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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Identification of Challenges Faced by Primary School Teachers in Implementing Inclusive Education in District Haripur

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Abstract: The present study aimed to examine primary school teachers' perceptions, challenges faced during implementation, and institutional support for inclusive education in District Haripur, Pakistan. The study focused on teachers' insights toward inclusion, differences in challenges experienced by male and female teachers, institutional, social, and personal barriers, and the adequacy of training and resources. A positivist paradigm and descriptive cross-sectional survey design were employed. The population consisted of 715 public-sector primary school teachers, from which 200 teachers (100 males and 100 females) were selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on established measures and rated on a five-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics and independent-samples t-tests were applied using SPSS. The findings revealed that teachers acknowledged the benefits of inclusive education, particularly its contribution to learning opportunities and social interaction, but expressed concerns regarding increased workload and overcrowded classrooms. No statistically significant gender differences were found in teachers' perceptions and reported challenges, indicating that the major difficulties were associated with common institutional and resource conditions rather than gender. The study further identified weak school-level support, limited parental involvement, low societal acceptance, inadequate professional guidance, insufficient teacher training, shortages of instructional and assistive materials, and limited government support as major barriers. It concludes that inclusive education in District Haripur remains constrained by inadequate teacher preparation, limited resources, weak institutional coordination, and insufficient support from families and communities, and recommends continuous practical teacher training, improved instructional and assistive resources, stronger school leadership and specialist support, and greater parental and community engagement to facilitate effective inclusive education at the primary level.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Primary School Teachers, Teacher Perceptions, Implementation Challenges, Institutional Support, District Haripur

Introduction

Inclusive education has become a major education reform in the world today that seeks to enhance equity, social justice and equal learning opportunities for all learners irrespective of their personal differences. It is becoming a crucial method instead of an extravagant plan since it helps to empower classroom inclusiveness, promotes diversity and improves social engagement among learners (Jardinez & Natividad, 2024). Inclusive education is especially important at the primary level, where the foundational academic and confidence skills

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along with social identity are established. Marginalization in this age group may result in childhood educational and social deprivation, as inclusive education is a key factor in sustainable development and equal involvement of the disadvantaged groups (Shutaleva et al., 2023). Limited teacher training, resources, institutional support and professional development opportunities are causing many education systems to struggle with inclusion being more theory than practice (Permana & Lasmawan, 2023; Sikuola & Davidova, 2022).

In Pakistan, the barriers were largely related to the lack of teacher training, overcrowded classrooms, lack of learning resources, ineffective monitoring and poor infrastructure, especially in the rural and semi-urban regions. Inclusion was additionally limited by social stigma and low awareness of disability, and parental involvement was low because of cultural misunderstandings and ineffective school-parent consultation (Basit et al., 2022; Virani & Ali, 2022). The low confidence and lack of preparedness of teachers to meet various learning needs were also experienced, and their views on inclusion were also inspired by workload, absence of support services and special needs assistants. It was also found that among schools, there were no assistive devices, counseling support and resource rooms, and it was challenging to implement effectively in both rural and urban areas (Haideri & Parveen, 2025; Kamran, 2022; Younas et al., 2024).

The lack of professional training, the insufficiency of instructional resources, overcrowded classrooms and the lack of institutional support were among the major challenges faced by teachers. A lack of teacher preparation, adverse attitudes in society, ineffective parental engagement and inadequate school facilities were still barriers to successful inclusion, which implied that schools and parents should be sensitized and cooperate to improve the situation (Saira et al., 2025). Moreover, the institutional weaknesses, including policy gaps, ineffective monitoring mechanisms, absence of structured training programs and ineffective planning at the school level, also added to the policy-practice gap. There was also a problem with teachers not being able to incorporate students with intellectual disabilities because of the lack of specialized skills and classroom accommodations (ul Haq & Rafiq, 2025; Sarwar & un Nisa, 2024). The literature also highlighted that teacher capacity building and support systems such as professional development were crucial in enhancing inclusive education outcomes. It was found that structured training programs and continuous professional development could help to increase teacher confidence and instructional competence, and collaborative methods like action research helped to improve the practice in the classroom (Mehmood & Parveen, 2025; Sajid et al., 2025).

