



Explore Perspectives of Teachers and Parents on Inclusive Education: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

The present study examines the experiences of teachers and parents about inclusive education at secondary level. Inclusive education is about equal opportunities in learning for every child, including those with diverse learning needs and disabilities, in mainstream education. The research was carried out in the context of an inclusive education project in order to gain insight into the experiences, perceptions, problems and expectations of teachers and parents of implementing inclusive education in schools. To obtain detailed information about the experiences of the participants, a phenomenological research design was used. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from secondary school teachers and parents who are in inclusive classrooms. The results have shown that generally, teachers' and parents' attitudes towards inclusive education were positive and they were aware of the importance of inclusive education in fostering social interaction, equality, empathy and academic participation of students. There were challenges, however, such as a lack of teacher training, inadequate teaching resources, and insufficient support in the classroom, communication issues between the school and families, and problems with meeting diverse learning needs in overcrowded classrooms. The study also points to the importance of professional development opportunities, collaboration between teachers and parents, policy support, and educational resources to reinforce inclusive practices in secondary schools. The research adds to the existing body of knowledge regarding inclusive education and provides insight into the perspectives of parents and teachers in relation to the contextual nature of inclusive education, and also offers practical recommendations for how to make inclusive educational environments better in schools.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Teachers' Perspectives, Parents' Perspectives, Secondary School Education, Phenomenological Study, Inclusive Practices, Special Needs Education

Introduction

Background Information

Inclusive education involves integrating students from diverse backgrounds into regular classrooms, ensuring accessibility and participation for every learner (Ainscow, 2005; Booth & Ainscow, 2016). It is based on the fundamental principles of equity, fairness in society, and universal educational rights (Mittler, 2000; Florian, 2014). Historically, educational systems were designed around segregation, but changes in policy and research have emphasized inclusion

as a way to enhance student learning and social development (Florian, 2014; Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012). Examining the perspectives and experiences of key stakeholders, especially educators and families, is essential for understanding the real-world impacts of inclusive education frameworks and identifying factors that support or hinder effective implementation (de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011). Research indicates that successful inclusion depends on factors such as educator training, family involvement, and organizational readiness (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012; Dyson & Gallan augh, 2008). Additionally, challenges like limited funding, inadequate teacher preparation, and community attitude continue to hinder the full adoption of inclusive education (Hornby, 2011; Slee, 2018). Recognizing and addressing these barriers is critical for enhancing educational practices and creating inclusive learning environments.

Problem statement

This study explores the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers and parents regarding the implementation of inclusive education through a phenomenological approach. Research suggests that teacher preparedness and parental attitudes significantly impact the success of inclusive education (Florian & Spratt, 2013; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). However, existing studies primarily focus on student outcomes, leaving a gap in understanding the challenges faced by educators and families (Pijl, Frostad, & Flem, 2008). By addressing this gap, the study aims to provide insights into key challenges, support mechanisms, and best practices for enhancing inclusive education (Sharma & Sokal, 2015; Lindsay, 2007). The findings will help bridge the divide between policy and practice, supporting more effective training programs and inclusive strategies (Ainscow, 2016; Mitchell, 2014).

Research Objectives:

1. Investigate the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers and parents regarding the implementation of inclusive education.
2. Explore the main issues and obstacles that teachers and parents encounter when implementing inclusive education.

Research Questions:

1. How do teachers and parents perceive the concept and implementation of inclusive education?
2. What are the key challenges faced by teachers and parents in fostering an inclusive learning environment?

Literature Review

Foundations and Policy-Practice Gaps in Inclusive Education

Universal education accessibility is based on the principle that all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have the right to receive instruction in traditional educational settings (Ainscow, 2005; Booth & Ainscow, 2016). International agreements such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) highlight inclusivity as a fundamental human right. However, a common issue found in scholarly research is the gap between inclusive educational policies and their implementation. While many countries support progressive approaches, obstacles such as lack of professional development, limited financial resources, and poor coordination among stakeholders hinder their effectiveness (Dyson & Gallan augh, 2008; Booth & Ainscow, 2016).

