



EXPLORING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS INCLUSION IN CLASSROOM SETTINGS

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Abstract:

Inclusive education is an important part of fair and equal schooling. It aims to ensure that students with disabilities can learn and participate meaningfully in regular classroom settings along with their peers. This study focuses on understanding the views of pre-service teachers toward inclusive education. Attitudes toward inclusion are influenced by several factors, such as previous experience with inclusive classrooms, professional training, personal beliefs, and awareness of the support systems available in schools. By examining these perceptions, the study contributes to a better understanding of inclusive education and its emotional aspects. Looking at how pre-service teachers view the emotional impact of inclusion helps identify areas where more awareness, training, and policy support may be required. A clear understanding of these viewpoints can help in creating classrooms that are emotionally supportive and respectful, ensuring dignity, participation, and overall development for students with disabilities. The findings indicate some uncertainty among respondents, but overall, there is no strong belief that inclusion has negative emotional effects. This highlights the importance of providing more training and practical experiences to help future teachers develop confident and informed attitudes toward inclusive education. Improving awareness and understanding can reduce confusion and encourage more positive and evidence-based approaches to inclusive practices in schools.

Key words: Inclusive Education, Pre-Service Teachers, Attitudes, Students with Disabilities, Teacher Training, Educational Equity, Professional Development.

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Introduction: An area of interest in teacher preparation that has gradually permeated most institutions is inclusion. Inclusion has been internationally recognized as best practice in education. It is accepted as a philosophy to ensure that all children get quality education at the same time ensuring equity, equality and justice especially for those who have been historically marginalized from mainstream education due to disability, gender or other characteristics (Marin 2014). Since schools are the main contributors to society, it is imperative that inclusion in schools takes place to promote equity of diverse children that percolates to the society.

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCERT 2000) has recommended inclusive schools for learners with special educational needs by

making appropriate modification in the content, presentation and transaction strategies, preparing teachers and developing learning friendly evaluation procedures.

Teacher education is an integral component of educational system and intimately connected with society. It is, therefore, essential that teacher education programme must ensure that student teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skill and Efficacy to cope with the requirements of changing society. The trained and motivated teachers can deal effectively with all the challenges of modern society. Pre-service training and in-service training in inclusive education are very important if inclusive practices are to be implemented successfully in schools (Simi, 2008). Most of these studies found that general teachers

often have negative attitudes to inclusive education because of their lack of training, knowledge skills and self-confidence with children with special needs. Studies suggested that all teachers need to be trained on special education and inclusive practices. That means institutions offering pre-service training programs need to consider this and ensure that they make provision for special education and inclusive practices in their training programs. Those working in the field of education feel that, teacher training programme at all levels M.Ed. and B.Ed. requires a complete overhaul. “Teachers need to be sensitised and equipped to help students with different needs. Any innovation in teaching will benefit all learners, “says Thakkar (Malini Sen 2007).

Need of the Study: The current study entitled “Exploring Pre-Service Teachers’ Attitudes toward Inclusion in Classroom Settings” conducted to shed some light on the attitude of the pre-service teachers that could contribute to successful inclusion of differently abled learners. With a wide syllabus to cover in two years, the teacher preparation programs have limited bandwidth to develop practical knowledge and a positive attitude towards inclusion. With the RTE and RPWD act the number of differently abled children attending mainstream schools is increasing. The teachers are often over-burdened with curricular and co-curricular activities, which allows little time to spend on making extra effort to include diverse learners. Negative attitudes towards inclusion based on traditional thinking still act as a big social barrier and contributes to reduced self-efficacy leading to teacher stress (Barnes & Gaines, 2015). Teacher’s attitude of pity, superstition, fear of change and doing something wrong governs his/her behaviour towards diverse class. Hence there is an imperative need for training programmes for preservice teachers to directly develop their thinking, attitudes, confidence and skills to ensure

inclusion. Studying pre-service teachers’ attitudes is particularly significant because it allows teacher educators to intervene early in the professional development process. By identifying attitudinal gaps and concerns, teacher education institutions can redesign curricula, enhance practicum experiences, and provide targeted support. The findings of the present study are expected to benefit teacher educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, and researchers by offering insights into how teacher preparation programs can better promote inclusive values and practices.

The Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the level of attitude of pre-service teachers towards inclusion in classroom setting.
2. To analyse the cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion.
3. To identify factors influencing pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards inclusive education.

Research Question:

1. What is the nature of pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion in classroom settings?

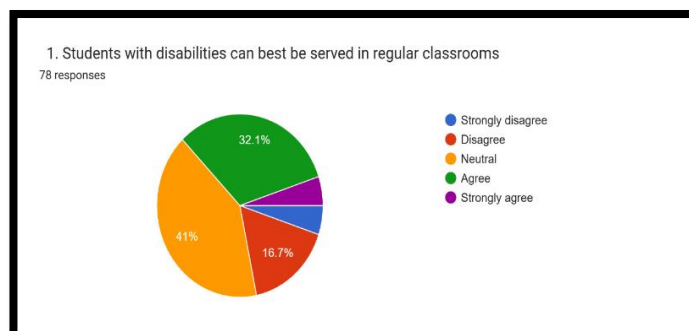
Methodology of the Study: The study adopted a descriptive survey design, which is suitable for finding attitudes and perceptions of pre-service teachers.

Sample: The sample comprised of 78 pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher education programs at Sarada Kurup College of Education and Research, Ghansoli. A convenient sampling technique was used to select participants. The sample included both male and female pre-service teachers from different academic backgrounds.

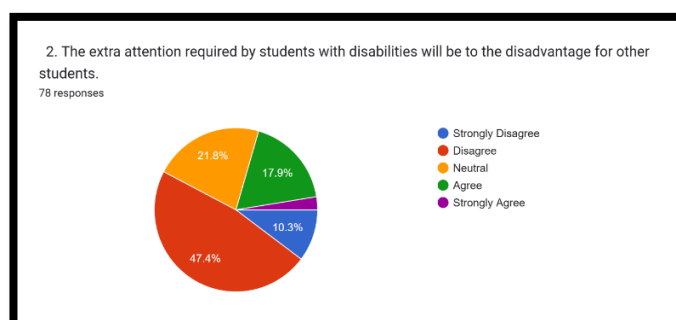
Tool of the Study:

Data were collected using a standardized attitude scale towards inclusive education. The scale consisted of 20 items measuring different components of attitude

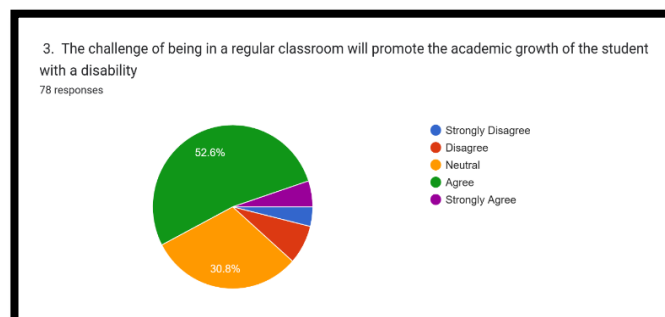
Data Analysis: For the present study, the researcher used the Descriptive Analysis. Percentage was used to analyse the data are as follows;



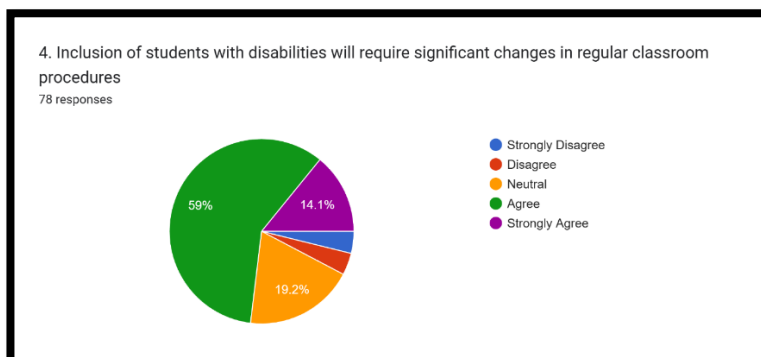
- 41% of the pre-service teachers expressed a Neutral opinion, indicating lack of clarity about the effectiveness of inclusive classrooms for students with disabilities. 32.1% agreed with the statement, reflecting a moderately positive attitude toward inclusion. 16.7% disagreed, suggesting concerns about the feasibility of serving students with disabilities in regular classrooms.



