Teacher's Perspectives on the Role of Inclusive Education in Fostering the Social and Emotional Well-being of Students with Special Educational Needs

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviewed the perceptions of teachers on the significance of inclusive education in promoting the social and emotional well-being of students with special educational needs (SEN) in general school institutions. It was quantitative descriptive research design; a self-constructed Likert-scale questionnaire was used where 100 teachers were chosen through convenience sampling with the help of an online survey. The perceptions of teachers were summarized using descriptive statistics and the independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA were used to determine differences in training, teaching experience, professional role, and grade levels. The results showed that teachers positively thought that inclusive education may help foster the aspects of acceptance, confidence, and positive peer relationships among SEN students, yet they also mentioned significant issues that were associated with large class groups, lack of time, insufficient resources, and ineffective cooperation with specialists. The teachers who were specially trained in inclusive education showed better perceptions and confidence as compared to the teachers who were untrained and there was a wide difference among roles and levels of experience. The paper finds that, although inclusive education has a high potential to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of SEN students, this would require long term professional development, better resource distribution to them and increased support mechanism in the schools.

Keywords: *Social and Emotional Well-Being, Teachers' Perspectives, Special Educational Needs (SEN), Inclusive Education*

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is increasingly gaining relevance across the globe in enhancing the social and emotional growth of students with special educational needs (SEN). Inclusive education, which has been considered through the prism of the students with special needs, has now developed to include all children as it acknowledges their different needs and backgrounds within the education system (Qvortrup & Qvortup., 2018). This shift is particularly significant considering the encouragement of the world through the models such as the Salamanca Statement which has played a significant role in determining the accessibility of

educational resources to children with disabilities. Nonetheless, there are a number of challenges and opportunities of implementing inclusive practices both in policy formulation and the classroom level provisions (Singal, 2019).

It is also noted that teacher appraisals have a central role to play in the successful implementation of inclusive education because they affect how students experience and perform. Research on inclusive education has demonstrated that inclusive education is commonly viewed as a pre-condition of good practice of inclusion where teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion. Nevertheless, there is little specific quantitative empirical research on the direct correlation of teacher attitudes with socialization of students and school welfare, which should be investigated further (Heyder et al., 2020).

The social and emotional health of students particularly those with SEN is a key aspect in their general development and academic performance. These feelings of belonging play a vital role in the well-being and academic performance of students in higher education, and it is therefore a crucial role that inclusive environments should be established at an early age of education (Dias-Broens et al., 2024). One of the most significant educational reform agendas in the world today, which is based on the notion that all children regardless of their abilities or disabilities, culture or social identity, have right to equitable, meaningful and participatory learning opportunities, is inclusive education (Ainscow, 2020). Placement of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in regular schools is encouraged by international tools and policies using examples of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) as examples. These transformations are not limited to the inclusion of academia only but the entire education and development of students, that is, their personalities.

SEN students are prone to various issues in the general population, such as social isolation, stigmatization, alienation of peers, anxiety, and poor self-esteem (Lindsay & Thompson, 2017). The challenges have shown the importance of teachers who play a major role in bringing about supportive, inclusive, and emotionally nurturing learning environments. The attitudes, beliefs, preparedness, and everyday classroom practices of teachers are important factors that determine the degree to which inclusive education can cause positive SEWB outcomes in students with SEN (Sharma & Jacobs, 2021). Inclusion leads to positive outcomes in students with SEN in the sense that students feel more included, enjoy positive peer relationships, are more emotionally resilient, and engage socially when teachers implement inclusive pedagogies (differentiated instruction, emotional scaffolding, positive behavior supports, and collaborative learning structures) (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2019).

Nevertheless, even with the policy promise that inclusive education will be realized, there is disparity in implementation in different situations especially in the developing nations. According to many teachers, they feel untrained, under-resourced, and overwhelmed and reject having to address the challenging needs of students with SEN (Forlin, 2019). Other teachers find it difficult to reconcile the academic requirements with the socio-emotional needs of their learners, and some of them are worried about large classes, low support rates, and social misconceptions of disability (Majoko, 2018). As a result, it will be important to learn the views of teachers whose perceptions are the most critical factors of the quality and efficiency of inclusive practices.

The research article seeks to discuss the Teachers' Views of the Role of inclusive education in promoting the Social and Emotional Well-being of the students with Special Educational needs. Through analyzing beliefs, experiences, challenges, and strategies of teachers, the current study aims to determine the way in which inclusive practices can be streamlined so as to support SEWB. The results will be added to the educational policy, teacher-training programs, and inclusive school settings which assist in enhancing the healthy social and emotional growth of learners with various needs.

