

A Study on the Inclusion of Children with Hearing Impairment in Schools: A Survey on Teachers' Attitudes with special reference to Hapjan Block, Tinsukia District, Assam

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Abstract

The inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms has become the focus of extensive research in education. It has both academic and social benefits for all students, such as providing opportunities for communication and social interaction. Inclusive education, particularly for children with hearing impairments, presents unique challenges and opportunities that warrant thorough investigation. The objective of the study was to find out the attitudes of teachers toward the inclusion of children with hearing impairment in schools. The researcher used the Descriptive Survey Method and collected data from 120 school teachers with the help of an Online Questionnaire. The survey findings highlight overall support for the inclusion of children with hearing impairments in mainstream classrooms, citing benefits for all students. However, nuanced perspectives reveal reservations and concerns among some respondents. While professional development and training on assistive technologies are perceived as sufficient by many, doubts and dissatisfaction persist among others. Parental involvement is widely acknowledged as crucial, yet opinions on its importance vary. Overall, the data underscores the complexity of inclusive education and emphasizes the need for ongoing dialogue, support, and resources to ensure successful inclusion.

Keywords: Inclusion, Hearing Impairment, Teachers' Attitudes

Introduction

The concept of inclusive education has gained considerable traction globally, particularly following the endorsement of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006, which emphasizes the right to inclusive education at all levels. Inclusive education entails the full integration of children with disabilities into mainstream classrooms, where they learn alongside their non-disabled peers. Among the various disabilities, hearing impairment poses unique challenges and opportunities in the context of

inclusive education. Understanding and improving the inclusion of children with hearing impairments is essential to ensure equitable access to education and promote social integration. Hearing impairment, which ranges from mild to profound hearing loss, affects a child's ability to access spoken language and, consequently, their academic and social development. In the classroom, children with hearing impairments often face barriers such as difficulties in communication, social isolation, and limited access to curriculum content delivered through auditory means. These challenges necessitate the adoption of specialized teaching strategies, accommodations, and the use of assistive technologies to facilitate effective learning. However, the success of inclusive education for children with hearing impairments heavily depends on the attitudes, knowledge, and preparedness of teachers. Teachers play a pivotal role in the implementation of inclusive education. Their attitudes towards inclusion can significantly influence their teaching practices and the overall classroom environment. Positive attitudes are often associated with greater willingness to adapt teaching methods, employ assistive technologies, and engage in continuous professional development. Conversely, negative attitudes or a lack of confidence in managing inclusive classrooms can hinder the educational progress of children with hearing impairments. Therefore, examining teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of these children is crucial for identifying the facilitators and barriers to effective inclusive education. Several factors can influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education for children with hearing impairments. These include personal beliefs about disability, prior experience with inclusive practices, level of training in special education, and perceived administrative and peer support. Additionally, the availability of resources such as hearing aids, FM systems, and sign language interpreters can impact teachers' readiness to accommodate students with hearing impairments. Understanding these factors can help in designing targeted interventions to improve teachers' attitudes and competencies in inclusive settings. Previous research on inclusive education has shown mixed results regarding teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities. Some studies indicate a general positive inclination among teachers, while others highlight significant apprehensions and challenges. Specifically, research focusing on hearing impairments is relatively sparse, with most studies concentrating on broader categories of disabilities. This gap underscores the need for more focused investigations to elucidate the specific attitudes of teachers towards children with hearing impairments and to develop tailored strategies to support their inclusion. This study aims to address this gap by conducting a comprehensive survey on teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with hearing impairments in mainstream schools. The research will

explore various dimensions of teachers' attitudes, including their beliefs about the benefits and challenges of inclusion, their confidence in implementing inclusive practices, and their perceived need for support and resources. By analyzing these attitudes, the study seeks to provide insights into the current state of inclusive education for children with hearing impairments and to identify areas for improvement. In addition to examining attitudes, the study will also investigate the relationship between teachers' attitudes and their actual practices in the classroom. This will involve assessing how positive or negative attitudes translate into the use of inclusive teaching strategies, the adaptation of learning materials, and the engagement with students with hearing impairments. Understanding this relationship is crucial for developing practical recommendations that can enhance the inclusivity of educational environments. The findings of this research will have significant implications for policymakers, educators, and advocates of inclusive education. By highlighting the factors that influence teachers' attitudes and identifying the challenges they face, the study will contribute to the development of more effective training programs, resource allocation strategies, and policy frameworks. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that children with hearing impairments receive the support they need to succeed academically and socially within mainstream educational settings.