While inclusive education is globally recognized as a basic right, its actual implementation often falls short especially in contexts where deep social and economic inequalities persist. Research indicates that many education systems interpret inclusion narrowly, focusing more on the physical placement of students in mainstream classrooms than on fostering meaningful academic and social engagement (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Furthermore, teachers and school cultures have been observed to respond negatively to inclusive reforms when introduced into society without adjusting them to local contexts or involving central parties in the process

(Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). This policy-practice gap is even more pronounced in low-resource settings, as teachers struggle with overcrowded classrooms, lack of appropriate training, and unavailability of essential assistive devices (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012). Therefore, despite policies promoting inclusion, a lack of structural transformation and context-rooted strategies hinders the effective and complete implementation of this concept in the classroom. This theme addresses the fact that inclusive education has become widely accepted worldwide as an obligation and even a human right. However, there remains a persistent disconnect between inclusive policies and their practical application. While frameworks like the Salamanca Statement promote equal learning opportunities, real-world implementation is often hindered by limited teacher training, insufficient funding, and weak inter-agency coordination. In many cases, inclusion is reduced to physical placement in mainstream classrooms without ensuring meaningful engagement. These issues are especially critical in under-resourced settings, where overcrowding and lack of support tools further constrain progress. Bridging this gap requires context-sensitive reforms, systemic change, and long-term commitment at all levels of the education system.

Teachers' Role and Support Mechanisms in Inclusive Classrooms

Teachers play a central role in enacting inclusive education. Their attitudes, preparedness, and professional learning significantly impact their ability to address diverse needs (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012). Effective inclusion is strengthened by teacher collaboration, administrative support, community participation, and the use of differentiated instruction and assistive technologies (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013; Pijl, Frostad, & Flem, 2008). However, many educators still report feeling underprepared and unsupported (Forlin, 2013; Florian & Spratt, 2013). The success of inclusive education in various school environments largely depends on how effectively teachers are supported through continuous, context-sensitive professional development and reliable institutional backing. Evidence suggests that when teachers are actively involved in shaping inclusive approaches and receive sustained mentorship, their confidence and capability in meeting the diverse needs of students improve significantly (Florian & Linklater, 2010). Furthermore, inclusive outcomes are more sustainable when the entire school community including administrators, educators, support staff, and parents' works collectively towards shared goals (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). Yet, efforts often fall short due to constraints such as inadequate time, scarce resources, and unclear policy frameworks, leaving educators to rely heavily on personal initiative rather than structured systems (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). For inclusion to become a practical reality, it is crucial to eliminate these systemic barriers through well-planned, adequately funded reforms grounded in inclusive values. This theme emphasizes that inclusive education depends heavily on teachers' professional readiness and systemic support. Ongoing training, mentorship, and collaboration with peers and school leadership are essential for addressing diverse learning needs. Strategies such as differentiated instruction and assistive technologies further enhance inclusive practices. However, many teachers feel underprepared due to limited resources and unclear policies. Sustainable inclusion necessitates context-aware reforms and a collective effort across the school community.

Parental Involvement in Inclusive Education

Parental viewpoints and participation are essential components in achieving success within inclusive educational settings. Favorable perspectives and dynamic family involvement contribute to enhancing developmental outcomes for students with varying educational requirements (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). An inclusive educational environment can be fostered through collaborative school-family connections, especially when parents contribute to strategic planning and educational decision-making processes. Multiple studies confirm that genuine parental involvement plays a crucial role in supporting the goals of inclusive education

and connecting school and home, ensuring consistent support for learners with diverse needs (Hornby, 2011). When parents especially those with children who have disabilities, participate in decision-making processes, such as developing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and maintaining regular communication with the school, students tend to experience greater academic growth and emotional engagement (Blue-Banning et al., 2004). However, challenges like limited parental awareness, poor communication channels, and a lack of confidence in navigating school systems can hinder these partnerships (Lindsay & Thompson, 1997). To establish and maintain effective collaboration, schools must implement inclusive and culturally responsive practices that view parents as equal partners in their children's educational journey. The promotion of inclusive environments greatly depends on parental involvement. The involvement of families including those with children with disabilities in the planning and communication processes is an important part of inclusion and is critical to its establishment. Engagement of this nature can enhance student outcomes, but limitations, such as insufficient awareness and poor school-family connections can impair parental work in that regard. Schools should embrace inclusive practices that are culturally responsive and view parents as partners.