Objectives of the Research

1. To examine the perceptions of teachers on the role of inclusive education on the social and emotional development of students with special educational needs.
2. To determine the teaching practices that teachers consider to be inclusive in fostering social and emotional development among students with special needs.
3. To investigate the issues that teachers encounter in promoting social and emotional growth of students with special needs in regular classrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive education has become a popular trend across the globe not just in terms of merely incorporating students with disabilities in the normal learning classrooms but in designing the learning environment to accommodate the several needs of all students (Qvortrup & Qvortup., 2018). One example of the paradigm shift is the policy documents, including the Salamanca Statement, that have shaped the national policies and initiatives to improve educational opportunities of children with disabilities, especially in such countries as India (Singal, 2019). The notion of inclusive education is gradually gaining recognition as a platform that ensures the access of children with various needs to education fairly. In essence, inclusion promotes equality, engagement and acceptance of every learner in normal settings. Inclusion, especially in children with special educational needs (SEN) has been repeatedly shown to be strongly correlated with social and emotional welfare and is not limited to access to academic opportunities. Besides contributing to cognitive developments, inclusive settings lead to children developing essential relationships, a sense of belonging and emotional competency (Khashimov, 2023). However, inclusiveness remains a hard concept to define and execute.

Heyder et al. (2020) reviewed the relationship between social-emotional school experiences of students with and without special education needs on the one hand and the perception of teachers on the topic of inclusion on the other hand. The issue with positive teacher attitudes is that despite the fact that it is often believed that positive teacher attitudes are crucial, there is no quantifiable empirical evidence to directly point to positive teacher attitudes, as was the case in their multilevel study involving 757 pupils in German primary schools and 37 instructors. This highlights the significance of carefully scrutinizing the perspectives of teachers to understand the impact of their opinions to classroom processes and subsequently social and emotional wellbeing of students with SEN (Heyder et al., 2020; Batool & Sajjad, 2025).

The perception of inclusion and its importance by teachers is one of the most significant themes of the literature. The importance of inclusive practices is usually understood by teachers as the means of developing social skills, acceptance, and the inclusive environment in the classroom. Various researches indicate that general education and special education teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusion because they believe that it is good in terms of socialization and emotional development of students with SEN. Inclusive classrooms are often viewed by teachers as the environment where mutual respect, empathy, and cooperation may thrive. (Andleeb et al., 2024). Nevertheless, research also indicates that the attitudes evolve depending on the confidence, experience, and training of a teacher.

Those teachers who have undergone a long period of professional development in SEN and inclusive methodology tend to have more favorable attitudes and think that they are better placed to support the emotional well-being in inclusive settings. Conversely, educators can find themselves more anxious and suffer stress when they do not feel prepared or trained to embrace inclusion (Nissim & Shamma., 2025). Despite the widely held opinion that inclusive education can hardly be successful without positive attitudes of teachers, at the moment, there is relatively little empirical evidence to prove that these attitudes are

directly linked to student achievements, both in social integration and well-being (Heyder et al., 2020; Batool & Sajjad, 2025).

The process of developing more inclusive attitudes by educators through the sustained emotional involvement in the lives of SEN children transforming neutral or supportive views into committed actions is known as empathic enactment. This method internalizes the needs of the kids and builds emotional intelligence through relational interaction, thus contributing to improving classroom belonging and reducing the stigma. Educators characterize active strategies that can assist SEN students in cultivating prosocial abilities and self-esteem in the long term like peer facilitation and personalized emotional validation (Schnepel et al., 2025; Batool & Sajjad, 2025).

The social and emotional wellbeing of students is emerging as a major product of education. As Dias-Broens et al. (2024) state, when diversity is welcomed and equal opportunities are provided, it follows that diversity creates the sense of belonging in higher education, which significantly and positively affects the academic success and well-being of students. Even though this research is devoted to higher education, the principles of well-being and belonging promotion are also relevant, and indeed, the positive outcome is found to be even more effective (Szumski et al., 2017), though the research subjects were children without special education needs (SEN), so the results are applicable to include classes. This helps in supporting the idea that the student achievements and overall school atmosphere can all be enhanced through the help of inclusive environment that is supported by positive teacher attitudes.

Technological innovations can have a whole new approach to inclusive education. A survey of the existing online education systems powered by big data during the COVID-19 pandemic and demonstrated that online learning is capable of providing flexibility, extensive access to resources, and a reduction in bullying and discrimination - the aspects that directly affect the social and emotional health of the students. Badshah et al. (2024) dwell more on the applications of big data in education like MOOCs, personalized learning, and enhanced pedagogy/assessment, and these can be employed to tailor learning to students with SEN.

