state of inclusive education in developing countries, In these countries, the responsibility for executing inclusive education policies at the grassroots level is often entrusted to local or international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Whereas Western countries have made tremendous strides in resolving several issues related to the implementation of inclusive education, developing countries face an entirely different scenario. In this regard, efforts have been made by the Federal and Provincial government and various organizations to promote inclusive education and ensure that children with disabilities or special needs are not left behind. The Pakistan Disability Act 2018 was a significant step towards promoting inclusive education. It provides legal protection and rights to individuals with disabilities, including the right to inclusive education.

The Government of Pakistan has taken steps to integrate children with disabilities into mainstream schools. The National Education Policy 2017 emphasizes inclusive education and calls for the provision of equal opportunities for all students. Several investigations have delved into the realm of inclusive education within the specific context of Pakistan, shedding light on various aspects and challenges pertaining to inclusive practices in the Pakistani educational landscape. (see Ali 2022., Ghouri et al. 2010., Malik 2011., Shaukat et al., 2013). It is particularly important to highlight that inclusive education endeavors in mainstream schools in Pakistan are currently in the early stages of development, challenges such as limited resources and infrastructure constraints still exist and require continued efforts to overcome. However, despite efforts, there are still many challenges to implementing inclusive education on a large scale. Moreover, creating an inclusive culture within the classroom at the primary level can be a challenging task for teachers. This is because they need to cater to the diverse needs of students with different abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles. However, achieving true inclusion requires ongoing effort and commitment from educators, administrators, policymakers, and communities. It requires a shift in mindset from viewing disability as a deficit to recognizing it as a natural part of human diversity. By embracing inclusion in our schools, we can create a more inclusive and just society for all. The focus of this study was to explore teachers' perspectives regarding the hurdles and challenges of implementing inclusive classroom practices in primary schools in Pakistan.

The objectives of the present study are:

1. To analyze the main hurdles faced by teachers in inclusive classrooms at government primary schools.
2. To examine the gender-related differences in the hurdles faced by teachers in an inclusive classroom setting at government primary.

2. Literature Review

Different researchers have described the significance of inclusive education in different ways. Alquraini and Gut (2012), elaborate that inclusion is a modern and dynamic approach to education that provides an opportunity for all students to learn academically and socially. Moreover, the major goal of inclusion is to provide education to all types of students so that they can adjust to society and achieve education along with their peers, friends, and companions (Peters, 1999). In addition to this, Zabeli and Gjelij's (2020) research study highlighted that no one can deny the importance of inclusion, as it is most effective in the early years of a child's development. It is also used to increase students' engagement in different areas of learning. Similarly, Guralnick and Bruder (2015) also identified in an investigation that inclusion is very important in the early years of a child's development because at that time the child faces different kinds of experiences that determine the shape of his personality. Furthermore, Osero's (2015) research study highlighted some challenges that teachers face in implementing inclusive education in classrooms.

These challenges may include a lack of knowledge about learners, a heavy work load, a lack of teacher training, a lack of cooperation among teachers and parents, a diverse attitude of teachers and parents towards disabled children, etc. In the same manner, Majoko's (2016) study also elaborated on the lack of training facilities as a major challenge in the process of inclusion. Similarly, Thwala's (2015) study also highlighted a broad spectrum of roadblocks faced by teachers in inclusive classrooms, primarily deriving from inadequate training, a lack of self-confidence, and limiting familiarity with inclusive practices. These challenges may include a lack of instructional materials, a large class size, time limitations, and an inappropriate assessment procedure. On the other hand, Hassan et al.'s (2015) study explored that inclusive education has a positive effect on students' outcomes, their social understanding, their behavior modification, and their adjustment in society.

3. Material/Methods

The study was conducted using a descriptive research design. The main focus of this investigation was to explore the hurdles and challenges that teachers face in implementing inclusive classroom practices at primary schools. In the region of Multan, there were a total of 886 government-registered schools for primary education, as confirmed by the official list that had been issued by the Directorate of Elementary Education. The population of the study constituted total of (4,201) primary school teachers, including male and female teachers. By following the multistage sampling technique, a sample of teachers (106) including both male (36) and female (70) teachers was obtained for this investigation from various mainstream government schools in District Multan, located in South Punjab, Pakistan .For this purpose, at the first stage, 11 Government primary schools were selected from a total of 886 schools in Multan district. This selection was done through cluster sampling.

