

## A STUDY ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS AWARENESS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

<sup>1</sup>S.Santhana Rajam, <sup>2</sup>Dr. M. Govindan

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar (Full-Time), Department of Educational Psychology, Tamil Nadu Teachers Education University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

<sup>2</sup> Former Professor & Head, Department of Educational Psychology, Tamil Nadu Teachers Education University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

### Abstract

In the present research the investigators attempts to study the awareness towards inclusive education among the elementary school teachers working in Chennai, Chengalpattu, Kanchipuram and Thiruvallur Districts of Tamil Nadu. The study was conducted on a sample of 805 elementary school teachers from three types of schools (government, government-aided and private schools). The purpose of the study is to find the level of awareness towards inclusive education and to find whether there is any significant difference in awareness towards inclusive education among the elementary school teachers in respect to their gender, educational qualification, years of teaching experience, type of school management, and in-service training. The investigators adopted the survey method and random sampling technique for the present study. The results showed that the awareness level of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education is moderate and there is statistically significant difference in awareness towards inclusive education among elementary school teachers with respect to their gender, years of teaching experience, type of school management, and in-service training.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Inclusive Education, Elementary School Teachers.

### Introduction

Education is the most essential and powerful ingredient in the development and empowerment of individuals, and inclusion in education irrespective of the socio-economic differences and the differences in 'abilities' and 'disabilities' undoubtedly makes this foundation much better and stronger (Praisner, 2003; Ahmad, 2014). A school system emphasizing education for all should ensure the right of all children to a meaningful education based on individual needs and abilities. Now a days the term 'inclusive' is a buzzword in education. The term was formally introduced at the UNESCO Conference on Special Needs in Education, which was held in Spain in 1994. Inclusion means enabling all children to be in a mainstream setting and also refers to the process of educating children with disabilities in the regular education classrooms of their neighborhood Schools.

### Concept of Inclusive Education

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, inclusive education is considered as the right of every child to be a part of mainstream society (Anisow and Miles, 2008). Inclusive education, stands for improvement

or modification of the structure of education systems in all dimensions to address and welcome the different needs of children. It is the role of every member of education system to aware and understands the concept of inclusive education properly and implements it to build an inclusive society. The implementation and success of inclusive education depends upon large number of factors. Among the factors, the most important is the teacher whose work has undergone a tremendous change since the implementation of inclusive education in India. So, it is the responsibility of the teacher to cater the need of the students who are being included from mainstream system and accordingly create a conducive environment for accommodating all children to access as well in success.

### **Teachers Awareness towards Inclusive Education**

Teachers play a crucial role in implementing inclusive education, as they shape learning opportunities and experiences in school for students and are responsible for introducing innovations in education systems (Hattie, 2009). The Salamanca Declaration UNESCO(1994) described inclusive education as schooling in which all students, including those with severe impairments, have access to normal classes with necessary assistance. Polat (2011) defined inclusive education as “the inclusion of all children and young people regardless of any individual differences, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, or socio-economic status”. The educationist across the world have felt that there is a need to make teachers about inclusive education (Pingle & Garg, 2015). The biggest challenge in inclusion of children with special needs is lack of awareness in school authorities and teachers in India (Sen, 2007).The teacher's have some amount of awareness but an inadequate amount of information on disabilities and inclusive education (Maheswari & Shapurkar, 2015). The research conducted by Sharma & Samuel (2013) found that only a few teachers were aware about the provisions provided by the government. By reviewing various literature it is found that there is a contradictory findings about the awareness of inclusive education among teachers. More number of studies found that teachers have lack of awareness about inclusive education (Campbell et al., 2003, Papadopoulou et al., 2004, Sharma & Samuel, 2013, Sawhney & Bansal, 2014) and very less number of studies revealed that teachers were aware of inclusive education in their school (Agne, 2010). Further, primary school teachers have lucid awareness about inclusive education (Ozgur Sinero & Turgag Catal 2023); awareness of teachers towards inclusive education among Central school teachers is more than government school teachers (Doni, 2023); awareness of teachers towards inclusive education is moderate level (Sunilkumar & Rajitha, 2022; Gulay, Altun 2023); private school teachers' awareness towards inclusive education is more as compared to government school teachers (Dave, 2021); Social studies teachers awareness towards inclusive education is positive (Simsek and Kilcan 2023); 46% of primary school teachers stated that they were unaware of the term inclusive education and did not know what it meant (Maheswari & Shapurkar, 2015). Considering all these facts the present study is aimed to find the level of awareness about the inclusive education among elementary school teachers with respect to their gender, educational qualification, years of teaching experience, type of school management and in-service training.