The inclusion of children with hearing impairments in mainstream schools is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires a thorough understanding of teachers' attitudes and the factors that shape them. This study aims to provide a detailed examination of these attitudes and to offer actionable insights for improving inclusive education practices. By fostering a more inclusive educational environment, we can ensure that all children, regardless of their hearing abilities, have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Objective of the Study

1. To find out the attitudes of teachers toward the inclusion of children with hearing impairment in schools.

Research Questions

1. What are the attitudes of teachers toward the inclusion of children with hearing impairment in schools?

Literature Review

Inclusive education aims to integrate students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms, promoting equal access to education and fostering social interactions among all students. Research has consistently shown that inclusive education can lead to positive academic and social outcomes for both students with and without disabilities (Hehir et al., 2016). Specifically, children with hearing impairments benefit significantly from inclusion, experiencing improved language development, higher academic achievement, and better social skills compared to their peers in segregated settings (Antia et al., 2011). Teacher attitudes play a critical role in the success of inclusive education, with positive attitudes associated with more effective implementation of inclusive practices and negative attitudes impeding the process (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Factors influencing teachers' attitudes include personal beliefs about disability, prior experience with inclusive education, and the level of professional training received (Forlin et al., 2009). Adequate training and professional development are crucial for preparing teachers to effectively include children with hearing impairments, as those who receive specialized training in inclusive practices are more confident and capable (Gaad & Khan, 2007). The use of assistive technologies, such as hearing aids and FM systems, is essential in supporting the inclusion of these children, and providing teachers with the necessary resources and training to use these technologies effectively is important (Marschark & Hauser, 2011). Administrative support also significantly influences teacher attitudes, with supportive schools tending to have more successful inclusive programs (Pijl & Frissen, 2009). Inclusive education promotes positive peer interactions, which are crucial for the social development of children with hearing impairments, leading to better social skills and relationships (Wolters et al., 2012). However, inclusive education poses several challenges, including difficulties in communication, lack of specialized training, and inadequate resources, which are major barriers to effective inclusion (Smith & Tyler, 2010). Parental involvement is another critical factor, as parents who are actively involved in their child's education significantly contribute to better academic and social outcomes (DesJardin, 2006). Cultural attitudes toward disability also affect teachers' attitudes, with societies that stigmatize disabilities having less supportive teachers for inclusive practices (Alur & Timmons, 2009). Inclusive education benefits non-disabled peers by promoting empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect among all students (Koster et al., 2010). Legislative frameworks and policies, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States, mandate the inclusion of students with disabilities

in mainstream schools, advancing inclusive practices (Yell et al., 2013). Collaboration among teachers, including special education and general education teachers, is essential for effective inclusion, leading to better student outcomes (Friend & Cook, 2010). The future of inclusive education lies in continuous improvement and innovation, with ongoing research, policy development, and investment in teacher training and resources necessary to address the evolving needs of students with hearing impairments and to ensure that inclusive education becomes a reality for all (Mitchell, 2014).

Methodology

The present study utilized a sample population drawn from Schools in Hapjan Block, Tinsukia District, Assam. The total number of participants in the sample was 100 teachers. The selection of the parents was done using the Simple Random Sampling Technique. In this study, the researcher used an online questionnaire as a tool to collect the data.

Data Analysis

The majority (74%) strongly support integrating children with hearing impairments into mainstream classrooms, citing benefits for all students. Another 14% agree, albeit with some reservations. A small minority (2%) disagrees due to concerns about disruptions and support services. Similarly, 5% strongly oppose inclusion, fearing negative impacts on the learning experience. 5% remain neutral, indicating a need for more information. These diverse perspectives emphasize the complexities of inclusive education and the importance of ongoing dialogue and support.

1. I believe that children with hearing impairments should be included in mainstream classrooms.
100 responses

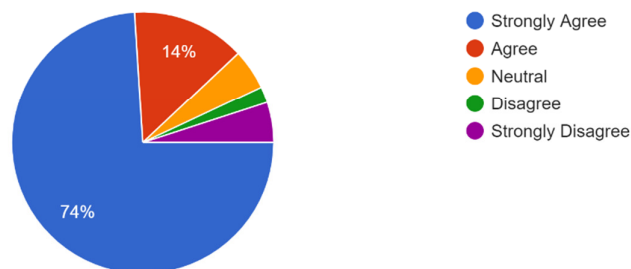


Figure 1: Attitudes Towards Inclusion of Children with Hearing Impairments in Mainstream Classrooms.