At the second stage, a total of 4 schools for Boys and 7 schools for Girls were selected. These schools were chosen based on convenient sampling, considering the ease of accessibility in

the city of Multan. Finally, at the last stage, a random selection was made from each girl's primary school, where 10 female teachers were chosen. Similarly, from each boy's primary school, 9 male teachers were randomly selected. Furthermore, the research instrument used for the data collection was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was carefully crafted and reviewed by experts to ensure its validity before it was administered. This ensured that the questions were relevant and accurately measured the intended constructs. The experts' opinions were invaluable in refining the questionnaire and ensuring that it was free from bias or ambiguity. Furthermore, the reliability of the questionnaire was also ensured. The reliability coefficient of the research instrument was also calculated (0.87) as an essential step for developing a reliable and valid questionnaire to gather accurate data for research purposes. In addition to this, in order to accomplish success in achieving the objectives of this investigation, the survey questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first part comprised demographic information regarding teachers, while the second part consisted of 12 items related to problems and hurdles that teachers face in an inclusive classroom. The tool for the survey was designed on a five-point Likert scale, i.e., from "Strongly Disagree" (SD), "Disagree" (D), "Neutral" (N), "Agree" (A), to "Strongly Agree" (SA) and the points were assigned to each response, respectively, from "1, 2, 3, 4, 5". The questions were designed to be clear and concise, avoiding any ambiguity or confusion. Moreover, ethical guidelines in research were strictly adhered to conduct this investigation in a respectful and responsible manner to maintain the integrity of the research process.

4. Data Analysis and Results

In the data analysis process, the collected data was first cleaned and organized before being imported into the software SPSS, which proved to be a valuable tool for statistical analyses in this study and helped to uncover important insights that would have been difficult to identify otherwise. The data was analyzed through descriptive statistics, such as mean, to provide an overview of the data. Furthermore, an inferential statistics t-test was applied to compare the significant differences between male and female teachers' responses regarding challenges in inclusive classroom practices. The results of the analyses were then interpreted and presented in tables to make them easier to understand.

The table 1 presents insights into teachers' perceptions regarding the different hurdles and challenges in an inclusive classroom. The highest mean value ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.37$) on Statement 7 highlights a prevalent sentiment among teachers that they do not have sufficient access to the necessary professional resources. Likewise, the highest mean score ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 3.88$) on Statement 12 also shows a significant consensus among the teachers that the school building does not adequately support an inclusive environment. Similarly, ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.52$) on item 2 highlights that a significant portion of teachers perceive managing a large number of children within an inclusive classroom as challenging. Furthermore, ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.61$) on item 3 suggests that a significant portion of teachers perceive a lack of adequate guidance from the administration on effectively addressing the needs of inclusive children within the classroom.

Further, (M = 3.62, SD = 1.05) on item 4 implies that a significant majority of teachers feel that they do not receive adequate support and guidance from the local community in this regard. Whereas, (M = 3.18, SD = 2.77) on item 8 also suggests a higher level of agreement among the respondents regarding the lack of cooperation between parents and institutions.

Table No 1: Descriptive Statistics of Insights into Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Hurdles in an Inclusive Classroom

Item No.	Statements	Mean	SD
1	Creating an inclusive culture within the classroom is a difficult task for me.	3.18	1.48
2	Managing a large inclusive classroom poses significant challenges for me	3.45	1.522
3	Insufficient guidance hampers effective addressing of inclusive children's needs.	3.61	1.614
4	Lack of support from the local community is a hurdle in an inclusive learning environment.	3.62	1.052
5	Lack of sufficient parental support in effectively managing inclusive children poses issues for me	3.57	1.372
6	Inadequate in-service training hinders effective teaching of inclusive children.	3.88	1.217
7	There is a lack of access to appropriate professional resources for inclusive classrooms	4.15	1.376
8	Lack of a harmonious relationship between parents and institutions	3.18	2.77
9	Salary package does not match the level of services teachers provide in an inclusive classroom	3.35	1.477
10	Creating Individualized Lesson Plans is a difficult time-consuming process for me	3.53	1.344
11	Managing a whole class with special needs is an extremely challenging work for me	3.64	1.078
12	Inadequate school building design hampers inclusivity and student diversity.	4.01	3.88

Furthermore, (M = 3.35, SD = 1.47) on item 9, the highest level of agreement among the respondents regarding the inadequate salary packages. In the same manner, (M = 3.88, SD = 1.21) on item 6 indicates a very high level of agreement among the respondents regarding the lack of appropriate in-service training. However, (M = 3.18, SD = 1.48) on Statement 1 indicates a moderate level of agreement among the respondents regarding the challenges of creating an inclusive culture. Similarly, (M = 3.57, SD = 1.37) related to statement 5 also indicates a moderate level of agreement among the respondents regarding the lack of support from parents. Similarly, (M = 3.53, SD = 1.34) on item 10 highlights a moderate level of agreement among the respondents regarding the time-consuming nature of creating individualized lesson plans. Furthermore, statement 11 (M = 3.64, SD = 1.07) demonstrates a moderate level of agreement among the

respondents regarding the challenging nature of managing the whole class during therapy sessions for students with special needs.