Institutional and Systemic Challenges to Inclusion

Structural factors such as high-class sizes, inflexible curricula, shortage of special education teachers and a poor teacher-student ratio are some of the factors that hinder inclusive practices (Mitchell, 2014). Scholars argue that simply reforming policies is not enough; a more radical institutional reform is necessary to address the root causes of inequalities (Ainscow, 2016; Slee, 2018). The barriers to inclusive education are often rooted in the long-standing institutional culture that prioritizes equity and individual needs less (Slee, 2011). Schools operating under a strict accountability system are afraid to use inclusive approaches because they fear that they will lose the educational status quo or have to use up their limited resources (Graham & Slee, 2008). In addition, the lack of coordination between essential services such as education, health, and social welfare results in inadequate support for students with complex needs (Sharma & Deppler, 2005). These challenges are even greater in the underfunded settings, where schools lack proper infrastructure and inclusive learning materials. Achieving inclusive education requires significant system-wide changes guided by inclusive values, facilitated by inter-sectoral collaboration, and sustained through ongoing political investment. This theme addresses the issue of systemic barriers to inclusive education, such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of specialized personnel, rigged primary education structures, and ineffective teacher-student ratios. The resistance to change may stem from institutional priorities that prioritize academics over equity. Additionally, the lack of alignment of education, health, and social sectors does not assure the support to students with complex needs. In low-resource areas, these challenges are further exacerbated. These deeply rooted obstacles cannot be overcome solely through policy changes; they require institutional changes that prioritize inclusivity and collaboration across sectors.

Methodology

Methodology Introduction

The framed study utilizes a phenomenological design of qualitative study to explore and develop meanings from the life experiences of teachers and parents regarding inclusive education. Drawing on the philosophical thought of Husserl and Heidegger, phenomenology seeks to understand how individuals subjectively experience and assign a meaning to events in their lives (Creswell, 2013; van Manen, 1990). This design is ideal for the study as it allows for a detailed exploration of personal perceptions, emotions, and experiences related to the adoption of inclusive practices. Inclusive education is a personal and socially constructed phenomenon; therefore, capturing the complexity and richness of teachers and parents' experiences is crucial

(Moustakas, 1994). Rather than attempting to generalize findings, this approach emphasizes gaining a deeper understanding of the **nature of inclusion** as understood, experienced, and practiced in real-life educational contexts. It focuses on the **personal narratives** of participants and aims to uncover the subjective meanings they associate with inclusion in their daily roles as educators and caregivers (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The research seeks to identify both the **facilitating and barriers** that impact inclusive education at the grassroots level by concentrating on these firsthand accounts and the **recurring themes** that arise from them.

This section outlines the **research design, participant selection, sampling method, research setting, and data collection instruments**. Each methodological decision is purposefully made to ensure the **authenticity and trustworthiness** of the results, staying true to the lived realities of those most affected by inclusive education policies and practices (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By centering the voices of key stakeholders' teachers and parents the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of inclusion as it is genuinely experienced on the ground.

Research Design

This investigation employs a qualitative methodological approach based on phenomenology to examine the aspects of educational inclusion and analyze the lived experiences of instructors and family members. Phenomenology is a suitable framework for this research as it focuses on the subjective experiences, values, and viewpoints of participants (Creswell, 2013). This approach allows the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of the conceptualization and practical implementation of inclusive educational practices within real-life learning environments.

Participants and Sampling

Participants: The study will involve teachers, school heads, and parents of children with special needs who are enrolled in 26 centers located across various areas of Lahore, Punjab, operated by the Ghazali Education Foundation.

Sampling Strategy: The method of purposive sampling will be used to identify participants who fall into this category.

Sample Size: Approximately 10–15 teachers and 10–15 parents will be selected. Data collection will continue until data saturation is reached.

