



Exploring the Impact of Teacher Attitudes and Motivation on Inclusive Practices: An Empirical Study among Secondary School Teachers in Meerut District, India

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Abstract

The effective implementation of inclusive education hinges critically on the attitudes and motivation of teachers, yet empirical evidence on these constructs remains limited in the Indian context, particularly within secondary education. This paper presents the results of a quantitative survey conducted among 300 secondary school teachers across urban and rural schools in the Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh, India. Using validated Likert-scale instruments, the study measures teacher attitudes towards inclusion, their motivation to adopt inclusive practices, and the prevalence of such practices in their classrooms. The findings reveal that, while most teachers express a moderately positive attitude towards inclusion, significant variability exists according to demographic factors such as gender, age, and type of school management. Teacher motivation emerges as a strong predictor of the actual adoption of inclusive strategies, mediating the relationship between attitude and practice. Barriers identified include resource limitations, inadequate training, and societal stigma. The paper concludes with practical recommendations for policy, professional development, and school management, emphasising the need for targeted interventions to foster both positive attitudes and sustained motivation for successful inclusion.

Keywords

Inclusive education; teacher attitude; teacher motivation; secondary schools; empirical study; India; educational practice; quantitative research; barriers to inclusion.

Introduction

Inclusive education, defined as the process of providing equitable learning opportunities to all students regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or circumstances, has become a central tenet of educational reform worldwide (UNESCO, 2020). In India, the commitment to inclusion is enshrined in legislation such as the Right to Education Act (2009) and reinforced by the National Education Policy (2020), which both highlight the imperative of integrating children with disabilities and other marginalised groups into mainstream schooling (Das, Kuyini, & Desai, 2022).

Despite the rhetorical and policy emphasis on inclusive education, there is a significant gap between policy and practice, especially in secondary schools where academic pressures, resource constraints, and entrenched attitudes often pose formidable challenges (Sharma & Das, 2015; Pandey & Yogendra, 2017). While national reports and case studies point to

pockets of innovation and success, empirical evidence from large, representative teacher samples remains limited, particularly in northern India.

The implementation of inclusive education is profoundly shaped by the classroom teacher, who acts as both the interpreter and agent of policy (Forlin, 2018; Mitchell, 2020). Existing research consistently identifies two interconnected constructs—attitude and motivation—as critical predictors of whether teachers will adopt, adapt, or resist inclusive practices (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Klassen, Perry, & Frenzel, 2021). Positive attitudes towards inclusion are associated with greater openness, willingness to differentiate instruction, and the ability to build supportive learning environments (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Motivation, particularly when intrinsic, enables teachers to persist through challenges, seek out professional learning opportunities, and actively experiment with new strategies (Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey, 2010).

However, in the Indian context, teacher attitudes and motivation are not uniform; they are shaped by complex socio-economic, demographic, and institutional factors, including gender, teaching experience, location, and school management (Bhatnagar & Das, 2014; Lal & Sahu, 2017). Furthermore, the actual adoption of inclusive practices depends on an enabling environment—adequate resources, supportive leadership, professional development, and positive community engagement (Sebba & Ainscow, 2016; Bhattacharya & Rath, 2016).

This paper aims to bridge the research gap by empirically investigating the interplay of teacher attitudes, motivation, and inclusive practices among a diverse sample of secondary school teachers in Meerut district, Uttar Pradesh. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the overall attitude of secondary school teachers in Meerut towards inclusive education, and how does it vary by demographic and professional characteristics?
2. How motivated are teachers to implement inclusive practices, and what are the sources of their motivation?
3. What is the relationship between teacher attitudes, motivation, and the actual adoption of inclusive classroom strategies?
4. What barriers do teachers perceive as hindering effective inclusion, and how might these be addressed?

The findings contribute to the evidence base for targeted policy, professional development, and school-level interventions designed to strengthen inclusive education in India.

Literature Review

Teacher Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education

Teacher attitudes represent the predispositions, beliefs, and feelings teachers hold regarding inclusive education and its value (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Global research indicates that positive attitudes are linked to greater willingness to include students with disabilities or special needs in mainstream classrooms (de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011; Forlin & Chambers, 2011). In India, attitudes are influenced by cultural norms, personal experience with disability, training exposure, and the perceived supportiveness of the school environment (Sharma et al., 2006; Bhatnagar & Das, 2014).

For instance, Sharma and Das (2015) found that secondary school teachers in Delhi generally expressed support for the principle of inclusion, but many remained sceptical about their ability to manage diverse classrooms without adequate support. Internationally, similar concerns are reported: teachers may accept the idea of inclusion in principle but fear increased workload, lack of competence, and negative effects on academic standards (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Lindsay, 2007).