4.1 Independent Samples t-Test for Gender-Based Teachers' Insights Regarding Hurdles in an Inclusive Classroom (N=106).

Table No 2: Gender-Wise t-test

	Gende		Std.		t	df	P-value
	r	N	Mean	Deviation			
Problems	Male	36			-2.589	104	.011
	Female	70	48.5143 44.1667	8.2666 8.49706			

The above-given table 2 presents the results of a gender-wise t-test conducted to measure the problems faced in an inclusive classroom. The P-value obtained from the t-test is 0.011, and the significance level (α -value) is 0.05. Since the P-value is less than the α -value, which indicates that the observed difference is statistically significant. Based on the results, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the problems faced by male and female teachers in the inclusive classroom. However, male teachers, on average, reported facing more problems than female teachers in an inclusive classroom. There appears to be a significant difference between males and females in terms of the problems experienced in the inclusive classroom, as indicated by the t-test results.

4.2 Discussion

The study focused on understanding the perspectives of teachers to identify the various challenges that teachers face in an inclusive classroom. The findings revealed that teachers faced a range of hurdles and challenges in inclusive classrooms, including managing diverse learning needs, a lack of support services, and a lack of resources. Overall, the survey provided valuable insights into the perceptions of participants regarding the challenges of implementing inclusive classroom practices. Additionally, another issue, according to the findings of this investigation, was a lack of cooperation between parents and institutions. According to the findings of this investigation, one of the biggest issues reported was the lack of support for teachers, who are often left to navigate this complex environment without adequate training. The findings resonate with the study conducted by Lopez-Gavira et al. (2019), who also identified in their study that teachers

lacked sufficient training in the use of technological tools, limiting their ability to provide an inclusive learning environment for students with diverse needs. In addition to this, another major hurdle observed in this study was associated with handling a large class size while maintaining an inclusive environment. The study findings correspond with those presented by Mpu and Adu (2021) who also shed light on the impact of overcrowding on teachers' sense of inadequacy in teaching in an inclusive classroom. This comparison strengthens the evidence on the multifaceted nature of hurdles and challenges in inclusive education.

Furthermore, another issue raised by the teachers, according to the findings of the present investigation, was the lack of sufficient resources required in an inclusive setting. The findings of this study align with the study conducted by Jury et al. (2023) which highlighted resource limitations as a barrier to implementing inclusive education. In addition, the findings of the research implied that male teachers reported experiencing a broader range of difficulties in inclusive classrooms as compared to female teachers. This highlights the need to provide gender-specific training and professional development opportunities for male teachers to address the specific challenges they face in inclusive classrooms

5. Conclusions

The study results highlight a potential need for better support and provision of resources to assist teachers in their professional development, addressing infrastructure-related challenges to create an inclusive learning environment, addressing salary disparities and ensuring that teachers' compensation reflects the value of their contributions in the education field, to create inclusive and supportive learning environments, and providing teachers with the necessary support, resources, and guidance to ensure the successful inclusion of all students in the classroom. Overall, inclusive education is an essential first step towards establishing an equitable culture in which all individuals have equal opportunities to be successful. However, it is important to always keep in mind that inclusion is an ongoing endeavor that requires ongoing evaluation and development.

5.1 Recommendations

The study has some recommendations:

1. Ensure that the school building is designed to accommodate the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Make necessary modifications such as ramps, accessible washrooms, and sensory-friendly spaces to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.
2. Foster partnerships and collaboration with community organizations, parents, and volunteers to provide additional support and resources for inclusive education initiatives.
3. Providing competitive salary packages can help attract and retain qualified and motivated teachers in inclusive education settings.
4. Develop and implement comprehensive in-service training conferences, seminars and

workshops should be conducted for teachers programs that specifically focus on inclusive education practices.

5. Encourage and facilitate parent involvement in the education of their children, providing opportunities for parents to collaborate with teachers and actively participate in their child's learning journey.