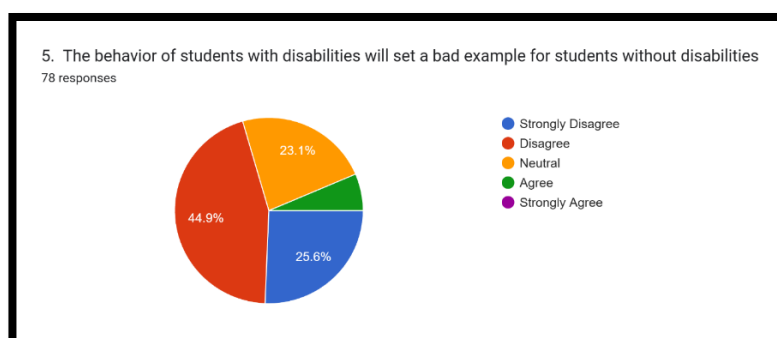
- 47.4% of the pre-service teachers disagreed and 10.3% strongly disagreed with the statement, reflecting a positive and inclusive attitude. 21.8% expressed a neutral opinion, 17.9% agreed, while a very small percentage strongly agreed, indicating that a minority of respondents still perceive inclusion as potentially burdensome for general classroom instruction.



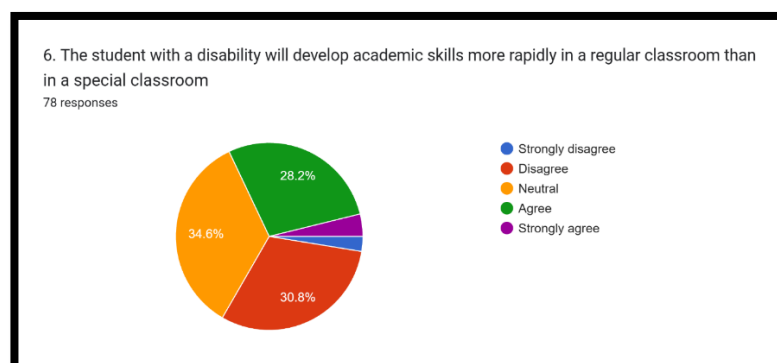
- A majority of respondents (52.6%) agreed with the statement, indicating confidence that exposure to regular classroom challenges can enhance the academic growth of students with disabilities. 30.8% of the respondents reported a neutral stance, suggesting partial acceptance or cautious optimism, possibly influenced by limited firsthand experience with inclusive settings. Only a small proportion disagreed or strongly disagreed, while a minimal percentage strongly agreed, reflecting relatively low resistance to this belief.



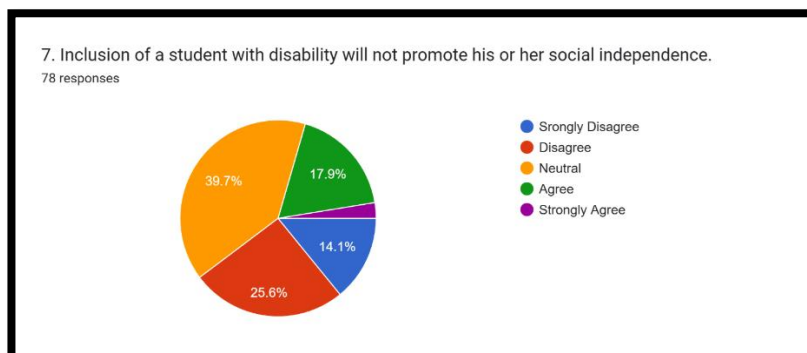
- 59% of the respondents agreed with the statement, while 14.1% strongly agreed, showing inclusion necessitates meaningful modifications in classroom practices. 19.2% of the respondents remained neutral, reflecting uncertainty regarding the extent or nature of such changes. Only a small proportion disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating minimal resistance to the idea that traditional classroom procedures may need adaptation.



