



## THE PERCEPTION OF SPECIAL AND GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN KP, PAKISTAN

**Sharif Ullah<sup>1</sup>, Irfan Ullah<sup>2</sup> & Javed Iqbal<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Special Education Department (SED), Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan

<sup>2</sup>Special Education Department (SED), Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan

<sup>3</sup>Provincial Management Officer, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan

<b>KEYWORDS</b>	<b>ABSTRACT</b>
Inclusive Education, Special Education, General Education, Descriptive Method, Pakistan	The study aimed to compare perceptions of teachers of special education and general education teachers regarding concept of inclusive education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The primary aims of the study were to determine the teachers' views in the general education schools and special education centers on inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education system, and to compare the perceptions of special and general education teachers regarding this inclusion. A descriptive research design was used. The teachers of Special and general education in KP were considered the study's population, delimited to 06 districts. Collected data were analyzed and interpreted through statistical tools. The conclusions drawn were that 'There was no significant difference between the views of special & general education teachers about inclusive education in KP. Teachers in both setups expressed the welcoming attitude and a favorable opinion of inclusion and agreed to teach students with the disabilities in an inclusive classroom. The teachers of both the groups admit that individuals with disability can find more opportunities. The teachers from both categories agreed that students with disabilities find out the greater opportunities for social interactions in mainstream education.
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<b>Correspondence</b>	<b>Irfan Ullah</b>
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:irfanullah70@gmail.com">irfanullah70@gmail.com</a>
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### INTRODUCTION

The term inclusive education refers to an approach in which different strategies, activities as well as procedures that are used to ensure that all learners receive equal opportunities to access quality education regardless of their background, disabilities and abilities (Stubbs, 2008; Ullah & Samad, 2025). In inclusive education, the individual needs are the top priority, and teaching strategies are

flexible and aligned with the systematic program. The inclusive education contests discrimination, promotes collaboration and reduces barriers to learning and sharing for all the students (Graham, 2020). The policy or act known as the no child left behind act was implemented in 2001 to ensure the rights, services, and provisions for people with disabilities. The "no child left behind act (2002)" formulated that specially designed the instructions and strategies for all those children who had received disabilities or impairments of one form or other and included these groups and subgroups of the different students who were acknowledged in regards of their disabilities, the socioeconomic status of these children, their language differences, racial backgrounds, together with the ethnicity (Thompson, 2018).

From the 1970s, the inclusion of children with disabilities into general education settings began to improve and attracted attention because it integrated both the special education and mainstream education. The educational institutions are now expected to admit all children and organize their educational setup according to their needs (Basit, Majeed, Irfan & Basri, 2022). Under Individuals with disabilities education act, all children with disabilities must get education in least restrictive environment (LRE). However, the confusion has arisen in many communities about inclusion through "mainstreaming" (Zagona, Kurth & MacFarland, 2017). The concept of mainstreaming embraces selection of child with special educational needs into general education curriculum. Many teachers report that they value principle of educating children with diverse needs in mainstream settings and recognize the social and academic benefits of inclusion. Still, inclusion of exceptional children in general education provides a sheltered environment for special students; mainstreamed students are expected to be skilled & share same educational values as general education students (Ballard & Dymond, 2017).

Bringing all students together regardless of their abilities or disabilities is the primary objective of the inclusive education, and accommodating them in an appropriate setting where they can benefit most. Consequently, the inclusion process enhances the knowledge of both types of students, i.e., those with and without disabilities (Thompson, 2018). In inclusive setup, students learn in different ways; the primary aim of the inclusion of exceptional children in the mainstream is to ensure that he/she receive all the supports they need to achieve learning outcome alongside their peers (Khan, Solehria, Alam & Imran, 2025). Special education teachers generally show stronger confidence in inclusion's feasibility than many mainstream teachers, because their training and daily experience make them more familiar with differentiated instruction, individualized supports & communication strategies. In this connection, in a study on teachers' experiences with the inclusive classrooms, the majority of respondents identified support from general educators as key factor in their classrooms, across various types of association or co-teaching with special educators (Alabdallat, Alkhamra & Alkhamra, 2021).