### **Review of Related literature**

Dutta and Sinha (2024) compared the level of awareness of inclusive education among teachers working in government and private elementary schools in Jagun, Tinsukia District of Assam. For this study, the authors selected 80 teachers from schools by using random sampling technique. The results of the study revealed that the elementary school teachers have a positive and neutral attitude towards inclusive education. Furthermore, the study indicates that there is no significant difference between private and government elementary school teachers awareness towards inclusive education.

Gulay and Altun (2023) examined the awareness of teacher candidates towards inclusive education. For this study, the authors selected 708 teacher candidates in an education faculty determined by criterion sampling. The data were analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics, and the semi-structured interview data were analyzed by content analysis. The findings of the study revealed that the awareness of teacher candidates' towards inclusive education was at a moderate level. The study also revealed that, the awareness level of the participants who had inclusive education training was higher than the participants who did not, and the female participants had higher awareness compared to the male participants. The interview results revealed that training on inclusive education increased teacher candidates' awareness of its history, aims, the students it encompasses, and its applications. The study suggested to expand the inclusive education provided to teachers before and during the service.

Simsek and Kilcan (2023) examined the relationship between the awareness of social studies teachers on inclusive education and their perceptions of social justice. The research was conducted in the 2021-2022 academic year with the participation of 148(101 female, 47 male) social studies teachers assigned in the central district of Ankara Province and Mamak district of Ankara Province. The Findings of the study are: there is a significant difference between the participants total inclusive education awareness scores and their gender, however, no significant relation was determined between the participants total social justice perceptions scores and their gender; there is a significant difference between the participants total inclusive education awareness scores and the socio-economic status of the schools in which they are assigned, however, no significant difference was determined between participants' social justice perception scores and the socio-economic status of the schools in which they are assigned; there is a significant difference between the Participants total inclusive education awareness scores and their professional seniority, however, no significant relation was determined between the participants' total social justice perception scores and their professional seniority; there is no significant difference between the participants' total inclusive education awareness scores and the presence of disadvantaged students in the classroom, however, there is significant difference between the participants' total social justice perception scores and the presence of disadvantaged students in the classroom. The study also reveals that there is statistically positive and significant relationship between social studies teachers' awareness of inclusive education and their perceptions of social Justice.

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Antony Joseph and Ganesan (2021) studied the awareness of inclusive education among teachers in relation to morale. For this study the authors selected 120 teachers working in Chennai by using random sampling technique. The findings of the study showed that there is significant difference in teachers' awareness of inclusive education with gender, locality, and marital status. The study also reveals that there is significant difference in teacher morale with respect to gender, locality and marital status. Furthermore, there is significant relationship exists between teacher awareness of inclusive education and their morale.

Jena and Mishra (2018) studied the awareness about inclusive education among 100 elementary school teachers of Cuttack and Bhadrak Districts of Odisha. The results of the study revealed that no significant difference exists in awareness level of elementary school teachers about inclusive education with respect to gender, locality, professional qualification, and age. The study also revealed that with regard to experience, significant difference was found between more experienced and less experienced teachers about the concept of inclusive education whereas, no significant difference was found between more experienced and less experienced teachers in legal provisions of inclusive education, basic information about children with special needs and skill and competencies required for inclusive education.

Rajwinder Kaur (2016) studied the awareness of inclusive education among 200 school teachers from Amritsar District of Punjab. The findings of the study revealed that there is no significant difference between the scores of awareness of male and female teachers towards inclusive education. The study also revealed that the rural and urban secondary school teachers, and government and private School teachers do not differ significantly in their awareness towards inclusive education.

Pingle and Garg (2015) conducted an experimental study to find the effect of inclusive education awareness programme developed to create awareness among pre-service teachers. The sample comprised of 77 pre-service teachers in the experimental group and 53 in the control group from two colleges offering Diploma in the teacher education programme. The finding of the study revealed that teachers from experimental group have gained awareness about inclusive education to a moderate extent. The study also reveals that no significant interactive effect of social intelligence, emotional intelligence, socio-economic status and treatment was found. Further, the study confirms that treatment given to the experimental group was effective.