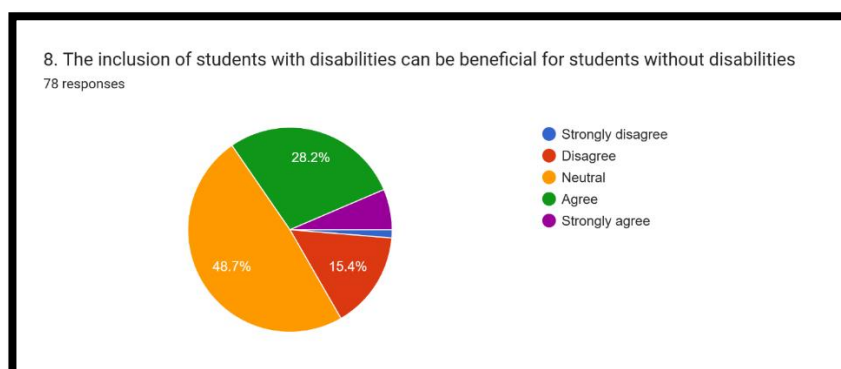
- 44.9% of the respondents disagreed and 25.6% strongly disagreed with the statement, that students with disabilities do not negatively influence their peers. 23.1% of the respondents expressed a neutral opinion, suggesting uncertainty or limited exposure to inclusive peer interactions.



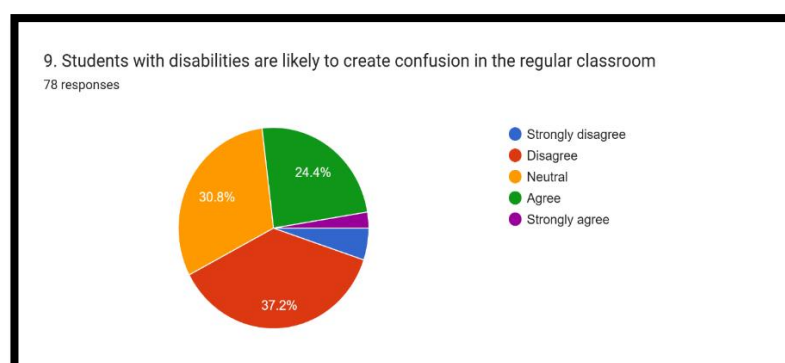
- 34.6% of the respondents expressed a neutral view, indicating that academic progress may depend on individual needs and contextual factors. 30.8% disagreed and a small percentage strongly disagreed, together suggesting that they do not believe regular classrooms automatically ensure faster academic development. 28.2% agreed, while only a very small proportion strongly agreed, reflecting moderate confidence in inclusive settings for promoting academic skills.



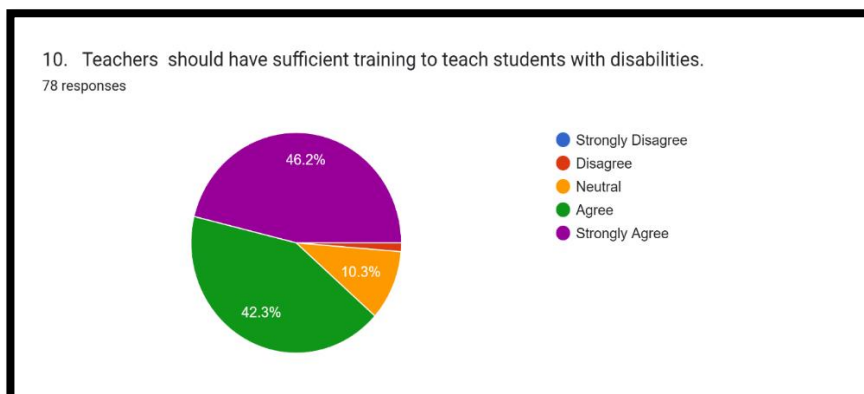
- 39.7% of the respondents expressed a neutral stance, about the relationship between inclusion and the development of social independence. 25.6% disagreed and 14.1% strongly disagreed, suggesting that a substantial proportion of respondents believe inclusion does promote social independence.