### Research Objectives

1. To explore the views of teachers working in the general education system about educating disabled students in the mainstream education system
2. To explore the views of teachers working in the special education institutes about educating disabled students separately in special education system.

3. To compare the views of teachers from both groups in mainstream education system and the special education system about educating special children.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

EIS is basically pushing students to gain more knowledge and skills and to become skilled, talented youth who are productive members of society. The aim of education has become more controversial as educational institutions expand enrollment to include students with various types of exceptions (Ashfaq & Rana, 2015). Despite numerous efforts to address all the obstacles, the role of educators, parents, and ordinary people in shaping and promoting the notion of inclusive education and the process of inclusion is remarkable (Pinter, Bloom, Rush & Sastre, 2020). A large body of research on teachers' perceptions of inclusive education has found that a significant proportion of educators are ready to accommodate the students with disabilities in mainstream settings (Snipstad, 2019). These constraints leave teachers, especially those in the general education, feeling underprepared and overworked when inclusion is implemented in their schools. However, the large body of the existing literature examining teachers' perceptions from both special and general education is available, advocating as well as supporting the advancement of the inclusive practices & flourishing (Ashraf & Jahan, 2022).

The thoughts of the educators about the accommodation of children with the disabilities have been observed to be diverted due to their personal aspirations, especially philosophy of having disabled children in their class. This philosophy has been compared with the services teachers deliver and teachers' perceptions (Schnepel, Krähenmann, Dessemontet & Opitz, 2020). It has been observed that this idea has been damaged by lack of proper training & adequate knowledge in surrounding world about the inclusive education, inclusion policies, and inclusion practices (Ewing, Monsen & Kielblock, 2017). However, strengthening the notion of inclusive education and studying teachers' perceptions of it are topics of hot debate and require ongoing, sustained support for their progress, individualized supports, communication strategies. Where parents and communities are supportive and where school leaders' model inclusive values, teachers feel empowered. The positive perception of teachers towards inclusion is driven by a range of factors, including policies on inclusion, school culture, existing assets & efforts to fulfill needs of children with diverse disabilities (Gilmour, Fuchs & Wehby, 2018).

The suppose teachers' perceptions of inclusion are positive. In that case, this should foster dedication that frequently shapes the extent to which students with diverse disabilities are acknowledged as an integral part of the institute community (Fonte & Arwood, 2017). In this regard, the research on teachers' perceptions has made it clear that teachers of general as well as special education favor inclusion, as it affirms the rights of students with diverse disabilities to be educated in an equivalent setting alongside their peers. Beyond logistics, social attitudes also shape teacher perceptions. Thus, several exploratory studies in Pakistan find negative community beliefs, low parental engagement, and stigma around disability influence both teachers' willingness to adopt inclusive practices and the success of those practices in classrooms. Research revealed that both groups of teachers share a parallel way of thinking about nervousness regarding the regular education classroom's ability to meet needs of children with disabilities, strong or parental involvement is low, teachers report lower

morale and skepticism about inclusion benefits & possibility of inclusion practices ([Ashraf, Fatima & Bashir, 2017](#)).

### Research Hypotheses

1. The views of the teachers working in the general education system are significantly positive towards inclusion. And views of the teachers working in the general education system are significantly negative towards inclusion.
2. The views of teachers working in the special education institutes are significantly positive towards inclusion. And views of the teachers working in the special education institutes are significantly negative towards inclusion.