### Objectives of the study

1. To find the level of awareness towards inclusive education of elementary school teachers
2. To find whether there is any significant difference in awareness towards inclusive education among the elementary school teachers with respect to their
  - a) Gender
  - b) Educational qualification
  - c) Years of teaching experience
  - d) Type of school management and
  - e) In-service training

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## Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the above objectives the following null hypotheses have been formulated:

1. There is no significant difference in awareness towards inclusive education of the elementary school teachers with respect to their
  - a) Gender
  - b) Educational qualification
  - c) Years of teaching experience
  - d) Type of school management and
  - e) In-service training

## Methodology of the study

The investigator has chosen the survey method for the present study.

## Sample

The teachers working in elementary level schools in Chennai, Chengalpattu, Kanchipuram, and Thiruvallur Districts of Tamil Nadu are the population for this study. From them 805 teachers were taken as sample.

## Tools used

Elementary School Teachers Awareness Towards Inclusive Education Scale developed and validated by Mrs.S.Santhana Rajam and Prof. M.Govindan (2022) was used in the study.

## Statistical techniques used

The study adopted the statistical techniques like Mean, Standard Deviation, t-test and 'F' test.

## Percentage analysis

**Table 1**  
**Elementary School Teachers Awareness towards Inclusive Education**

Variable	Percentage level		
	Low	Moderate	High
Elementary School Teachers Awareness towards Inclusive Education	9.56%	83.23%	7.21%

From table 1, there are 9.56% of elementary school teachers have low level of awareness towards inclusive education, 83.23% of elementary school teachers have moderate level of awareness towards inclusive education, and 7.21% of elementary school teachers have low level of awareness towards inclusive education. The level of awareness towards inclusive

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education of elementary school teachers is moderate.

**Differential Analysis**

**Table 2**  
**Differences in the Awareness towards Inclusive Education of Elementary School Teachers with respect to demographic variables Gender, Educational Qualification and In-service Training.**

Variable	Demographic variables	Sub-Group	N	Mean	S. D	't' value	Level of Significance	
Awareness towards Inclusive Education of Elementary School Teachers	Gender	Male	254	113.39	18.671	7.06	0.01	
		Female	551	118.95	11.897			
	Educational Qualification	HSC and Graduate	464	115.00	16.200	1.06	Not significant	
		Post-Graduate	341	120.18	11.458			
	In-service Training		With training	483	109.51	9.80	7.269	0.01
			Without training	322	104.35	9.95		

It could be observed from table 2, the calculated 't' value for awareness towards inclusive education of elementary school teachers with respect to their gender, educational qualification and in-service training are found. It indicates that the elementary school male and female teachers, and teachers of with and without in-service training differ significantly in their level of awareness towards Inclusive Education. Hence, the null hypotheses 1(a) and 1(e) are rejected.

The calculated 't' value for awareness towards inclusive education of elementary school teachers with respect to their educational qualification is not significant. Hence, the null hypothesis 1(b) is accepted. It is concluded that, there is no significant difference in awareness towards inclusive education of elementary school teachers with respect to their educational qualification.

**Table 3**  
**Significance of difference in Awareness towards Inclusive Education of Elementary School Teachers with respect to the Teaching Experience**

Variable	Source of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	'F' ratio	Level of significance

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Awareness towards Inclusive Education of Elementary School Teachers	Between groups	2069.20	2	1034.60	10.24	0.01
	Within groups	81061.48	802	101.07		
	Total	83130.68	804			

It could be observed from table 3, the calculated ‘F’ value 10.24 is significant at 0.01 level. It reveals that the awareness towards inclusive education of elementary school teachers differ significantly with their years of teaching experience. Therefore, the null hypothesis 1(c) is rejected. As ‘F’ value is significant, ‘t’ test was employed to find the significance of mean differences between the elementary school teachers with 1-10 years of teaching experience, 11-20 years of teaching experience and more than 21 years of teaching experience. The ‘t’ values are depicted in the following table.