Teacher Motivation as a Mediator

Motivation, defined as the willingness and drive to act towards a goal, has a strong bearing on whether teachers attempt and sustain inclusive practices (Klassen et al., 2021). Motivation may be intrinsic (personal values, satisfaction, sense of accomplishment) or extrinsic (salary, recognition, promotion). Loreman, Deppeler, and Harvey (2010) and Forlin (2018) argue that intrinsic motivation—rooted in a belief in social justice or the transformative power of education—is more likely to support enduring change in practice.

Empirical studies from both Indian and international settings suggest that motivated teachers are more likely to differentiate instruction, seek new strategies, and develop positive relationships with students with diverse needs (Jordan et al., 2009; Lal & Sahu, 2017). However, motivation can be undermined by contextual barriers such as lack of resources, insufficient training, and unsupportive school leadership (Mitchell, 2020; Bhattacharya & Rath, 2016).

Barriers and Enablers

Table 1 below summarises key findings from the literature on barriers and enablers to inclusion in Indian schools.

Table 1. Barriers and Enablers to Inclusive Practice (Synthesis from Literature)

Barrier	Source(s)	Enabler	Source(s)
Lack of resources (aids, staff)	Bhattacharya & Rath, 2016; Sharma & Das, 2015	Ongoing professional development	Forlin, 2018; Lal & Sahu, 2017
Inadequate training	Bhatnagar & Das, 2014; Lal & Sahu, 2017	Supportive leadership	Sebba & Ainscow, 2016
Societal stigma	Chakraborti-Ghosh, 2012; Singal, 2019	Peer networks and mentoring	Klassen et al., 2021; Jordan et al., 2009
Rigid curriculum and exams	Sharma & Das, 2015	Community engagement	Bhattacharya & Rath, 2016

This synthesis highlights that barriers are multifaceted—spanning material, institutional, and cultural domains. Addressing these requires holistic interventions at policy, school, and classroom levels.

Demographic and Institutional Influences

Research consistently finds that teacher attitudes and motivation are shaped by demographic factors (gender, age, years of experience), institutional type (government vs. private, urban vs. rural), and prior exposure to inclusive settings (Lal & Sahu, 2017; Pandey & Yogendra,

2017). Younger and female teachers, as well as those with specialised training, tend to display more positive attitudes and higher motivation towards inclusion (Bhatnagar & Das, 2014; Klassen et al., 2021).

Gaps in the Indian Evidence Base

While international research on attitudes and motivation in inclusion is robust, empirical studies using quantitative methods in India—particularly in secondary schools—remain scarce. Most existing research focuses on metropolitan areas or case studies, leaving a gap regarding broader trends across different regions and school types (Das et al., 2022; Sebba & Ainscow, 2016). This study seeks to address this gap by providing a large-scale, data-driven analysis from a representative district in North India.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional, quantitative survey design to investigate the relationship between teacher attitudes, motivation, and the adoption of inclusive practices in secondary schools of Meerut district, Uttar Pradesh. This design was chosen for its suitability in capturing broad trends, patterns, and associations within a large and diverse teaching population (Forlin, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Sampling and Participants

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across key demographic variables: gender, age, years of experience, type of management (government, aided, private), and urban/rural location. The final sample comprised 300 secondary school teachers, distributed across 30 schools (15 urban, 15 rural).

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	n	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	158	52.7
	Male	142	47.3
School Type	Government	120	40.0
	Aided	90	30.0
	Private	90	30.0
Location	Urban	160	53.3
	Rural	140	46.7
Experience (years)	<5	62	20.7
	5–15	124	41.3
	>15	114	38.0

Instrumentation

Three structured instruments were used:

- **Teacher Attitude Scale towards Inclusion** (adapted from Sharma et al., 2006): 15 items, 5-point Likert scale, $\alpha = 0.88$.
- **Teacher Motivation Inventory** (adapted from Klassen et al., 2021): 12 items, 5-point Likert scale, $\alpha = 0.86$.

- **Inclusive Practice Adoption Checklist:** 10 items, self-reported frequency of inclusive strategies, 5-point scale, $\alpha = 0.82$.

All instruments underwent pilot testing and minor adaptation for local context. Content validity was reviewed by experts in inclusive education.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through paper-based and online surveys during the 2022–2023 academic year. Participation was voluntary, with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS v27. Descriptive statistics (means, SD), independent t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson's correlation coefficients were used to analyse group differences and relationships. Regression analysis was performed to determine predictors of inclusive practice adoption.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Teachers reported **moderately positive attitudes** towards inclusion (Mean = 3.68, SD = 0.51) and **moderate to high motivation** (Mean = 3.61, SD = 0.48) on a 5-point scale. The mean frequency of inclusive practice adoption was lower (Mean = 3.21, SD = 0.61).