Research setting

The study will take place in schools that implement inclusive education practices, preferably within the researcher's project area or inclusive education initiative.

Data Collection Tool

Semi-structured interviews will be utilized as the primary data collection tool to gather detailed and descriptive insights. These interviews provide flexibility while addressing key questions that align with the research objectives. Interview Duration: 30–45 minutes per participant Mode: In-person or online (depending on accessibility) Recording: Audio-recorded with participant consent, followed by transcription.

Results Findings and Discussions

Theme 1: Evolving Understanding and Perception of Inclusive Education

This theme reflects a significant conceptual shift in how participants especially educators like Sir Faisal perceive inclusive education. The respondents defined inclusion as a comprehensive and transformative educational philosophy, rather than just the mainstreaming of children with disabilities. As a prominent educationist stated, inclusive education is not simply putting the disabled children in mainstream schools, it involves a complete restructuring of the education system to ensure that every child, irrespective of their physical, mental or social condition, has

access to a consistent and meaningful learning environment. The language used by participants suggests a shift from a deficit perspective to a strength based, rights-based approach, aligning with the social model of disability. Teachers described inclusive classrooms as environments where cognitive development is fostered and where social empathy and respect for others are cultivated. One teacher explained, when children with varying abilities collaborate, it benefits not only the child with a disability but also teaches all children to be more tolerant, understanding and socially aware.” Parental input confirmed this view as they cited similar arguments, stating that inclusive education promotes identity and emotional support. One parent expressed, “Now my child feels like he belongs. He is not just sitting in the classroom, but he is included in a group. These responses indicate that inclusive education is increasingly seen as a value-based and person-centered model. This aligns with international programmes such as Education for All, and the UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).

Theme 2: Systemic and Societal Barriers to Effective Implementation

Although there is considerable support for inclusive principles, participants mentioned large obstacles existing in the form of structures and systems that hinder successful implementation. One of the prevailing issues was the lack of knowledge and misconception among rural populations. According to Sir Faisal, in most villages, no one believes that their child is not normal, let alone that the child may require special care. They fear stigma and worry about what others will say about their child or if the teacher will even notice them. Lack of qualified teachers and other specialized staff, as well as lack of assistive devices, were indicated several times as significant challenges. In most cases, as one respondent explained, we work without therapy rooms, without adequate facilities and with teachers who have never been trained to handle this type of work. Another frequently reported issue was financial instability. As one education leader explained, when programs are underfunded, it leads to questioning every cost; is it enhancing the child’s learning or is it just a paper filler? The other urgent barrier spotted was that of staffing turnover in the underserved provinces such as Sindh. As Sir Faisal put it, you teach an individual, and he or she goes elsewhere after a couple of months. Then you begin all over again. *In such place’s, sustaining progress is a constant battle.*” These factors are compounded by **overcrowded classrooms and large student-teacher ratios**, which limit individual attention and tailored instruction key components of effective inclusion.

This theme reflects what **Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory** would call **meso- and exo-level disruptions**, where educational policies exist but fail to reach full implementation due to breakdowns in institutional, community, and societal systems.

Theme 3: Building Support Mechanisms and Embedding Best Practices

Amidst the challenges, participants outlined a set of **practical, culturally responsive strategies** that have led to more successful and sustainable inclusion. At the center of these strategies was **ongoing professional development**. One senior educator shared, *“One-off training sessions don’t work. What we did was provide real-time classroom-based mentoring. We observed teachers, gave feedback, and kept supporting them through cluster-based monitoring.”* This model reflects the **embedded, iterative nature** of effective professional learning as described in Desimone’s framework (2009). Participants also emphasized the use of **simple, low-cost assistive tools** developed from locally available materials. *“You don’t need fancy equipment. We created learning aids with everyday items so schools can keep using them even after the funding ends.”* The implementation of **Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)** was also seen as a game-changer. *“Every child is different,”* said one teacher, *“and when we start focusing on their potential instead of their limitations, they thrive.”*

Importantly, inclusive success was tied to **strong community and parental engagement**. Sir Faisal explained, *“At first, parents don’t trust the process. But when they see their child*

improving when a mother says ‘My child now insists on going to school’ that’s when they become advocates.” Through activities like **PTMs, home visits, and consultation camps**, parents were included not just as informants but as **co-planners and co-supporters**.