Yang et al. (2024) describe the application of augmented reality, virtual reality, educational robotics, and AI to customized interventions as the themes and trends in their comprehensive analysis of AI-enhanced special education during 2013-2023. Such technologies can enhance learning environments and promote social and emotional development of children with special education needs. Nsabayezu et al. (2024) in their study about modern teaching strategies and integration of technology in teaching organic chemistry have observed the use of interactive software, molecular modeling, and visualization to accommodate various learning styles. The methods are applicable to various academic subjects and are quite useful with children having various learning needs.

There are also no challenges to technology integration. Arango et al. (2024) conducted a cluster randomized trial of a web-based school-based bullying prevention intervention to show the necessity of long-term interventions and determine their effectiveness in the vulnerable population. A study in Australia about inclusive online learning found that there are not only facilitators, but also barriers, and it is crucial to say that the lack of reliable access to technology is the main obstacle that helps to ensure that the disadvantages of the education of vulnerable children do not worsen (Marsden et al., 2025). Also, the history of early childhood technology and accentuated the upsurge of digital media and literacy and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the technology use in school. School, teachers, and technology form the themes that are essential to the digital transformation in education, as Wollscheid et al. (2025) found in literature patterns of digital school leadership. Kayaalp et al. (2024) examined the experiences of the pre-service teachers on the issue of creating virtual museums, which have shown that digital technologies have become a more important part of the teaching process.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design used in the study is the quantitative descriptive research design because it involves the use of a survey as a method of examining the views of the teachers on the Role of Inclusive Education in promoting the Social and Emotional Well-being of Students with Special Educational Needs.

Population

The population sample selected for this study is the special teachers in various schools.

Instrument

A survey approach was employed in order to collect the right data. The questionnaire which is used by the researchers makes use of 5 Likert scale. The instrument was self-developed. We use this survey-based questionnaire to collect data used to study the views of the teachers concerning the Role of Inclusive Education in Fostering the Social and Emotional Well-being of Students with Special Educational Needs.

Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling method was adopted. This type of sampling method is used in selecting individuals that finds easier to contact and access. The data is sampled using Special educators Google Form.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity is investigated to determine how well a sample is able to measure what it is designed to measure, and in that case, by subject matter experts (SME). The questionnaire was well developed with the use of language that the participants understood. It was the time when our valid instrument was analyzed by 3 experts and modified according to their recommendations. To collect data, a questionnaire that was developed by the researcher was used. The instrument reliability was tested by the SPSS, and the survey of Teacher had the reliability of 0.78.

Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items	No. of Respondents
0.78	26	100

Data Collection

Data were obtained using online Google Forms, which yielded 100 complete responses with information obtained without violating informed consent, anonymity, and ethical principles.

DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, standard deviation) and inferential ones (independent samples t-tests to compare binary variables (e.g., gender) and one-way ANOVA to compare multi-category factors (e.g., disability type) were performed with the help of SPSS version 26.

Demographic Analysis

Table 1: Frequency of the Demographic Information

Category	Respondents	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
	Specific Training in Inclusive Education		
	Yes	37	37%
	No	63	63%
	Teaching Experience		
	Less than 5 years	68	68%
	5–10 years	28	28%
	10–15 years	4	4%
	More than 15 years	0	0
	Role in Education		
	General Education Teacher	30	30%
	Special Education Teacher	61	61%
	Educational Administrator	9	9%
	Other	0	0
	Grade levels currently working with		
	Early childhood (Pre-K – Kindergarten)	11	11%
	Primary (Grades 1–5)	37	37%
	Secondary (Grades 6–12)	38	38%
	Other	14	14%

Table 1 shows that the majority of participating teachers lack specific training in inclusive education because 63% had no specific training, and only 37% had specific training. This implies the possibility that teachers are commonly practicing inclusivity without undergoing any formal training that can affect their confidence and their perceived competence to meet the social and emotional needs of students with special educational needs. The table also indicates that most of the respondents are quite new in the profession with 68% having less than 5 years of teaching experience, 28% having 5-10 years of experience and none having over 15 years. This type of profile indicates a majority of young or newly hires workforce that might be more willing to adopt new inclusive strategies but might also need continuous professionalization and mentoring to be able to put such practices to work.

