

Attitude of Regular and Itinerant Teachers Towards the Inclusion of Hearing Impairment Children

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Objectives: Inclusive education is a process of enabling all children to learn and participate effectively within mainstream school systems. It does not segregate children who have different abilities or needs. This article explores the attitudes of regular and itinerant teachers about inclusion of hearing impairment children in their schools in general education.

Methods: In a descriptive Survey research design, the sample included 100 teachers (50 regular and 50 itinerant) who were selected randomly, according to a multistage sampling method. Data was collected by using questionnaire with 32 questions regarding their attitudes. One-way Analysis of Variance and t-test were performed to obtain between- group comparisons.

Results: The results indicated that the teacher's positive attitudes towards inclusive educational system of students with hearing impairment. Significant difference in attitudes was observed, based on the teaching experience, gender, level of teaching. The results also indicate that most teachers are agreeable to the inclusion of students with hearing impairment in their classrooms.

Discussion: successful inclusion for hearing impairment children in regular classrooms entails the positive attitudes of Regular and itinerant teachers through a systematic programming within the classroom.

Key words: inclusive education, hearing impairment, teachers' attitudes, general education

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Introduction

Inclusive education is a process of enabling all children to learn and participate effectively within mainstream school systems. It does not segregate children who have different abilities or needs (1,2). In other words, is to indicate the shift of thinking from an unnatural segregated setting toward supporting inclusive schools (3). In Iran, the movement towards inclusive education continues on the assumption that teachers are willing to Admit students within the regular classes and be responsible for meeting their needs. However, Most of the research on attitudes revealed that school teachers can have a variety of attitudes such as

positive, negative or neutral or both. Recent research reported that mainstream school teachers- attitudes towards inclusion are mixed (4,5).

From the range of studies discussed here, most reported that teachers possess positive attitudes or views on inclusive education. Ali, Mustapha and Jelas (6) used a self-rated questionnaire with teachers in Malaysia to measure teacher attitude. Their findings were that overall teachers had positive attitudes towards inclusive education and agreed that inclusive education intensifies social interaction, while it decreases negative stereotypes of special educational needs children. The authors argued for cooperation between mainstream and

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special education teachers in order to implement inclusive education. Similarly, Dulció and Bakota (7) examined teachers' views by survey and found that teachers had supportive views towards the inclusion process. In their study Loreman, Forlin & Sharma (8) compared four countries' teacher attitudes, using a questionnaire and found that teachers are positive towards inclusive education for children with special needs, mainly with social, emotional and behavioral disabilities. Ross-Hill (1) shared the same view after examining the different attitudes of elementary and secondary school teachers towards inclusion, and how best to develop an inclusive environment based on these attitudes. The results indicated that most teachers either supported inclusion practices in regular classrooms or did not have strong views on inclusive education. On the other hand, the results of other studies indicate that teachers have relatively negative attitudes towards inclusive education. Lifshitz, Glaubman and Issawi (9) found that Israeli and Palestinian school teachers' views were not supportive of inclusion in the education system. This finding is similar to another study by Chhabra, Srivastava, Behpajoo et al and Srivastava (10). Their quantitative study in Botswana showed that school teachers held somewhat negative attitudes. They also found that teachers felt unprepared and afraid to work with children who have learning disabilities because they do not have enough knowledge about how to teach in integrated settings. Another investigation in Ghana revealed that existing concerns and attitudes of teachers about inclusive education affected their willingness to welcome and implement it (11). In their literature review Boer, Piji and Minnaert (2) also stated that the majority of teachers were undecided or had negative views about inclusion, and teachers did not feel competent or confident to teach pupils with various disabilities. They argued that the reasons for the varied attitudes of teachers were influenced by the participants' gender, experience, and length of teaching, training and the type of disability in question. Moreover Elliot (12) examined the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of children with mild to moderate mental disabilities in physical education settings and the amount of practice attempts performed and the levels of success attained by these students compared to their peers without disabilities. The findings suggested a relationship between teacher attitude toward inclusion and teacher effectiveness

Teachers with a positive Attitude toward inclusion provided all of their students with significantly more practice attempts, at a higher level of success.

In another research, Alghazo and Gaad (13) used a likert scale and semi-structured interviews to measure teacher attitude and found that teachers held neutral attitudes. There was a third dimension of findings when two attitudes were present. Meng (14) examined the attitudes of 252 school teachers in both rural and urban China towards inclusive education and found that these attitudes were a combination of negative, neutral and positive attitudes. This study revealed that teachers' attitudes could be positive, negative, or indifferent; that is, a proportion of teachers did not express either positive or negative attitudes. Meng thought that these findings were not similar to western findings because of western countries tradition of emphasis on the attitudes of stakeholders. Separate special education was emphasized by those participants who had shown negative attitudes and Meng also found that urban teachers had more negative attitudes towards inclusion than rural teachers, and those teachers attitudes were not influenced by resources, teaching year or relevant special education training.