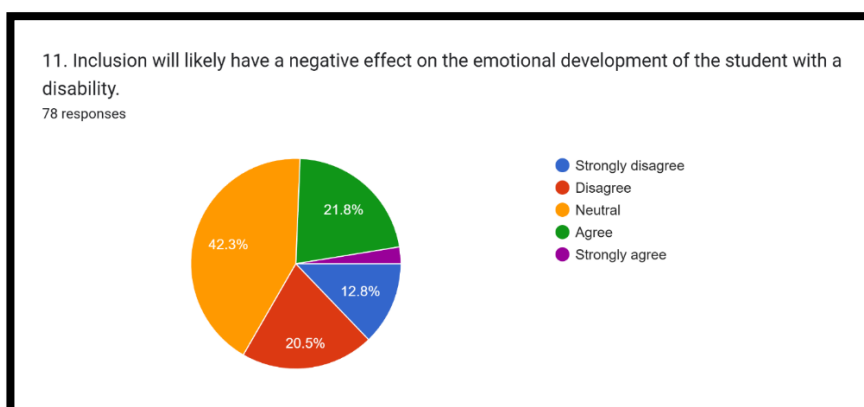
- 48.7% of the respondents expressed a neutral opinion, suggests uncertainty or limited awareness of how inclusion benefits students without disabilities. 28.2% agreed and a small percentage strongly agreed, indicating that they recognize the positive impact of inclusion on empathy, cooperation, and social learning among all students. 15.4% disagreed, while only a very small percentage strongly disagreed.



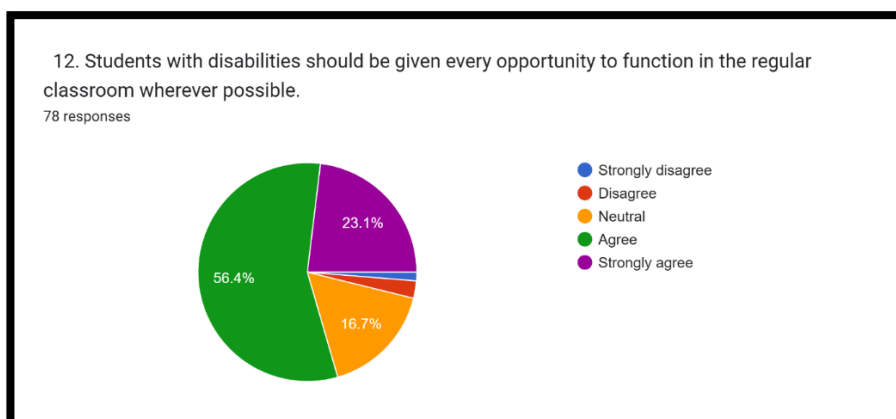
- 37.2% of the respondents disagreed and a small proportion strongly disagreed, indicating that they do not agree that inclusion creates classroom confusion. 30.8% expressed a neutral stance, suggesting uncertainty or lack of confidence in managing inclusive classrooms. 24.4% agreed, while only a very small percentage strongly agreed, reflecting that some respondents still anticipate classroom management challenges related to inclusion.



- **88.5%** of respondents either *agree* or *strongly agree* that teachers should have sufficient training to teach students with disabilities. 10.3% of the respondents suggested Neutral possibly due to lack of exposure, experience, or clarity about inclusive teaching practices.



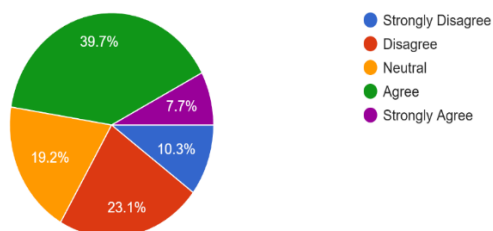
- The largest proportion of respondents (42.3%) chose ‘Neutral’, indicating uncertainty or mixed opinions about the emotional impact of inclusion on students with disabilities. 33.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, suggesting that many respondents do not believe inclusion has a negative emotional impact .



- 79.5% of respondents either agree or strongly agree with providing students with disabilities every opportunity to function in regular classrooms. This reflects a strong endorsement of inclusive education practices.

13. The classroom behavior of the student with or without disability generally requires same degree of patience from the teacher.