### Significance of Study

It was a distinguished study of thinking, perception, and views about the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream education system. This helped us to understand the significant challenges that both groups of teachers face during the inclusion of a person with disability in the mainstream, which could help the administrator to make the right decision. It also enabled the determination of the implications of these perceptions for plans and procedures in country's historical background. Knowledge of teachers' perceptions would apply to training, providing relevant information to help them develop positive perception of inclusion. Considering time and resources available, this study was delimited to 6-districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, i.e., Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Mardan, Swat, and Dir.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed descriptive research design. For data collection, questionnaire was developed. It was based on the parameters of the perceptions of teachers and was administered personally to collect data from target sample. The population of study comprised following: Teachers teaching at the primary level from both general and special education centers in KP and Teachers teaching at elementary level from mainstream and special education institutes in KP. The Sample was selected using stratified random sampling techniques. The teachers from the Special Education system and mainstream education were selected as the study's sample. Based on the descriptive nature of the study, the comprehensive questionnaire was developed, consisting of the parameters of perception, such as educational aspects, classroom management, and social aspects of the perception, and the statements regarding the aspects of perception and the parameters of perception. The questionnaire was administered personally as well as retrieved from the teachers of special and general education institutions included in sample. When respondents did not respond on time, the questionnaires were sent to researcher.

### DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data on the perception of special and general education teachers toward inclusive education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan, were analyzed thereby using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. In this connection, the analysis was carried out in several stages to ensure accuracy, validity, and meaningful interpretation of the results in reaching desired conclusion.

Table 1 Categories of Respondents

	Category	Mean	SD	SE Mean	T	Sig
Educational Aspect	Special Education Teachers	32.40	3.91	.319	3.499	.000
Classroom Management	General Education Teachers	30.50	5.40	.441		
Social Aspect	Special Education Teachers	24.19	5.24	.428	-.432	.560
	General Education Teachers	24.44	4.61	.377	-.432	
	Special Education Teachers	31.81	5.51	.450	.094	.247
	General Education Teachers	31.75	5.50	.449	.094	

This table shows categories of respondents i.e. special and general education teachers, total number of respondents i.e. 150 from each category, the parameters of perceptions of both the categories, sum of the mean values of respondents of each category in each parameter, standard deviation, mean, or expected value, Garrett, H.E.2000, of each category in each parameter and mean value of standard error of the whole responses of both the categories and all the three parameters. The comparative t-test values for educational aspect are 3.499, for classroom management they are -.432, & for social aspect they are .094. The significant difference in the educational aspect is 0.000; this indicates a significant difference between teachers' views in general education system and in special education centers. For classroom management, the significant difference value is 0.650, indicating that there is no significant difference between mainstream and special education system. For social, significant difference value is 0.247; there are no substantial differences amid teachers in mainstream & special education system.

## DISCUSSION

The study was carried out to examine teachers' perceptions in mainstream and special education systems regarding inclusive education system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the idea, and the practical problems encountered when including disabled students in their mainstream classrooms. It was a descriptive study that aimed to compare the views of both educators of the mainstream and special education systems. The questionnaire was designed and divided into three parameters, with the first intended to measure the educational aspect. Thus, the teachers of both the mainstream and special education systems had a very positive perception of the inclusion of the disabled students. The same findings were also explored by [Snipstad \(2019\)](#) and [Vidican, Marușca, Barth and Tepelea \(2023\)](#). The teachers of both special and general education favored including children with disabilities in general education settings and enhancing educational achievement. This unequal distribution of expertise and resources means that collaboration between special and general teachers is often ad hoc rather than systematic. Students with disabilities had a positive impact on their behaviors from their non-disabled peers, and the same behavioral influence was explored by [Lampert, Graves, and Ward \(2012\)](#).