The emotional wellbeing of the teacher was also found to be a critical factor, especially in the rural setting where resources were limited, with stress and workload impacting their capacity to provide inclusive practices successfully (Rehman et al., 2025). Nevertheless, existing literature was usually divided, with most of it not being based on local conditions, but rather national-level concerns (Kamran & Bano, 2025). Even though inclusive education was generally welcomed as endorsed by stakeholders, issues of poor infrastructure, a lack of professional help and low awareness remained (Basit et al., 2022). Thus, localized studies in District Haripur were still necessary to determine context-specific problems and formulate effective solutions to enhance the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools. Despite its growing acceptance in Pakistan as a critical approach to ensuring equity in education, the actual practice of inclusive education is still poor, uneven and largely impeded by systemic constraints. The literature reviewed suggests that educators have to deal with the problems connected to the insufficiency of training, the lack of resources, the adverse social attitudes, the lack of administrative support and the absence of specific assistance (Batool et al., 2023; Saira et al., 2025; ul Haq & Rafiq, 2025).

Although these results exist, most of the Pakistani research has addressed such issues on a broad national scale or been done in large urban areas like Islamabad and Punjab and has not been represented in the rural and semi-urban districts (Kamran & Bano, 2025; Younas et al., 2024). In addition, the literature shows that the issues of inclusive education differ in different geographical areas since schools have different infrastructure, availability of teachers, cultural orientation and administrative operations. This implies that

district-level research is crucial in order to produce localized evidence on which to improve policy. Although other studies have found teacher readiness and emotional wellbeing to be significant predictors of inclusion success, more research is necessary to determine how these variables interplay with institutional and social constraints in particular districts (Rehman et al., 2025). Also, 5 special needs assistants, leadership of head teachers and training programs are also under-researched in most districts, although they play a crucial role in enhancing inclusive learning (Haideri & Parveen, 2025; Kamran, 2022). Thus, the current research is validated since it will determine the problems experienced by primary school educators in undertaking inclusive education in a particular district setting.

Research Design

The research design was a descriptive survey design, which is usually employed in educational research to gather data concerning a population at one point in time. Creswell (2014) suggests that survey research is appropriate when describing attitudes, opinions and behaviors of as many respondents as possible. This design suited the present study as it was intended to research the attitudes of teachers and outline difficulties within the implementation of inclusive education without any manipulation of any variables. This study adopted a cross-sectional approach since it enabled the researcher to gather data at the same time among male and female teachers in primary schools in the District of Haripur. The design has been popular in inclusive education research where the goal is to learn more about the current circumstances and issues in the school systems (Fraenkel et al., 2019). It also allowed the researcher to compare the responses and come up with the general patterns concerning institutional, social and personal barriers in the practice of inclusive education.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all primary school teachers working in public sector schools in District Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, i.e. 715 (439 male & 275 female). These teachers were directly involved in classroom instruction and had experience dealing with students having diverse learning needs, including those with disabilities and learning difficulties.

Sample Of The Study

100 Male and 100 female teachers were selected as the sample. This was deemed a sufficient sample to conduct statistical analysis and generalization of the results since large samples enhance the reliability and validity of research conducted via surveys. The sample was diverse in terms of the geographical regions of teachers (rural and urban) and school settings, which provided variety in the responses of the teachers to the practices of inclusive education.

Sampling Technique

The researchers employed a stratified random sampling method so as to achieve equal representation of both male and female educators of various school environments. The use of stratified sampling is regarded as a good approach in situations when the population is not homogenous and the researcher wants to have a proportional representation of sub-groups (Cohen et al., 2018). In this research, the population was separated into two major strata, male teachers and female teachers. Teachers were randomly chosen in each stratum to make sure that each one had an equal opportunity to be included in the sample.

Research Instruments

A structured questionnaire was the most powerful research tool in the present study as it was designed through the modification of standardized tools like Teacher Attitudes to Inclusion Scale (TAIS), Opinions Relative to Mainstreaming Scale (ORMS) and Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES). The questionnaire was modified according to the contextual needs of primary schools in District Haripur. The standardized

constructs provided that the tool measured important dimensions of inclusive education in the form of attitudes, confidence and barriers, which have been well-known in the literature on the topic (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Saloviita, 2015).

Validity

Content validity and expert review were used to ensure the validity of the research instrument. The degree to which the instrument effectively addresses all the concepts of the research variables is known as content validity (Polit & Beck, 2006).

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha was used to analyze the responses and determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. Social science research was deemed to be acceptable with a reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The pilot testing results made the instrument reliable in gathering information to be used in the main study.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process for this study was carefully planned and executed to ensure ethical compliance, validity of responses and consistency across all participants. Researchers personally visited primary schools and collected data with a detailed prior explanation of the research purpose and provided guidelines about how to fill out the questionnaires to the participants/primary school teachers.

Data Analysis

The collected data were examined with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in line with the research objectives of the study.