A significant majority (71%) strongly believes in the positive academic impact of inclusive education. They emphasize its potential to enhance learning outcomes for both children with hearing impairments and their peers. Another portion (13%) agrees with the statement but holds reservations. While they acknowledge the academic benefits, they express uncertainties or concerns about the implementation and extent of inclusion. A notable percentage (9%) remains neutral, indicating a need for more information or clarification on the academic impact of inclusive education. They neither affirm nor refute the statement, suggesting a requirement for additional insights to form a conclusive opinion. On the contrary, a small fraction (5%) disagrees, expressing apprehensions about potential negative repercussions on academic performance or resource allocation within mainstream classrooms. An even smaller minority (2%) strongly opposes the idea of academic benefits, citing perceived limitations or challenges of inclusive education.

2. Inclusion of children with hearing impairments in mainstream classrooms benefits all students academically.

100 responses

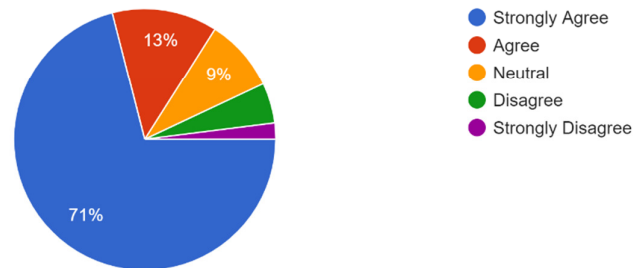


Figure 2: Perspectives on Academic Benefits of Inclusion of Children with Hearing Impairments in Mainstream Classrooms.

The data illustrates a spectrum of perspectives on the social benefits of integrating children with hearing impairments into mainstream classrooms. A significant majority (73%) strongly advocates for the social advantages of inclusion, emphasizing its role in fostering social development and integration among all students. While a smaller portion (12%) agrees, some reservations or uncertainties about implementation may linger. A small percentage remains neutral (5%), indicating a need for more information to form a conclusive stance. Conversely, a notable portion (8%) disagrees, expressing concerns about potential disruptions to social dynamics within mainstream classrooms. Additionally, a minority (2%) strongly opposes the

notion of social benefits, citing perceived limitations or challenges of inclusive education in promoting positive social outcomes for all students involved.

3. Inclusion of children with hearing impairments in mainstream classrooms benefits all students socially.

100 responses

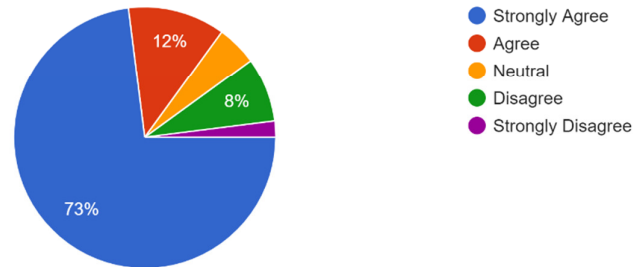


Figure 3: Perspectives on Social Benefits of Inclusion of Children with Hearing Impairments in Mainstream Classrooms.

The findings reveal mixed perspectives on the adequacy of professional development programs in preparing educators for inclusive education. A significant majority (74%) strongly agrees that these programs have adequately prepared them, indicating a level of confidence in their readiness to implement inclusive practices. Additionally, 12% agree, albeit not as emphatically, suggesting some level of satisfaction with their preparation but with potential room for improvement. Conversely, 8% disagree, expressing doubts about the effectiveness of professional development efforts in adequately equipping them for inclusive education. Moreover, a minority (1%) strongly disagrees, indicating significant dissatisfaction and possibly highlighting a need for more comprehensive and tailored training programs to support educators in effectively meeting the diverse needs of all students in inclusive classrooms.

4. Professional development programs have adequately prepared me for inclusive education.

100 responses

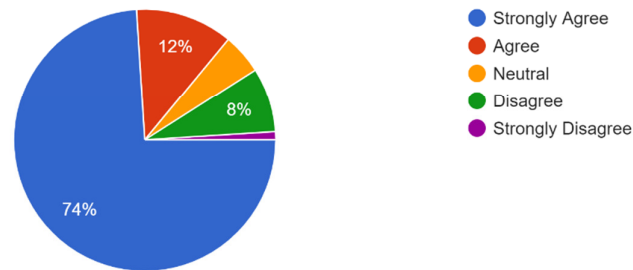


Figure 4: Perspectives on Adequacy of Professional Development Programs for Inclusive Education.