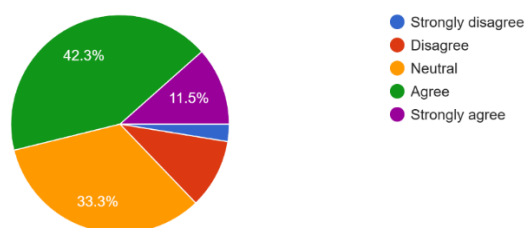
78 responses



- 39.7 % of the respondents agree and 7.7% strongly agree that teachers need a similar level of patience when dealing with students with or without disabilities.

14. Teaching students with disabilities is better done by special- than by regular-classroom teachers

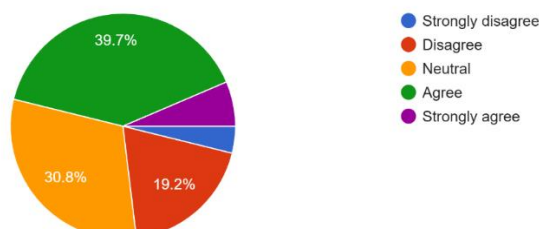
78 responses



- 53.8% of respondents agree or strongly agree that students with disabilities are better taught by special teachers, indicating a belief in the importance of specialized training and expertise.

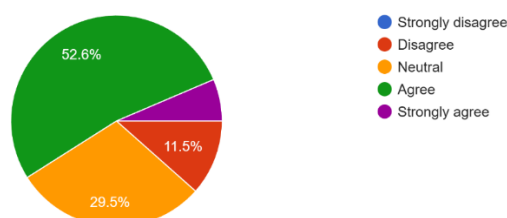
15. The student with a disability will not be socially isolated in the regular classroom.

78 responses



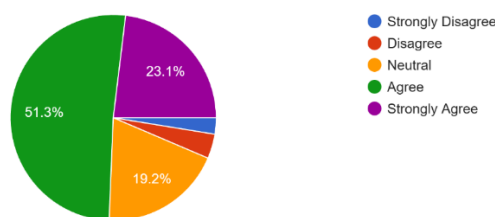
- About 47–48% of respondents agree or strongly agree that students with disabilities will not be socially isolated in regular classrooms. 30.8% responded neutral, and nearly 23% disagree or strongly disagree, reflecting that students with disabilities may experience social isolation even in inclusive settings.

16. Differentiating and adapting instructions would increase the workload of a teacher when there is a student with disability in the class
78 responses



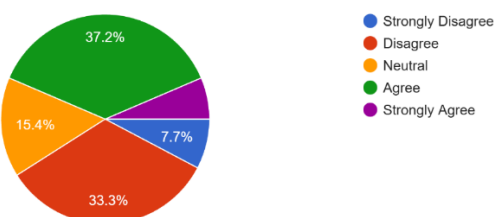
- 52.6% to the statement that differentiating and adapting instruction increases teachers' workload. A small proportion (11.5%) disagreed, indicating that some respondents believe differentiation is a normal part of teaching and does not necessarily add to workload.

17. Students with disabilities will need infrastructure accessibility to access all areas of the school building
78 responses



- 51.3% of respondents strongly agree and 23.1% agree that infrastructure accessibility is essential for students with disabilities. 19.2% responded as neutral and very few respondents disagreed, suggesting minimal resistance to the idea of making school infrastructure accessible.

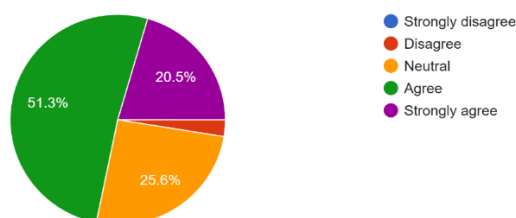
18. Same quantity of instructional material and teaching aids are required for students with or without disabilities
78 responses



- 44.9% (Agree + Strongly Agree) believe that the same quantity of instructional materials and teaching aids is sufficient for students with or without disabilities. 41% (Disagree + Strongly Disagree) feel that students with disabilities require different or additional instructional materials.

19. Inclusion requires teachers who have students with disabilities in their class to cooperate and collaborate with each other and other team members in the school.