Table 1

Comparison of Male and Female Teachers' Mean Scores regarding Teachers' Perceptions

	Groups	N	Mean	SD Score	SE Mean	t-value	Sig.	Effect Size
Teachers' Perceptions	Male	100	3.1388	.36752	.03675	2.365	.019	0.33
	Female	100	3.0138	.37977	.03798			

The Table above presents the comparison of male and female teachers' perceptions regarding inclusive education. Male teachers ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 0.37$) reported slightly higher perception scores than female teachers ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.38$). An independent samples t -test showed a statistically significant difference between male and female teachers, $t(198) = 2.365$, $p = .019$. The effect size was small ($d = 0.33$), indicating that although the difference is statistically significant, the practical difference between male and female teachers' perceptions is relatively small.

Table 2

Comparison of Male and Female Teachers' Mean Scores regarding Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Classroom Management

	Groups	N	Mean	SD Score	SE Mean	t-value	Sig.	Effect Size
Self-Efficacy & Classroom Management	Male	100	4.0075	.50777	.05078	-.714	.476	0.10
	Female	100	4.0588	.50673	.05067			

Not Significant

The table compares male and female teachers' self-efficacy and classroom management scores. Female teachers ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.51$) scored slightly higher than male teachers ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.51$). The

independent samples *t*-test revealed no statistically significant difference, $t(198) = -0.714$, $p = .476$. The effect size was very small ($d = 0.10$), indicating negligible practical difference between male and female teachers.

Table 3

Comparison of Male and Female Teachers' Mean Scores regarding Teachers' Challenge

	Groups	N	Mean	SD Score	SE Mean	t-value	Sig.	Effect Size
Teachers' Challenge	Male	100	2.9917	.50717	.05072	.293	.770	0.04
	Female	100	1.5975	.61842	.06184			

Not Significant

Table 3 presents the comparison of male and female teachers regarding challenges in inclusive education. Male teachers ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.51$) reported slightly higher challenge scores than female teachers ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.54$). The independent samples *t*-test indicated no statistically significant difference, $t(198) = 0.293$, $p = .770$. The effect size was trivial ($d = 0.04$), suggesting virtually no practical difference between the two groups

Table 4

Comparison of Male and Female Teachers' Mean Scores regarding Institutional, Social and Personal Factors

	Groups	N	Mean	SD Score	SE Mean	t-value	Sig.	Effect Size
Institutional, Social and Personal Factors	Male	100	1.6550	.57820	.05782	.679	.498	0.10
	Female	100	1.5975	.61842	.06184			

Not Significant

Table 4 compares male and female teachers regarding institutional, social, and personal factors affecting inclusive education. Male teachers ($M = 1.66$, $SD = 0.58$) reported slightly higher scores than female teachers ($M = 1.60$, $SD = 0.62$). The independent samples *t*-test revealed no statistically significant difference, $t(198) = 0.679$, $p = .498$. The effect size was very small ($d = 0.10$), indicating negligible practical difference.

Table 5

Comparison of Male and Female Teachers' Mean Scores regarding Resources and Support System

	Groups	N	Mean	SD Score	SE Mean	t-value	Sig.	Effect Size
Resources and Support System	Male	100	1.6286	.61487	.06149	.465	.642	0.07
	Female	100	1.5900	.55557	.05556			

Not Significant

Table 5 presents the comparison of male and female teachers regarding resources and support systems. Male teachers ($M = 1.63$, $SD = 0.61$) reported slightly higher scores than female teachers ($M = 1.59$, $SD = 0.56$). The independent samples *t*-test showed no statistically significant difference, $t(198) = 0.465$, $p = .642$. The effect size was trivial ($d = 0.07$), indicating almost no practical difference between male and female teachers.

Discussion

Primary school teachers in District Haripur generally acknowledge the importance of inclusive education, but their support in applying it in regular classrooms is inadequate. Teachers agreed to some extent that inclusion can improve learning opportunities and social interaction. Conversely, their views were less positive when they considered the actual placement of students with disabilities and learning difficulties in conventional classrooms. This perception is like the findings of Lindner et al. (2023), who reported that teachers often support inclusion as an educational principle but become more uncertain when they are required to

implement it without adequate training, resources, or professional assistance. Jardinez and Natividad (2024) and White and Fletcher (2026) reported similar difficulties in managing diverse learners in large mainstream classrooms. The findings of Batool et al. (2023) and Kamran et al. (2023) are also consistent in that limited preparation and inadequate support can reduce teachers' readiness for inclusive teaching. The concern about increased workload is further supported by Permana and Lasmawan (2023), who recognized workload, curriculum adjustment, and classroom management as important barriers.