6. References

- Ainscow, M., and S. Miles. 2008. Making Education for All Inclusive: Where Next? *Administration Quarterly*, 57(1), 3-48.
- Ali, N. H. (2022). Perceived Challenges in Inclusive Education: An Exploratory Study of Primary Schools in Pakistan. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 9(2), 302-321.
- Alquraini, T., & Gut, D. (2012). Critical components of successful inclusion of students with severe disabilities: Literature review. *International journal of special education*, 27(1), 42-59.
- Bailey, J., & du Plessis, D. (1997). Understanding principals' attitudes towards inclusive schooling. *Journal of educational administration*, 35(5), 428-438.
- Basit, A., Ashfaq, M., Arif, M. I., & Gulshan, M. A. (2022). Inclusive Education in Pakistan: Perspectives of Stakeholders. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 19(1), 1426-1435.
- Carrington, 1999). Inclusion needs a different school culture. *International journal of inclusive education*, 3(3), 257-268.
- Chernikova, O., Heitzmann, N., Fink, M. C., Timothy, V., Seidel, T., Fischer, F., & DFG Research group COSIMA. (2020). Facilitating diagnostic competences in higher education—a meta-analysis in medical and teacher education. *Educational Psychology Review*, 32, 157-196.
- DeMatthews, D. E., Serafini, A., & Watson, T. N. (2021). Leading inclusive schools:
- Ehsan, M. (2018). Inclusive education in primary and secondary schools of Pakistan: Role of teachers. *American Scientific Research Journal for Engineering, Technology, and Sciences (ASRJETS)*, 40(1), 40-61.
- Eikeland, I., & Ohna, S. E. (2022). Differentiation in education: a configurative review. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 8(3), 157-170.
- Fisher, D., Roach, V., & Frey, N. (2002). Examining the general programmatic benefits of inclusive schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 6(1), 63-78.
- Ghouri, A. M., Abrar, N., & Baloch, A. (2010). Attitude of secondary schools' principles & teachers toward inclusive education: Evidence from Karachi, Pakistan. *European Journal of social sciences*, 15(4), 573-582.
- Graham, L. J., Medhurst, M., Malaquias, C., Tancredi, H., De Bruin, C., Gillett-Swan, J., ... & Cologon, K. (2023). Beyond Salamanca: A citation analysis of the CRPD/GC4 relative to the Salamanca Statement in inclusive and special education research. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 27(2), 123-145.



- Guralnick, M. J., & Bruder, M. B. (2016). Early childhood inclusion in the United States. *Infants & Young Children*, 29(3), 166-177
- Hashmi, S., Khan, I. K., & Khanum, N. (2017). Inclusive education in government primary schools: Teacher perceptions. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 4(1), 32-47.
- HASSAN, U., Hussain, M., Parveen, I., & De Souza, J. (2015). Exploring teachers' experiences and practices in inclusive classrooms of model schools. *Theory and Practice in Education*, 11(3), 894-915.
- Jury, M., Laurence, A., Cèbe, S., & Desombre, C. (2023). Teachers' concerns about inclusive education and the links with teachers' attitudes. *In Frontiers in Education*. 7(1), 1-8.
- Lopez-Gavira, R., Moriña, A., & Morgado, B. (2021). Challenges to inclusive education at the university: the perspective of students and disability support service staff. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 34(3), 292-304.
- Majoko, T. (2016). Inclusion in early childhood education: pre-service teachers' voices. *Early Child development and care*, 186(11), 1859-1872.
- Malik, G. B. (2011). Inclusive education: Preparation of teachers, challenges in classroom and future prospects. *Pakistan Journal of Education*, 28(2), 11-32..
- Mpu, Y., & Adu, E. O. (2021). The challenges of inclusive education and its implementation in schools: The South African perspective. *Perspectives in Education*, 39(2), 225-238.
- Musacchio, G., Saradò, A., Falsaperla, S., & Scolobig, A. (2023). A scoping review of seismic risk communication in Europe. *Frontiers in Earth Science*, 11, 1155576.
- Naz, S. H., Fazil, H., Basri, R., Hussain, G., & Saira Hanif, T. (2022). Perspectives Of Inclusive Education In Pakistan: Content Analysis. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government*, 28(3), 502-523.
- Osero, P. O. (2015). Challenges Teachers Encounter in implementing Inclusive Education in Public Primary Schools in Nyamira County, Kenya. 3(3), 217-230.
- Peters, J. (1999). What is Inclusion?. *The Review: A Journal of Undergraduate Student Research*, 2(1), 15-21.
- Sarao, T. (2016). Obstacles and Challenges in Inclusive Education in India with Special Reference to Teacher Preparation. *Int. J. Educ. Appl. Res*, 6 (1) ,6-35.
- Savolainen, H., Engelbrecht, P., Nel, M., & Malinen, O. P. (2012). Understanding teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy in inclusive education: Implications for pre-service and in-service teacher education. *European journal of special needs education*, 27(1), 51-68.
- Shaukat, S., Sharma, U., & Furlonger, B. (2013). Pakistani and Australian Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes and Self-Efficacy Towards Inclusive Education. *Journal of Behavioural Sciences*, 23(2), 1-16.
- Srivastava, M., & Boer, A. A. de, & Pijl, SJ (2013). Inclusive education in developing countries: a closer look at its implementation in the last ten years. *Educational Review*, 67(2), 179–195.
- Thwala, S. (2015). Challenges encountered by teachers in managing inclusive classrooms in Swaziland. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(1), 495-500.



Walton, E. (2023). Why inclusive education falters: A Bernsteinian analysis. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 10 (2), 1-15.

Zabeli, N., & Gjelaj, M. (2020). Preschool teacher's awareness, attitudes and challenges towards inclusive early childhood education: A qualitative study. *Cogent Education*, 7(1), 1-17.