The findings underscore the consensus among respondents regarding the importance of parental involvement in the successful inclusion of children with hearing impairments. A significant majority (73%) strongly agrees that parental involvement is crucial, emphasizing the integral role that parents play in supporting their children's education and advocating for their needs within inclusive settings. Additionally, 12% agree, indicating a widespread acknowledgment of the importance of parental engagement, albeit not as emphatically as those who strongly agree. Furthermore, 6% remain neutral, suggesting a need for further understanding or clarification on the significance of parental involvement in inclusive education. Conversely, 5% disagree, and 4% strongly disagree, expressing dissenting opinions regarding the importance of parental engagement. These findings highlight the consensus among the majority regarding the essential role of parents in promoting the successful inclusion of children with hearing impairments, while also recognizing the

diversity of perspectives within the surveyed population.

5. Parental involvement is crucial for the successful inclusion of children with hearing impairments.

100 responses

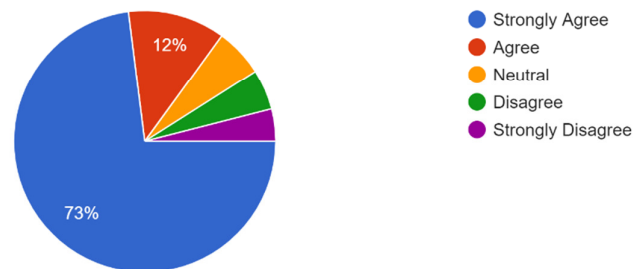


Figure 5: Perspectives on the Importance of Parental Involvement for Successful Inclusion of Children with Hearing Impairments.

The findings indicate a predominant consensus among respondents regarding the essential role of assistive technologies in including children with hearing impairments. A significant majority (70%) strongly agrees that these technologies, such as hearing aids and FM systems, are crucial for inclusion, emphasizing their pivotal role in facilitating communication and learning for children with hearing impairments within mainstream educational settings. Additionally, 13% agree with the statement, affirming the importance of assistive technologies albeit with potentially varying degrees of emphasis. Furthermore, 6% remain neutral, suggesting a need for further information or clarification on the significance of assistive technologies in inclusive education. Conversely, 9% disagree, and 2% strongly disagree with the notion of the indispensability of assistive technologies, possibly indicating differing opinions or perspectives on their efficacy or necessity in facilitating inclusion for

children with hearing impairments.

6. I believe that assistive technologies (e.g., hearing aids, FM systems) are essential for including children with hearing impairments.

100 responses

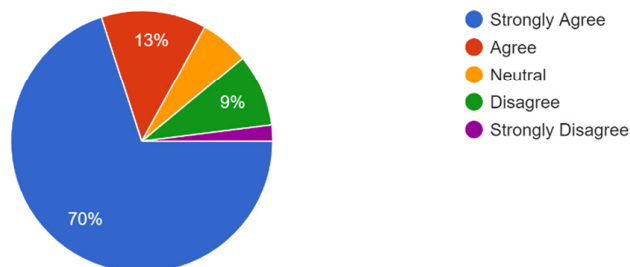


Figure 6: Perspectives on the Importance of Assistive Technologies for Inclusion of Children with Hearing Impairments.

The findings reveal a mixed perception among respondents regarding the sufficiency of training on the use of assistive technologies for children with hearing impairments. A significant majority (72%) strongly agrees that they have received sufficient training, indicating confidence in their preparedness to utilize these technologies effectively. Additionally, 9% agree, albeit not as emphatically, suggesting a general acknowledgment of the adequacy of training received. However, 8% remain neutral, indicating a need for further clarification or additional training to fully grasp the use of assistive technologies. Conversely, 4% disagree, and 7% strongly disagree with the statement, expressing dissatisfaction and potentially highlighting gaps in training provision or perceived inadequacies in preparing educators to utilize assistive technologies effectively.