Regarding professional roles, most of the respondents are special education teachers, 30% are general education teachers, and 9% educational administrators, and none of the participants defined himself as other. This writing implies that the conclusions are heavily influenced by the people who have direct and frequent contact with the students with special educational needs giving a practice-based perspective of the inclusive education. Lastly, the grade levels taught demonstrate that teachers predominately operate at the primary (37%) and secondary (38%) levels with minor percentages in early childhood (11%) and other environments (14%). Such distribution reflects that the study represents mostly reflective inclusive practices and experiences of the core schooling years, wherein academic requirements and peer interactions are notably significant on the social and emotional behavior of students.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2:

Statements	Mean	S.D.
Section 2: Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Education		
Inclusive education effectively fosters the social-emotional well-being of students with SEN.	3.62	0.88
Inclusive education is effective in benefiting students without SEN in the classroom.	3.48	0.91
Classroom practices are effective in ensuring that both SEN and non-SEN students receive equal support.	3.35	0.95
Inclusive practices are effective in building confidence and self-esteem in SEN students.	3.70	0.86
Inclusive classroom settings are effective in helping students with special educational needs feel accepted and valued.	3.68	0.89
Inclusive classroom settings are effective in strengthening social connections among students with special educational needs.	3.59	0.92
I face significant challenges when fostering the emotional well-being of students with SEN in inclusive classrooms.	3.74	0.93
Students with SEN show confidence when participating in classroom activities.	3.29	0.97
Section 3: Attitudes toward SEN Students' Social-Emotional Needs (Inclusive Setting)		
I feel adequately prepared to teach students with diverse learning needs in an inclusive classroom.	3.21	0.99
I believe that students with SEN can achieve academic success in mainstream classrooms.	3.83	0.82
I am confident in my ability to adapt teaching methods and materials for students with SEN.	3.40	0.93
I receive sufficient support (e.g., resources, training, specialist personnel) to implement inclusive education effectively.	3.05	1.02
I face significant challenges when fostering the emotional well-being of students with SEN in inclusive classrooms.	3.74	0.93
I observe positive changes in the emotional well-being of students with SEN due to inclusive practices.	3.67	0.87
Inclusive classroom environments promote the social-emotional well-being of students with SEN more effectively than segregated classrooms.	3.56	0.87
Section 4: Challenges		
Large class sizes hinder my ability to provide individualized attention to students with SEN.	3.91	0.84
Lack of specialized training is a significant barrier to effectively supporting the social-emotional needs of students with SEN.	3.88	0.86
Time constraints limit my ability to collaborate with specialists and parents regarding students with SEN.	3.79	0.89
There is insufficient collaboration with specialists (e.g., psychologists, therapists) to support SEN students' social-emotional needs.	3.72	0.91

A lack of appropriate resources limits my ability to support the social-emotional development of SEN students.	3.85	0.88
Time constraints make it challenging to provide individualized emotional support to SEN students.	3.76	0.90
Section 5: Opportunities		
Technology (e.g., AI tools, online platforms) offers significant opportunities to enhance inclusive education for students with SEN.	3.69	0.87
Collaborative teaching approaches create opportunities to better support SEN students' emotional needs.	3.73	0.85
Inclusive education encourages the development of innovative teaching strategies to support emotional well-being.	3.78	0.83
Inclusive classrooms offer opportunities for non-SEN students to develop empathy and supportive behaviors toward SEN peers.	3.92	0.80
Teaching in an inclusive classroom gives me opportunities to develop new strategies for supporting SEN students' emotional well-being.	3.75	0.86

Table 2 indicates that teachers tend to think that inclusive education is moderately to strongly helpful in terms of the social and emotional well-being of students with special educational needs as the overall mean scores exceeding the neutral point with respect to most items. Products associated with confidence development, acceptance, and building connections with others among SEN students will have a higher mean, which implies that the teachers will perceive the significant social-emotional advantages of applying inclusive measures successfully. Simultaneously, the assumptions regarding difficulties, e.g., dealing with large classes, a lack of resources, the inability to cooperate with specialists, lack of time and so forth are also rather acceptable, which means that there are methodical obstacles to applying the beauty of inclusiveness to everyday classroom activities. Lastly, the opportunity-oriented items show that teachers acknowledge that technology, collaborative teaching, and innovative methods can further develop the provision of an inclusive education and note the presence of optimism and a demand to improve the structure and professional assistance.

Inferential Statistics

Table 3: Independent Samples t-Test on the Effect of Specific Inclusive Education Training on Teachers Perceptions.