Consistent **community awareness campaigns** were another effective tool. One respondent said, *“We met with imams, village elders, and school neighbors to build a safe path from home to school.”* Such holistic efforts illustrate a **multi-level, collaborative approach** that aligns with both **inclusive pedagogical principles (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011)** and broader goals of **social transformation** through education.

Theme 4: Shifting Parental Attitudes and Emotional Journeys

This theme captures the emotional and psychological transformation that many parents undergo when engaging with inclusive education. Initially, parental reactions were marked by skepticism, fear of stigma, and concern about whether their children would be accepted, supported, or left behind in inclusive classrooms. As one parent put it, *“At first, I thought this was just charity work, but now I see this is true education.”*

Parents often ask: *“Will my child learn alongside typical children?”* or *“Will the teacher pay attention to my child?”* These concerns do not indicate ignorance, but rather reflect a deep sense of care and fear of social exclusion. This is supported by Hornby’s (2011) research, which found that parents’ worries often stem from a fear of rejection, lack of trust in the school’s abilities, and worries about social stigma. However, by actively participating in regular parent-teacher meetings, welcoming home visits, and staying informed about their children’s progress parents have been able to transition from anxious over lookers to empowered advocates.

As one mother shared, *“My son didn’t speak before, but now he insists on going to school.”* This transformation highlights the importance of relational trust, ongoing communication, and collaborative planning between schools and families (Blue-Banning et al., 2004). It also supports the understanding that inclusive education must address not only student needs but also the emotional journeys of their families, acknowledging parents as essential stakeholders in sustainable inclusion (Lindsay & Thompson, 1997).

This theme explores how parents initially approach inclusive education with fear, denial, and hesitation. Many worry whether their child will be accepted, supported, or mocked in regular classrooms. Over time, consistent communication, parent-teacher meetings (PTMs), and visible progress help shift their attitudes positively. Parents begin to trust the process and become strong supporters of inclusion. Their journey highlights the importance of emotional support and relationship-building in successful inclusive education.

Theme 5: Resourcefulness, Local Innovation, and Grassroots Solutions

This theme highlights the power of local innovation and contextual adaptability in making inclusive education functional and sustainable. In environments with limited access to assistive technologies and special education infrastructure, educators showcased ingenuity by developing learning aids from local materials, fostering teacher collaboration, and implementing real-time classroom-based mentoring.

Sir Faisal emphasized *“You don’t need fancy equipment. We created learning aids with everyday items so schools can continue using them even after the funding ends.”* These approaches are supported by studies that highlight the effectiveness of low-cost, high-impact interventions that are contextually relevant (Miles & Singal, 2010). Innovations, rooted at the local level, do not only ensure continuity but also create ownership and empowerment within the community. Moreover, the practices align with the approach to effective professional development proposed by Desimone (2009), where sustained, collaborative, and job-embedded learning is required. The participation of local stakeholders, community elders, religious leaders and parents through the process of awareness and participatory plans is a characteristic of whole community involvement

in inclusive education in line with the ideals of inclusive pedagogy and social progression (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

This theme focuses on the innovative solutions teachers create, despite limited resources, to overcome challenges using home-made teaching aids and constant mentorship. Instead of relying on expensive tools, they embrace cost effective contextual methods. Leaders and teachers build inclusion at a grass-roots level with what they have, and what is culturally appropriate. The success of these efforts should be maintained by encouraging community participation and cooperation. These grassroots strategies demonstrate that inclusive education can thrive even in low-resource settings.

Discussion

The outcomes of this research provide a comprehensive understanding of equitable education from the perspectives of educators, families, and educational administrators working in resource-constrained environments. Through systematic qualitative analysis, three primary domains were identified: (1) Conceptualization and Interpretation of Equitable Education, (2) Obstacles and Impediments to Implementation, and (3) Support Mechanisms and Best Practices. These domains highlight the contrast between the theoretical concept of equitable education and its practical implementation in Pakistan.