7. I have received sufficient training on how to use assistive technologies for children with hearing impairments.

100 responses

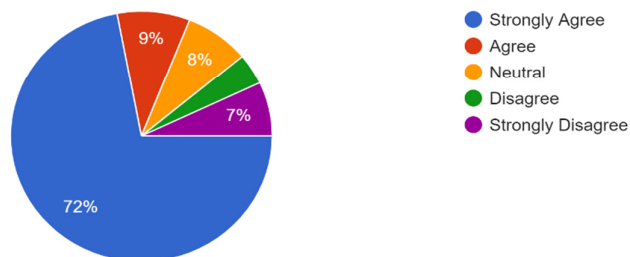


Figure 7: Perspectives on Sufficiency of Training on Assistive Technologies for Children with Hearing Impairments.

The findings reveal a considerable level of agreement among respondents regarding the feasibility of including children with hearing impairments in mainstream classrooms with appropriate support and resources. A significant majority (72%) strongly agrees with this statement, indicating confidence in the viability of inclusive education when accompanied by adequate support mechanisms. Additionally, 11% agree, further affirming the feasibility of inclusion with proper support. However, a small portion remains neutral (3%), suggesting a need for further information or clarification on the feasibility of inclusive education. Conversely, 4% disagree, and 10% strongly disagree with the notion, expressing skepticism or concerns about the practicality of inclusion, even with sufficient support and resources. These findings highlight the widespread belief in the feasibility of inclusive education for children with hearing impairments when accompanied by appropriate support, while also acknowledging varying levels of skepticism within the surveyed population.

8. Including children with hearing impairments in mainstream classrooms is feasible with appropriate support and resources.

100 responses

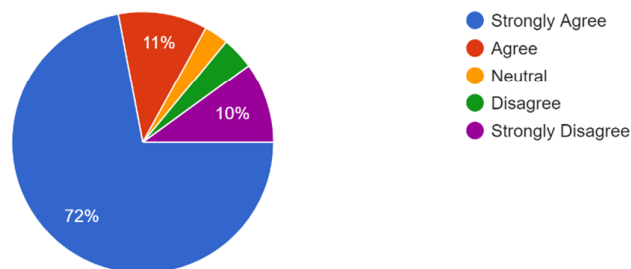


Figure 8: Perspectives on Feasibility of Including Children with Hearing Impairments in Mainstream Classrooms with Support and Resources.

Findings

The survey data reveals a strong consensus among respondents regarding the inclusion of children with hearing impairments in mainstream classrooms. A significant majority (74%) strongly supports integration, emphasizing benefits for all students. Additionally, 14% agree with some reservations, indicating a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved. However, a small minority (2%) expresses disagreement due to concerns about disruptions

and support services, while 5% strongly oppose inclusion, fearing negative impacts on the learning experience. A notable 5% remain neutral, indicating a need for more information. Regarding academic benefits, 71% strongly believe in them, with 13% agreeing but with reservations. However, 5% disagree, expressing concerns about potential negative repercussions on academic performance. Similarly, 2% strongly oppose the idea of academic benefits. In terms of social benefits, 73% strongly advocate for them, while 12% agree with reservations. Conversely, 8% disagree with the notion of social benefits, and 2% strongly oppose it. Regarding professional development, 74% strongly agree that they have received sufficient training, while 12% agree with reservations. However, 8% express doubts about the effectiveness of professional development efforts. The majority (73%) strongly agrees that parental involvement is crucial, with 12% in agreement but with reservations. However, 5% disagree, and 4% strongly disagree with the importance of parental engagement. Regarding assistive technologies, 70% strongly agree on their indispensability, while 13% agree but with potentially varying degrees of emphasis. However, 9% disagree with their importance, and 2% strongly oppose their indispensability. Concerning training on assistive technologies, 72% strongly agree that they have received sufficient training, while 9% agree with reservations. However, 8% remain neutral, and 7% strongly disagree with the statement, expressing dissatisfaction. Regarding the feasibility of inclusion with support and resources, 72% strongly agree, and 11% agree, while 10% strongly disagree with the notion.

Conclusion

The survey findings highlight both the overall support and nuanced perspectives regarding the inclusion of children with hearing impairments in mainstream classrooms. While there is a strong consensus on the benefits of inclusion for all students, including academic and social advantages, there are also reservations and concerns expressed by some respondents. Similarly, while there is a perceived sufficiency in professional development and training on assistive technologies, there are still doubts and dissatisfaction among a portion of respondents. The crucial role of parental involvement is widely recognized, although there are differing opinions on its importance. Overall, the data underscores the complexity of inclusive education and the need for ongoing dialogue, support, and resources to address concerns and ensure the successful inclusion of children with hearing impairments in mainstream classrooms.

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