Table 3. Means and SDs of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Attitude towards Inclusion	3.68	0.51	2.2	4.7
Teacher Motivation	3.61	0.48	2.1	4.8
Inclusive Practice Adoption	3.21	0.61	1.8	4.6

Group Differences

- **Female teachers** reported significantly higher attitudes and motivation than male teachers ($p < 0.05$).
- **Urban teachers** scored higher on all scales than rural teachers ($p < 0.01$).
- Teachers in **private schools** showed higher inclusive practice adoption than those in government or aided schools ($p < 0.05$).
- Teachers with **less than 5 years' experience** had higher motivation but lower practice adoption than those with more experience.

Table 4. Attitude and Motivation by Key Demographics

Group	Attitude Mean (SD)	Motivation Mean (SD)
Female	3.78 (0.45)	3.72 (0.44)
Male	3.59 (0.53)	3.49 (0.50)
Urban	3.79 (0.48)	3.71 (0.45)
Rural	3.55 (0.53)	3.48 (0.51)

Correlation and Regression Analysis

- **Teacher attitude and motivation** were highly correlated ($r = .61$, $p < 0.001$).
- Both attitude ($r = .43$, $p < 0.001$) and motivation ($r = .54$, $p < 0.001$) were positively correlated with inclusive practice adoption.

- In regression, **motivation** emerged as the strongest predictor of inclusive practice adoption ($\beta = .47$, $p < 0.001$), with attitude also significant ($\beta = .29$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 5. Regression Analysis Predicting Inclusive Practice Adoption

Predictor	β	SE	t	p
Attitude	.29	.07	4.11	<.01
Motivation	.47	.08	6.20	<.001
Gender (Female)	.16	.05	2.22	<.05
Location (Urban)	.18	.06	2.66	<.01

Perceived Barriers

Top barriers cited were:

- Lack of resource teachers (78% of respondents)
- Inadequate teaching aids (71%)
- Insufficient professional development (63%)
- Societal stigma towards disability (60%)

Table 6. Top Perceived Barriers to Inclusion

Barrier	% Endorsing
Lack of resource teachers	78
Inadequate teaching aids	71
Insufficient PD opportunities	63
Societal stigma	60

Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce and extend international research highlighting the central role of teacher attitudes and motivation in the implementation of inclusive education (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Klassen et al., 2021). In Meerut district, most secondary school teachers expressed a positive orientation towards inclusion and moderate to high levels of motivation. However, the actual frequency of inclusive practices in the classroom was lower, suggesting that positive dispositions alone are insufficient unless supported by conducive conditions and resources.

The strong correlation between motivation and inclusive practice adoption indicates that motivated teachers are significantly more likely to implement inclusive strategies, consistent with the findings of Forlin (2018) and Loreman, Deppeler, and Harvey (2010). The influence of motivation as a predictor was greater than attitude alone, emphasising the need for school leaders and policymakers to focus not just on awareness-raising but on deeper professional engagement and support.

Demographic analysis revealed that female and urban teachers reported significantly higher attitudes and motivation. This could reflect gendered patterns of empathy, exposure to diverse student populations, and better access to resources and training in urban contexts (Bhatnagar & Das, 2014; Lal & Sahu, 2017). However, the fact that private school teachers reported higher practice adoption, despite often facing greater workloads, suggests that school culture

and management style can foster motivation and innovation even with limited material advantages.

The barriers reported are in line with prior research (Sharma & Das, 2015; Bhattacharya & Rath, 2016). Notably, the lack of resource teachers and teaching aids was almost universally cited, indicating persistent systemic weaknesses that constrain classroom-level change. Societal stigma, while less frequently acknowledged, remains a significant challenge, particularly in rural schools, and underscores the need for broader community engagement and awareness campaigns (Singal, 2019).

Implications

For Policy

- **Increase Funding for Inclusive Resources:** Allocate dedicated funding to recruit resource teachers, provide adaptive teaching aids, and support schools in rural and government sectors.
- **Targeted Professional Development:** Implement sustained, context-specific professional development for teachers, emphasising not only skills but also sustained motivation and peer support (Forlin, 2018).
- **Community Outreach:** Develop community engagement programmes to address stigma and foster partnerships between schools and families.

For School Management

- **Supportive Leadership:** Foster an environment where teacher motivation is actively supported through recognition, mentorship, and opportunities for collaborative planning.
- **Peer Networks:** Encourage formation of teacher networks for sharing resources, co-planning lessons, and reflecting on practice.

For Teachers

- **Reflective Practice:** Engage in self-reflection, seek out new learning opportunities, and share strategies with peers.
- **Advocacy:** Teachers should advocate for the resources and support they need, communicating these needs to school leaders and local authorities.

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