However, some of the teachers sowed a bit of a negative perception in this regard, which was due to the level of their awareness, depending on big cities like Peshawar and Charsadda, where teachers were comparatively more aware of the process of the inclusion than in Swat and Dir. However, some research like [Pérez, Jiménez, Mateo and Gutiérrez \(2021\)](#), and [Parey \(2023\)](#), reported some annoying responses towards the inclusion of Persons with Disability in the mainstream. The second part of the

tool was aimed at examining the classroom management. It showed no significant difference in the views of the mainstream and special education teachers regarding inclusion of disabled students. All the teachers reported having relevant skills, knowledge, and experience to teach differently abled students in the inclusive setups wherein the teachers report lower morale & more scepticism about the inclusion's benefits. The requirement of relevant skills and knowledge is also reported by [Ngadni, Singh, Ahmad and Baharudin \(2023\)](#). Similarly, they opined that including students with disabilities might not disrupt the educational process of their normal colleagues. [Larios \(2023\)](#) also reported that teachers are successful in accommodating students with disabilities in mainstream classroom settings.

Normal students accept their peers with disabilities, creating a warm, supportive environment. The last part of the tool, the social aspect of including students in a mainstream system, was explored. A Strong bond among peers with and without disability is reported by [Adibsereshki and Salehpour, \(2014\)](#). The teachers agreed that inclusion improved students' social skills. Though entire research process was a very tough task, researchers' devoted attention and their research-oriented struggles made it easier and more fruitful. Special education teachers generally show stronger confidence in inclusion's feasibility than many mainstream teachers, because their training and daily experience make them more familiar with differentiated instruction, individualized supports, communication strategies. The respondents were very keen to respond and respected researchers, which motivated the researchers and gave them a sense of purpose. It was realized that study had many more aspects and potential for further exploration. Due to certain constraints, it was limited to specific regions and populations. In future, for data collection, it may be expanded to allow results to be generalized about teachers' perceptions of inclusion, including levels of awareness, qualifications, experience, as well as training.

## **FINDINGS**

1. The teachers of both mainstream and special education systems consider inclusive education as a basic right of every child, and the results reveal their willingness to include differently abled students in the mainstream system.
2. The majority of the teachers of both mainstream and special education systems, are strongly in favor of the inclusion of persons with disability in inclusive setups for learning with normal students. teach in the inclusive classroom.
3. A large proportion of special education teachers report having sufficient time and resources to implement the inclusive education, whereas the majority of general education teachers disagree to implement inclusive education.
4. The majority of teachers of mainstream & special education systems agree that students with disabilities gain more knowledge and learn positive behaviors in inclusive classroom. It was found that special education teachers were knowledgeable, experienced, skilled in teaching disabled students than general education teachers.
5. Teachers of education systems were confident, based on their experience, that modification in instruction to fill individual needs is challenging but not complex. Peer relations in students, regardless of disability, enhanced socialization skills

6. The teachers of both education systems agreed that the inclusive setups provide a greater opportunity for interaction among students with and without disabilities. and become aware of the range of the human potential.

## **CONCLUSION**

Both groups had the same perceptions about inclusive education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Both groups of teachers were willing to teach students with disabilities in an inclusive setting and were ready to modify their instructional strategies. Both groups of teachers were in favour of the idea that students with disability could gain more knowledge and skills in inclusive setups and would experience positive and welcoming behavior from normal students. It was evident from the findings of the study that integration is fruitful than segregation and can play an important role in the rehabilitation of a person with disabilities. Taken together, literature portrays teacher perception in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as hopeful but conditional: many teachers endorse the goals of the inclusive education & want to make it work, yet they commonly describe gap between policy aspirations and classroom reality.

## **Recommendations**

1. Teachers of both groups, and especially the teachers of the mainstream education, should be trained appropriately about the instructional strategies, classroom management, and behaviour therapy of both types of students.
2. Awareness campaigns should be run through seminars, workshops, in districts with lower awareness as mentioned in the research. The mainstream educational institutes should be equipped with sufficient assistive aids and physical infrastructure that could accommodate persons with disability easily.
3. Collaborative strategies be fortified between special education institutes and mainstream institutions to work jointly and share experiences with each other. School administration or planner should design peer-support system that develops socialization & peer relationships among students with and without disability.
4. In a broader sense, contents and subjects should be included in teacher education program on inclusive and special education in order to equip prospective teachers with skill and knowledge to deal PWDs in inclusive setups.

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