All the authors, researchers and practitioners believed that teachers' attitudes or views have a huge impact on the progress of inclusive education for children with special needs (10,15,16). These attitudes and views are influenced by experience and knowledge. From previous research it is assumed that teacher attitudes are essential for the success of inclusive education and the success of the integration of children with disabilities including physical, academic, behavioral and social disabilities (15). Teachers were also found to differentiate their attitudes or views according to the type of disability (17). General education teachers and Interpreters have differing views about the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. It is important to identify teachers' attitudes toward inclusion because it can dramatically affect their performance and the success of children with disabilities in the classroom. According to Avramidis et al. (18), "Professionals' attitudes may act to facilitate or constrain the implementation of policies the success of innovative and challenging programs must surely depend upon the cooperation and commitment of those most directly involved". Soodak, Podell, and Lehman supports this finding, reporting, "Teachers who embraced the responsibility to be inclusive have also elevated the quality of instruction, and the

instruction was deemed more effective than that of teachers who had dissimilar beliefs concerning inclusion". Their conclusion indicates that an increased receptivity toward including students with special needs is associated to greater teacher efficacy, higher rates of teacher collaboration, and an increased likelihood to differentiate instruction. Therefore, negative views of inclusion will influence interactions with children who have disabilities(19). Avramidis et al (18) Found that those who do not fully agree with inclusion are less likely to individualize lesson plans according to students' needs and are less confident that they can implement the requirements of individualized education plans. When general education teachers have negative attitudes toward inclusion and are unwilling to have students with disabilities in their classroom, they may not provide the necessary supports that would create a beneficial learning environment for the students. Many factors may affect educational professionals' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities including the level of confidence they have to teach the children, the support they are receiving, and opportunities for collaboration. Avramidis et al (18) report: Regular teachers' attitudes reflected lack of confidence in their own instructional skills and quality of support personnel available to them. They were positive about integrating only those whose disabling characteristics were not likely to require extra instructional or management skills from the teacher (18).

A thorough review of literature revealed that limited studies have directly investigated the teachers' attitude towards inclusion of the Students with hearing impairment in the general education particularly in the IRAN context. This increase has been driven by the belief that the attitude of the Teacher can have a direct influence on the successful inclusion of children with hearing impairment into regular classes. This investigation was a response to the need for empirical evidence regarding the teacher attitudes toward inclusion of hearing impairment children in General education in Iran where there is limited or no data available on the subject matter. Basically therefore, we intend to investigate the attitude of teachers towards the inclusion of hearing impairment students in general education classrooms, and the effects of variables such as gender, professionalism, Levels of teaching,

teaching experience, and Levels of Education on their attitudes.

Methods

The survey for data collection consisted of 32 statements that assessed the participants' opinions about the benefits of including a student with hearing impairment in inclusive educational system, concerns or anxieties when teaching the student with a disability, and beliefs about how their attitudes affect the inclusion process. The reliability coefficient with the Cronbach's alpha method has yielded 92% for this research. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement. Participants were recruited using Cluster sampling and the researcher asked participants to complete the surveys and identify others to become members of the sample. There are no gatekeepers to this population given the method of recruitment. All participants were given informed consent prior to completing the surveys. They understood the purpose and any risks that were associated with the study. They were also advised of the benefits of participating in the study and that the information they provided about the attitudes of including students with hearing impairment will benefit the teaching community. They understood that they were free to withdraw at any time and that refusal to participate would have no effect on future services from the involved university. They were told that their names would not be associated with the research findings in any way, their identity will remain anonymous, and the answers they gave could not be linked to the participant. The consent stated that the data would be stored in a secure location so that only the researcher will have access study. Finally, they were given the contact information of the researcher if they have any questions or concerns. The study adopts a pure descriptive approach. The sample was composed of 100 teachers who worked in general education school (regular schools) in Tehran, Iran. Data on the demographic information of the study sample indicate that 63.8% were married, and 37.2% were single. The data further reveal that 50. % of the participants was Interpreters teachers, while 50 % of them were teachers. Considering teaching experience, participants with 1–10 years and 10 years and above were 50% respectively. The breakdown of the sample can be found in table (1).