The first theme signifies a shift in the perception of inclusive education. Interviewees, particularly senior education leader Sir Faisal, emphasized that the traditional belief that inclusive education solely involves integrating children with disabilities into regular classes inaccurate. Instead, inclusive education is seen as a transformative practice that restructures the education system to ensure equal access and opportunities for all. Sir Faisal stressed that inclusive education goes beyond integration to redesign learning environment that caters to every child. This perspective aligns with the **social model of disability**, which posits that barriers exist within systems, not individuals (Oliver, 1990). Additionally, teachers and parents noted that inclusive environments foster empathy, cooperation, and identity development. These findings support **constructivist educational theory**, which underscore the importance of learning through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978), and align with the work of Ainscow and Miles (2008), who define inclusion as an ongoing process aimed at enhancing participation for all learners.

The second theme addresses several critical challenges faced during the implementation of inclusive practices. Participants highlighted structural issues such as the **shortage of trained teachers, lack of assistive materials, inadequate infrastructure, and staff turnover**, especially in rural and under-resourced provinces like Sindh. A persistent problem was the absence of professional support systems to sustain progress. Contributors also reported that they had to deal with significant financial limitations and a lack of transparency regarding how disposable funds were used. These challenges were complicated by cultural and social barriers. Many parents were reluctant to acknowledge that their children had additional needs out of fear that society would treat them as inferior. These issues align with Sharma, Forlin and Loreman (2008) who identified that in most South Asian settings, negative community attitudes and underprepared teachers continue to be major impediments to successful inclusion. This theme is further supported by the Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979), which explains how the educational outcomes are influenced by interactions among systems such as families, school, and broader cultural and policy systems.

The third theme sheds light on the support systems and best practices that emerged from the experiences of the participants. One major strategy identified was ongoing practice-based teacher training. Participants described how a single workshop was not sufficient, but effective methods an in-class mentor, observing in real-life, and providing individual advice. These strategies align with Desimone;s (2009) model of effective professional development, which emphasizes duration, coherence, and active learning.

Respondents also highlighted the importance of using Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and locally produced, affordable assistive devices. These practices closely align with Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2011), which promotes flexible learning environment that accommodate individual differences. Additionally, community and parental engagement were seen as essential. Schools implemented parent-teacher meetings, home visits and community awareness sessions with religious and community leaders to change the attitudes. This approach reflects what Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) refer to as inclusive pedagogy where involving of families and communities in the learning process increases student engagement and success.

The fourth theme focuses on the emotional and perceptual journey of parents in relation to inclusive education. Initially, many parents approached the concepts with hesitation, denial, or fear questioning whether their children would be accepted or learn effectively in mixed-ability classrooms. However, through ongoing interaction, visible student progress, and transparent communication, parents gradually become advocates for inclusion. Comments such as “*my child now insists on going to school*” demonstrate how trust and relational engagement can transform attitudes. This aligns with Hornby (2011), who emphasizes the importance of school-family partnerships in supporting learners with special needs. Moreover, Blue-Banning et al. (2004) assert that genuine collaborations, which involve parents as co-decision-makers, rather than passive informants, promotes more successful and sustainable inclusion. According to these findings, it is essential to support not only their learners themselves but also the emotional and perceptual needs of their families.

The final theme is grassroots resourcefulness and improvisation, which highlights overcoming resource shortages. Teachers and officials reported their design efforts of teaching materials using available resources locally, cluster-based mentoring, and engaging the local leaders to facilitate secure and nondiscriminatory learning pathways. Sir Faisal had said, as “you do not need fancy equipment, we used normal objects to make learning aids out of them.” The practices demonstrate what Miles and Singal (2010) refer to as adaptability of context in low-income environments. The effectiveness of such locally-based plans also speaks of the principles of coherence and sustainability of professional development at Desimone (2009). In addition, the formation of community awareness in the form of community initiatives in which imams and village elders commonly took part contributed to stigma decrease and collective ownership. The above strategies indicate that inclusive education can be effective without high-tech interventions in the community-centered approaches (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