In the present study, overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching materials, limited time, inadequate training, weak administrative assistance, and teacher stress were also identified as reasonable obstacles. These findings are in line with Sijuola and Davidova (2022), Beltran et al. (2025), Younas et al. (2024), and Rehman et al. (2025). Furthermore, the implementation of inclusive education in District Haripur is affected by several institutional, social, professional, and resource-related problems. Teachers reported that lack of administrative support, weak school leadership, inadequate professional guidance, shortage of parental involvement, low societal acceptance of children with disabilities, shortages of teaching and assistive materials, imperfect training opportunities, lack of resource rooms, weak cooperation with special education staff, and insufficient government support are the main factors that contribute to the implementation of Inclusive education practices. These concerns are consistent with Alkaabi et al. (2022) and Agus et al. (2023), who emphasized the importance of effective leadership, planning, and coordination within schools.

The limited involvement of parents and weak social acceptance identified in the present study are also comparable with the findings of Virani and Ali (2022) and Walton and Engelbrecht (2024), who highlighted the influence of family and community attitudes on inclusive education. Teachers' lack of access to specialists and professional guidance is further supported by Haq and Rafiq (2025) and Saira et al. (2025). Similarly, Permana and Lasmawan (2023), Sijuola and Davidova (2022), Mehmood and Parveen (2025), and Batool et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of adequate resources and proper teacher preparation. Haideri and Parveen (2025), Sajid et al. (2025), Muhammad et al. (2024), and Sarwar and Nisa (2024) also reported weaknesses in facilities, government support, training, and implementation mechanisms in Pakistan. These similarities indicate that the difficulties experienced by teachers in District Haripur are part of wider challenges faced by inclusive education in Pakistan. Therefore, inclusive education in District Haripur can be improved by providing practical teacher training, adequate teaching resources, specialist support, effective school leadership, and greater parental involvement. Stronger coordination between mainstream and special education services is also needed. Changing teachers' attitudes alone is not enough; schools must also have the resources and support required to implement inclusion effectively.

Conclusions

Primary school teachers generally have adverse approaches toward inclusive education. Teachers recognized its potential to improve learning opportunities and promote social interaction among students. However, their responses were strongly negative concerning the practical inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms. Teachers were also of the view that inclusive education increases their workload ($M = 4.74$) and is difficult to manage in overcrowded classrooms ($M = 4.74$), while the overall level of support for inclusive education remained low ($M = 2.97$). These findings indicate that teachers recognize certain benefits of inclusion but remain unwilling to support its implementation because of workload demands, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient support. The absence of a significant gender difference further shows that these challenges are experienced similarly by male and female teachers and are therefore more closely related to systemic conditions than to gender. In addition, low ratings for parental involvement ($M = 1.66$) and societal acceptance of students with disabilities ($M = 1.59$) demonstrate that limited family participation and weak community acceptance further restrict the implementation of inclusive education. In general, inclusive education requires improvements in the form of institutional support, teachers' preparation for the challenges, classroom conditions, parental involvement, and societal acceptance rather than focusing on gender-specific interventions. It is concluded that institutional, social, and personal barriers are deeply

interconnected and collectively form a major obstacle to successful inclusive education practices at the primary level. Likewise, teachers are not sufficiently prepared to handle diverse learning needs. Because of the absence of resource rooms or support facilities ($M = 1.65$), which further reflects infrastructural limitations in schools. In addition, school management was found to provide weak support for inclusive teaching practices ($M = 1.63$), and collaboration between teachers and special education staff was also reported to be lacking ($M = 1.61$).

Recommendations

1. Since the study revealed that teachers possess low self-efficacy and insufficient preparedness for inclusive classrooms, it is recommended that the Elementary and Secondary Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, teacher training institutions, and school authorities may design and implement regular pre-service and in-service training programs on inclusive education, which focus on inclusive teaching strategies, differentiated instruction, classroom adaptation, behavior management, and assessment of students with disabilities, etc.
2. Overcrowded classrooms are one of the most serious barriers to inclusive education. Therefore, it is recommended that educational authorities improve the teacher–student ratio in primary schools.
3. Most of the schools lack resource rooms and support facilities for inclusive education. Resource rooms may be established in primary schools to provide specialized instructional support for students with disabilities.
4. Collaborative teaching models such as co-teaching, peer mentoring, and professional learning communities can be promoted in schools. Regular meetings among teachers, school leaders, and specialists may be scheduled to improve communication, sharing of best practices, and joint problem-solving for inclusive classrooms.

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