Table 1. Demographic Data of Participants (N = 100)

Variable		N	%
Gender	Male	52	52
	Female	48	48
Level of teaching	Primary level	56	56
	Secondary level	44	44
Age	20-30	25	25
	31-41	65	65
	41-51	10	10
Professionalism	Professional Teachers	50	50
	Non-Professional Teachers	50	50
Education	Diploma	22	22
	MS	59	59
	MA	19	19
Teaching Experience	1 – 10 years	35	35
	10 years	59	59
	and above		

Five hypotheses were postulated at the significant level of .05. The hypotheses were; there is no significant difference between male and female teachers in their attitude towards the inclusion of hearing impairment students in general education classrooms; there is no significant difference between itinerant qualified and teachers qualified in their attitude towards the inclusion of hearing impairment children in general education classrooms; there is no significant difference between Levels of teaching teachers in their attitude towards the inclusion of hearing impairment in general education classrooms; there is no significant difference between teacher with less than 10 years of teaching experience and their counterparts with more than 10 years of teaching in their attitude towards the inclusion of hearing impairment students in general education classrooms;

there is no significant difference between Levels of Education teachers in their attitude towards the inclusion of hearing impairment in general education classrooms. The obtained data was analyzed and compared by computing the mean scores and standard deviations for each of the groups. Inter-group comparisons were done with appropriate statistical tools. One-Way Analysis of Variance and t-test were performed to obtain between- group comparisons.

Results

The result in table (2) illustrates that the attitude of male teachers is 103.54, while that of female teachers is 115.44; the t-test analysis shows that the calculated t-test is 7.23; it means that the mean difference between male and female teachers is significant.

Table 2. Comparison of Male and Female, and their Attitude towards the hearing impairment

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t' value	Sig
Male	52	103.54	12.89	98	7.23	.02
Female	48	115.44	14.29			

* Significant at .05 level

And since the mean score of female teachers is higher than that of their male counterparts, it follows that the female teachers have more positive attitude towards the inclusion of special need students than their male counterparts. It also follows that the difference in mean score is not by chance, but statistically significant. Hypothesis one is therefore rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference between male and female teachers in their attitude

towards the inclusion of hearing impairment students in general education.

Hypothesis Two states that, "there is no significant difference between Interpreters qualified and teachers qualified in their attitude towards the inclusion of hearing impairment students in general education classroom. Comparisons of itinerant and teachers in their attitude towards the inclusion of hearing impairment students in general education classroom is presented in table (3).

Table 3. The itinerant and teachers in their attitude towards the inclusion of hearing impairment students

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t' value	Sig
itinerant	50	127.84	13.12	98	.842	.402
teachers	50	130.12	13.93			

* Not significant at .05 level

Table (3) shows that the mean attitude score of itinerant qualified teachers is 127.84, while that of the teachers is 130.12. This means that the teachers qualified tend to have a more favorable attitude towards the inclusion of hearing impairment students than their Interpreters qualified teachers.

The t-test analysis shows that the difference between them is not significant at .05 level, therefore occurred by chance. Based on this, hypothesis three is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference between itinerant trained and teachers trained teachers on their attitude towards the inclusion of hearing impairment students in general education classrooms (table 4).

Table 4. Comparison of Levels of teaching, and their Attitude towards the hearing

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t' value	Sig
Primary	56	123.24	12.23	98	9.86	.04
Secondary	64	98.31	10.85			

* Significant at .05 level

The mean values and standard deviation obtained on inclusive education of children with hearing impairment were 123.24 and 12.23 for teachers at primary level, and 98.31 and 10.85 for teachers at secondary level. "T" test revealed a statistically significant difference at $p=0.04$ with a "t" value of 9.86.

Hypothesis four states that, "there is no significant difference between teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience and their counterparts with more than 10 years of teaching experience in their attitudes towards the inclusion of hearing impairment students in general education classrooms. The result of hypothesis four is presented on table (5).

Table 5. Comparison of teacher with less than 10 years' experience and their Attitude

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t' value	Sig
1 – 10 years	35	103.54	14.65	98	8.46	0.000
10 years and above	59	123.14	11.33			

* Significant at .05 level

The mean values and standard deviation obtained on attitudes of teachers working in regular schools towards inclusive education of children with hearing impairment were 103.54 and 14.65 for teachers with less than 10 years experience, and 123.14 and 11.33 for those with more than 10 years experience. "T"

test revealed a statistically significant difference at $p=0.00$ with a "t" value of 8.46.

ANOVA revealed There was no statistically significant difference between the three groups at $p=0.65$ with an 'f value of 0.43 (table 6).