In conclusion, it is evident that, as discussed, there is a growing interest among teachers and parents in Pakistan towards inclusive education. The results suggest that there is hope of moving towards meaningful change with the abandonment of large scale systemic denial and the embrace of smaller, community-based initiatives that focus on increasing resources, destigmatization and professional support with a broad vision of true progress. The study emphasizes that inclusion should not just be talked about in policies, but should be integrated into a sustainable policies, cultural insights, and frameworks that ensure comprehensive involvement of institutions. Achieving this vision would require involvement at all levels, form institutional reforms to grass roots mobilization. As highlighted in the study, inclusive education is not an administrative goal but a progressive movement based on principles of human dignity, equity, and collective responsibility.

Implementations

Inclusive education in the schools involved in the case presents a complex picture, with more sophisticated, contextual solutions on one hand, and an unavoidable gap system on the other. Researchers have made every effort to encourage teachers, especially in underprivileged and remote areas to adjust their teaching methods to accommodate the diverse learning styles of all

students. This reflects a systemic attitude towards education that aligns with the first theme September 2020 Understanding and Perception of Inclusive Education, where inclusion is not the automatic interpretation of physical integration but an epistemological pursuit of equity and inclusion by all.

Among all the practices utilized, differentiated instruction stood out as the most common. Teachers reported that they had prepared lessons to enable learners to read and practice at different levels of depth thereby honoring their own speed and stage of preparedness. The instruction was also enhanced by utilizing other means such as instructional technology, visual aids, locally available manipulative as well as grouping arrangements. These approaches conform to the ideas of Universal Design of Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2011) which not only focus on individual learner differences but also incorporate a strategies into the curriculum design to address learner variability in advance (CAST, 2011).

The issue of teamwork was essential in the implementation process. Teachers used peer-assistance learning modes, buddy system, and cooperative learning practices in their classroom to create an atmosphere of mutual support and understanding. These practices did not only enhanced academic inclusion but also contributed to the development of students, both academically and socially and emotionally, especially those with learning difficulties. These strategies align with an inclusive pedagogical approach that supports all learners, including those with special needs (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

It was identified that one of the essential facilitators of these inclusive practices was professional development. Teachers attributed mentorship programs, in-bed coaching and on the job training to the improvement of their confidence and skills. Yet, one aspect that kept being raised was the issue of discontinuity, as well as the generic nature of many professional development projects. Educators asserted the necessity of job-specific and prolonged training, as advocated by Desimone (2009) in her framework where professional learning should be job-embedded, collaborative, and should directly focus on individual teaching problems faced by educators.

Along with promising practices, the results also indicate high levels of barriers to implementation responding to the second theme Barriers and Challenges to Implementation. Overcrowded classes, unavailability of special materials and absence of assistive technology were reported as key barriers to providing meaningful inclusive instruction by educators. Additionally, the lack of classroom aides and therapy support, especially in remote regions; therefore, they left teachers to work in isolation, where they could not afford to give individual attention to students with special needs. Despite these limitations, Theme 5 (*Resourcefulness, Local Innovation, and Grassroots Solutions*) was visible in how teachers adapted. In the absence of expensive assistive tools, educators used locally available materials to create effective learning aids. They also worked with community members such as imams, village elders, and neighbors to raise awareness and ensure safe, supportive pathways from home to school. These grassroots innovations allowed schools to sustain inclusive practices even after project funding ended. These limitations are further added by the lack of uniformity in monitoring systems, making it difficult to determine the long term effects or provide constructive feedback of the effects of inclusion strategies in a timely manner.

Another major feature of implementation was parental involvement. The researchers reported that PTMs, collaborative learning plans, and school activities played a significant role in strengthening inclusive values at home. Such involvement was not only supported by academic and emotional means of support to the students according to the themes, as shown in the third theme, Support Mechanisms and Best Practices, but also facilitated the closure of the gap

between home and school. These findings align with Theme 4 (*Shifting Parental Attitudes and Emotional Journeys*), where many parents initially expressed hesitation, fear of stigma, or disbelief about their child's learning needs. However, through PTMs, open dialogue, and visible progress, parents' perceptions shifted. Teachers reported that when families felt heard and involved, they became active supporters of inclusion. Statements like "Now my child insists on going to school" reflect this emotional transformation and its positive impact on implementation. Teachers also observed that when parents understood and participated in their child's learning journey, outcomes improved, and resistance to inclusion decreased.