**Table 4**

**‘t’ Values between the means of Awareness towards Inclusive Education of Elementary School Teachers with 1-10 years of Teaching Experience, 11-20 years of Teaching Experience and more than 21 years of Teaching Experience**

Variable	Years of Teaching Experience	N	Mean	S. D	‘t’ Value	Level of Significance
Awareness towards Inclusive Education of Elementary School Teachers	1-10 years	194	105.29	8.561	1.75	Not Significant
	11-20 Years	323	106.99	11.721		
	1-10 years	194	105.29	8.561	5.05	0.01
	More than 21 Years	288	109.40	8.890		
	11-20 Years	323	106.99	11.721	2.84	0.01
	More than 21 Years	288	109.40	8.890		

The table 4 reveals that the elementary school teachers with 1-10 years of teaching experience and more than 21 years of teaching experience, 11-20 years of teaching experience and more than 21 years of teaching experience differ significantly at 0.01 level. Whereas, the elementary school teachers with 1-10 years of teaching experience and 11-20 years of teaching experience do not differ significantly in their level of awareness towards inclusive education.

**Table 5**

**Significance of difference in Awareness towards Inclusive Education of Elementary School Teachers with respect to the Type of School Management**

Variable	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	“F” ratio	Level of significance
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Awareness towards inclusive education of elementary school teachers	Between groups	11362.80	2	5681.40	63.49	0.01
	Within Groups	71767.88	802	869.49		
	Total	83130.68	804			

It could be observed from table 5, the calculated ‘F’ value 63.49 is significant at 0.01 level. It reveals that the of elementary school teachers working in government, government - aided and private schools differ significantly in their level of awareness towards inclusive education. Therefore, the null hypothesis 1(d) is rejected.

As ‘F’ value is significant, ‘t’ test was employed to find the significance of mean differences between the elementary school teachers working in government and government-aided, government and private, and government-aided and private schools. The ‘t’ values are depicted in the following table.

**Table 6**  
**‘t’ values between the means of Awareness towards Inclusive Education of Elementary School Teachers working in Government, Government- aided, and Private Schools**

Variable	Type of the School Management	N	Mean	S. D	‘t’ Value	Level of Significance
Awareness towards Inclusive Education of Elementary School Teachers	Government	275	109.49	8.228	1.66	NS
	Government - Aided	264	110.66	8.173		
	Government	275	109.49	8.228	8.52	0.01
	Private	266	102.14	11.599		
	Government- Aided	264	110.66	8.173	9.77	0.01
	Private	266	102.14	11.599		

Table 6, reveals that the elementary school teachers working in government and private, government- aided and private schools differ significantly at 0.01 level, whereas the elementary school teachers working in government and government- aided schools do not differ significantly in their level of awareness towards inclusive education.



### **Findings and Discussion**

- In this study the level of awareness towards inclusive education of elementary school teachers is moderate. This result is corroborate with the findings of the studies done by Dutta and Sinha (2024), Gulay and Altun (2023),and Pingle and Garg (2015) who found that the elementary school teachers level of awareness towards inclusive education is moderate.
- The male and female elementary school teachers differ significantly in their level of awareness towards inclusive education. This finding is supported by the research study carried out by Simsek and Kilcan (2023) and Antony Joseph and Ganesan (2021) who state that there is significant difference in teachers awareness on inclusive education with respect to gender.
- The elementary school teachers irrespective of their educational qualification differ significantly in their awareness towards inclusive education. This finding is contrast to the study of Jena and Mishra (2018) who found that no significant difference exists in awareness level of elementary school teachers about inclusive education with respect to their professional qualification.
- The elementary school teachers with and without in-service training significantly differ in their level of awareness towards inclusive education.
- The elementary school teachers having different years of teaching experience differ significantly in their level of awareness towards inclusive education. This result concord with the studies made by Jena and Mishra (2018) who states that there is a significant difference between more experienced and less experienced elementary school teachers about the concept of inclusive education.
- The elementary school teachers working in government, government- aided and private schools differ significantly in their level of awareness towards inclusive education. This result is contrast with the result of Rajwinder Kaur (2016) who found that the school teachers do not differ significantly in their awareness towards inclusive education.

### **Conclusion**

The level of awareness towards inclusive education of elementary school teachers is moderate. Further, the elementary school teachers differ significantly in their awareness towards inclusive education irrespective of their gender, in-service training, years of teaching experience, and type of school management. Based on the present study, the investigator felt that in order to increase the level of awareness towards inclusive education of elementary school teachers seminars and workshop should be conducted at school level as well as national and international level. Vision and importance of inclusive education may be advertised on print and social media. Government and NGO's should provide in-depth short-term training courses to the teachers for increasing awareness and practical knowledge about inclusive education. In a nutshell, a combination of specialized training, effective teaching strategies, and psychological support can enhance teachers' awareness and support for students in inclusive education settings.

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