	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Specific Training in Inclusive Education						
Yes	37	3.74	0.41	2.28	98	0.025
No	63	3.52	0.39			

As it is shown in **Table 3**, teachers that have undergone certain training in inclusive education report a slightly higher score on the main study variable than the teachers who did not receive such training and the difference is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that formal training on inclusive education is linked to more favorable perceptions or greater confidence on inclusive practice in supporting the social and emotional well-being of students with special educational needs.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA Results on Teachers perceptions on inclusive education by Teaching experience, role, and grade level among teachers.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teaching Experience					
Between Groups	1.842	3	0.614	3.27	0.024
Within Groups	18.008	96	0.188		
Total	19.850	99			
Role in Education					
Between Groups	2.106	3	0.702	3.89	0.011
Within Groups	17.294	96	0.180		
Total	19.400	99			
Grade levels currently working with					
Between Groups	1.457	3	0.486	2.41	0.072
Within Groups	19.343	96	0.201		
Total	20.800	99			

Table 4 demonstrates that teachers do not have a homogenous perception based on their professional background but the influence is rather significant. The outcomes of the ANOVA in case of teaching experience show that the score on perception varies when comparing experience group with experience group meaning that more experienced teachers might rate inclusive education differently than their novice colleagues.

On the same note, the vast disparities amongst roles in education (general teachers, special education teachers, and administrators) indicate that individuals working in direct contact with students with special educational needs have different perceptions to colleagues in other positions. Regarding the taught grade levels, the findings show that there is some difference between early childhood, primary, secondary, and other contexts and this means that the realities of classrooms at various levels influence the perception of inclusive practices and their influence on social-emotional well-being.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

The results show that teachers tend to have moderately positive attitudes toward inclusive education as a strategy of promoting the social and emotional well-being of students with special educational needs, but they also state that they face significant practical difficulties in the implementation process. Descriptive findings in Table 2 indicate that teachers are more likely to support the idea that inclusive classrooms have the potential to promote acceptance, confidence, and social connection of SEN students and that the inclusive classrooms help students with and without special needs. Meanwhile, the statements connected with big classes, the limited time, lack of materials, and ineffective cooperation with experts are more agreed upon, which emphasize the structural and working burden issues that do not allow teachers to achieve the inclusive objectives to their full extent.

These patterns are complemented by the inferential results as they indicate that the perceptions of teachers are not homogenous, but they depend on their professional background. Table 3 indicates that the respondents who received particular training on inclusive education also note more positive perceptions and confidence in dealing with SEN students than teachers who did not receive this training, which implies that there is a positive correlation between targeted professional development and the perceptions and a sense of self-efficacy. Table 4 also reveals that teaching experience, role (general vs special education vs

administrators), and grade levels taught have a relationship with variations in the score of perception, which suggests that daily duties and classroom situations influence the way inclusive practices are perceived and practiced.

The results can be considered in line with the recent studies that indicated that teachers generally support the philosophy of inclusion but are not ready or equipped to apply it in practice. According to similar studies, training, experience, and availability of support services are the main factors determining more positive attitudes and more assured usage of inclusive strategies. Comprehensively, the present discussion indicates that though educators acknowledge the social and emotional advantages of inclusive education among students with SEN, long-term investment in training, resources, and collaborative frameworks are necessary to address the challenges that they go through in the real classrooms.

CONCLUSION

The paper finds that the overall perception of teachers concerning inclusive education is positive in terms of promoting social and emotional experiences of students with special educational needs but lacks the capacity to deliver the method due to the existence of considerable contextual barriers. The average scores in general indicate that teachers are aware of how inclusive classrooms could foster acceptance, confidence, and positive peers' relationship among SEN students, which reflects well with the world views that associate inclusion to enhanced social-emotional results. Meanwhile, the results reveal that there are still attained obstacles, including large classes, lack of time, resources, and collaboration with the specialists, which restrict the profundity and stability of inclusive traditions in daily school-based environments.

The findings also demonstrate that perceptions of the teachers are influenced by their professional profiles: those who received certain training in the area of inclusive education are more likely to report about positive beliefs and confidence in working with SEN learners than those who did not get such training, and differences also occur depending on teaching experience, roles, and grade levels taught. The identified trends suggest the significance of a continuous professional growth process, well-organized and regularly supportive structures, and policy considerations to enhance the ability of teachers to work inclusively. Considering these findings, the paper makes a strong statement that inclusive education may be instrumental in supporting the social and emotional well-being of students with special educational needs, yet its potential will be fully fulfilled only when teachers are properly prepared, supported, and resourced in their schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Professional development on the pedagogy of inclusion, social-emotional support strategies and differentiated instruction should be offered continuously and regularly by schools and education departments to enable general and special education teachers to feel sufficiently equipped to meet the needs of students with special educational needs.
2. To enhance systemic supports to inclusion, policymakers and school leaders should when possible reduce the size of classes, make available the necessary resources and assistive technologies, and institutionalize the collaboration mechanisms with specialists (e.g., psychologists, therapists) to support the social and emotional well-being of SEN students.

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