Overall, the implementation of inclusive education in the studied context reflects **genuine commitment from educators and emerging community partnerships**, despite significant institutional and contextual limitations. The observed practices align with globally recognized inclusive education principles, but their sustainability depends on **systemic reforms**. These reforms should include **increased investment in resources, consistent and localized teacher training, ongoing support structures, and community-wide sensitization**. Without addressing these structural gaps, the potential of inclusive education as envisioned by teachers, parents, and leaders like Sir Faisal cannot be fully realized.

Limitations and Further Research

The study is helpful in gaining an understanding of how teachers and parents view inclusive education; however, a number of limitations have to be taken into consideration. First, the study was conducted within a specific framework, focusing on schools that are a part of the Ghazali Education Foundation in Lahore, Punjab. Therefore, the full generalizability of the findings to other areas or educational institutions with different social, economic, cultural, or structural situations is not possible.

Second, the work was based on qualitative methodology and a phenomenological approach with a relatively small group of participants. While this approach allowed for a deep exploration of lived experiences, its nature limits the ability to generalize a result in a broader setting. Additionally, the participants' responses given were self-reports and could include biases such as social desirability or selective biases.

There were time constraints and difficulties accessing certain stakeholders, especially those in the remote or poor regions. The depth or the length of interviews was also influenced by logistical problems in certain instances and possibly even the content of the data gathered.

Despite these limitations, the study opens up many avenues for further research. In the future, the study could be replicated using mixed-method research to leverage the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research in understanding inclusive education practices. Comparing urban and rural environments or different provinces in Pakistan, could help identify situational differences and local issues.

Moreover, it is also possible for future studies to consider the long-term development of the effects of inclusive education programs through the perspectives of students in the first person. This would add a new dimension to the debate on inclusion by involving the opinions of children with special and without special needs. The evaluation of the effectiveness of a particular intervention like the use of assistive technology, parent support model, or the teacher training program would also help to find scalable methods that could be beneficial. In conclusion, while research has provided valuable insights into inclusive education, there is a need for additional research in this area to enhance knowledge and fill known gaps and establish desirable educational policies and practices regarding inclusive education in various contexts.

Conclusion

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to investigate the lived experiences and views of teachers and parents regarding inclusive education in the context of mainstream schooling in Lahore, Punjab. The results provide a detailed exploration of the perception and implementation of inclusive education by the major stakeholders. Parents and teachers overwhelmingly identified inclusive education as more than just the integration of children with special needs into mainstream classes. They viewed it as a values-based and holistic approach that emphasizes equity and mutual respect, empathy, and belonging. Their experience demonstrates that inclusive education can significantly contribute to the academic and socio-emotional achievements of all students when consistently supported and pursued.

However, the research also highlighted serious challenges and structural barriers to successful inclusion. These included shortage of instructional materials, inadequate professional training overcrowded and chaotic in classrooms, and institutional under-service. Despite these obstacles, parents and teachers expressed a strong willingness, in the inclusive practices, if appropriate mechanisms and support systems were in place. The research emphasized the transformative role of parental engagement, as many parents became strong supporters of inclusion after witnessing positive changes in their children's' behaviour, confidence, and learning outcomes.

The study concluded that successful inclusive education requires more than just policy reforms. It necessitates ongoing teacher training, access to appropriate resources, efforts to raise community awareness, and institutional dedication commitment. Additionally, inclusion should be viewed as continuous and dynamic process that celebrates diversity as a strength rather than a weakness. Overall the research provides valuable insights into the understanding and implementation of inclusive education in Pakistan. Offering practical recommendations to policymakers, educational leaders, and practitioners to enhance inclusive practices and create a more equitable, empathetic and effective educational environment where all children can thrive.

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