Table 6. ANCOVA for attitudes of teachers working in regular schools regarding qualification

Groups	N	SS	df	MS	F value	Sig
Diploma	22	143.77	2	71.88	0.43	0.65
MS	59					
MA	19					

* Not significant at .05 level

The ANOVA analysis shows that the difference between them is not significant at .05 level, therefore occurred by chance. Based on this, hypothesis three is accepted.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of Regular and itinerant teachers towards the inclusion of children with hearing impairment in the general education in Iran. Overall, the results indicated teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with hearing impairment in general education classrooms were positive, which is consistent with

previous Research has been inconsistent regarding the relationship between demographic variables and teacher attitude. Some studies show little to no relationship (6,18,20,21) Other studies show more positive attitudes based on levels of special education experience and training (10). The results of the various analyses on the study have revealed that female teachers have more positive attitude towards the inclusion of hearing impairment students than their male counterparts. This could be due to better emotional intelligence of women; with better adaptation ability and empathy several studies support the view that there is no correlation between

a teacher's gender and the attitude towards inclusive education. In a similar study, concluded that gender was not a significant factor in determining teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. However, other studies found that female teachers were inclined to have more favorable attitudes. It appeared to have higher expectations of students with disabilities, than their male counterparts. In contrast, some studies found that male teachers were either significantly more confident than their female counterparts regarding their ability to teach students with disabilities or they held more positive views about inclusive education. In other words, the positive attitude of female teachers towards the inclusion of special needs children demonstrated in this study may be due to the fact that females naturally have good tolerance compared to male. They are more calm and receptive than males. The reasons for the negative attitude of the male may be attributed to lack of training in special education. Generally, the findings by previous researchers that teacher's attitudes are more likely to be favorable if they have: (a) higher perceived teaching competence, (b) greater educational preparation, and (c) more experience in teaching. Moreover, the teachers at primary level agreed more strongly with the concept of inclusive education, compared to secondary level teachers. These findings are supported by various researchers (13,22,23), where they reported that primary level teachers showed more positive attitudes as they were less concerned with subject-matter. To elaborate, teaching at primary school level involves the 'play way' method, so all the students can be equal participants and children with disabilities can cope easily through observation and learning, whereas at secondary level formal teaching is involved and not much consideration is given to the presence of children with hearing impairment. Furthermore teachers with more than 10 years experience showed a more positive attitude towards inclusive education when compared to teachers with less work experience. This could be due to the fact that as their experience increases, teachers become more aware about disabilities and the influencing factors, and this could create a positive attitude towards inclusion of students with hearing impairment in regular classrooms.

In addition, the results of the various analyses on the study have revealed that Teachers with higher qualifications were not more favorably inclined towards inclusive education when compared to those with lower qualifications. Another reason may be that

most participants believed that inclusive education is beneficial to all children with hearing impairment or without disabilities, for instance by ensuring that non-disabled children can have the opportunity to help and care for their peers. Deng and Guo in study argued that it is an opportunity to support one another which can improve the psychological experience of all students (24). Similarly, Ali et al. (6) argued that inclusive education intensifies social interaction among children and decreases negative stereotypes. In addition Leatherman and Niemeier in 2005 argued for benefits from inclusive education for disabled children, their peers, teachers and the school as a whole (16). On the contrary, Priestly and Rabiee suggested that inclusion would be of little benefit to children with disabilities (25). Furthermore, attitudes towards inclusion may become less positive as a result of experience, a scenario which is supported by previous findings from Hodgkinson (26), where it was found that the attitudes of teachers in India may change with experience. The participants in this study might have changed their attitudes after more practical experience.

Moreover, the reason behind negative attitudes towards inclusive education is also considered to be due to some barriers such as lack of relevant teacher training, lack of teaching materials, teachers' insufficient knowledge and large size classes. Previous research supports the idea that such factors may have an impact on attitudes (17,27-30). The findings provide support to the idea that teachers' attitudes affect students academically, socially and emotionally. Students need the support of their peers and their teachers to learn and grow successfully. A teacher who focuses only on a student's deficits is unlikely to focus on a student's strengths. The findings of this study could have implications for the successful implementation of inclusive education, but there are some limitations that must be considered. Only a small number of participants were chosen for the study.

Conclusion

Inclusion agendas should be concerned with identifying all forms of exclusion and barriers to learning within national policies, cultures, educational institution and communities with a view to remove them. Also, it has implications for redirecting teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of hearing impairment students in regular educational program positively. Thus, successful inclusion for hearing impairment children in regular classrooms entails the

positive attitudes of teachers through a systematic programming within the classroom.

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