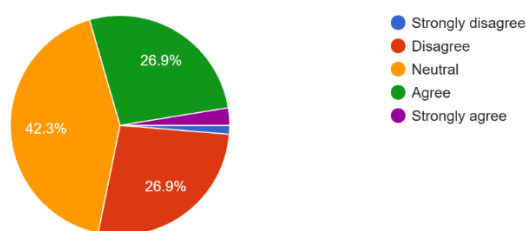
78 responses



- 20.5 % of respondents strongly agree and 51.3% agree that collaboration among teachers and school team members is essential for effective inclusion. 25.6% responded towards neutral and a very few respondents disagreed, indicating broad acceptance of collaboration as a key requirement for inclusive education.

20. More liberty to explore in the regular classroom will create too much confusion for students with disabilities.

78 responses



- 42.3% of the respondents chose 'Neutral', indicating uncertainty in the opinion that more liberty will create too much confusion for students with disabilities.

Findings of the Study :

- Most pre-service teachers do not view additional support for students with disabilities as a threat to the learning opportunities of other students.
- Pre-service teachers largely endorse the developmental value of inclusive classrooms, particularly in terms of academic stimulation and growth.
- Pre-service teachers largely reject stereotypes that portray students with disabilities as behavioural risks or negative role models.
- Many pre-service teachers lack confidence or

concrete understanding of how inclusive environments foster social independence, peer interaction, and autonomy among students with disabilities.

- Many pre-service teachers do not yet clearly perceive inclusion as mutually beneficial.
- They suggested adequate training is essential for teachers working with students with disabilities
- They also suggested the need for **greater awareness, training, and exposure to effective inclusive practices**, which can help clarify misconceptions and build confidence in inclusive education.

- Pre-service teachers believe that **teaching students with disabilities may demand greater patience and specialized understanding.**
- Most of the responses suggested that preference for **specialized support rather than complete segregation**, emphasizing the need for **training regular teachers in inclusive practices.**
- Majority of the responses suggested that **inclusion alone is not sufficient** and proactive measures are essential to ensure meaningful social integration of students with disabilities.
- A large number of respondents strongly recognize that **physical accessibility is a foundational requirement for inclusive education.**
- Collaborative practices are considered fundamental to successful inclusive education by majority of Pre-service teachers.

Conclusion and Suggestions:

The findings of the study indicate that pre-service teachers generally hold positive and progressive attitudes toward inclusive education. However, despite these favourable attitudes, many pre-service teachers demonstrate limited confidence and insufficient understanding of how inclusive environments promote social independence, peer interaction, and autonomy among students with disabilities. Inclusion is often not perceived as mutually beneficial, particularly in social and emotional dimensions. The responses suggest that while inclusion is supported in principle, pre-service teachers feel inadequately prepared to implement inclusive practices effectively.

The study also highlights a strong consensus on the need for adequate training, collaboration, physical accessibility, and proactive strategies to ensure meaningful inclusion. Pre-service teachers emphasize the importance of specialized support within regular classrooms rather than complete segregation, reinforcing the idea that inclusion requires structured

planning, professional competence, and institutional support to be truly effective.

Based on the findings, the following suggestions are recommended:

1. **Strengthening Teacher Education Programs**
Teacher education curricula should include comprehensive and practical training on inclusive education, focusing on classroom strategies, differentiated instruction, and management of diverse learning needs.
2. **Increased Exposure to Inclusive Settings**
Pre-service teachers should be provided with greater field-based experiences, school internships, and observations in inclusive classrooms to build confidence and practical understanding.
3. **Focused Training on Social Inclusion**
Special emphasis should be placed on helping pre-service teachers understand how inclusion fosters social independence, peer interaction, and autonomy among students with disabilities.
4. **Promotion of Collaborative Practices**
Training programs should encourage collaboration among general educators, special educators, counsellors, and parents to support inclusive education effectively.
5. **Awareness and Sensitization Programs**
Workshops, seminars, and reflective discussions can help address misconceptions about inclusion and reinforce the idea of mutual benefits for all learners.
6. **Ensuring Physical and Institutional Accessibility**
Educational institutions must prioritize physical accessibility and provide adequate resources, assistive technologies, and support services to facilitate inclusive learning environments.
7. **Proactive Measures for Meaningful Inclusion**
Inclusion should go beyond physical placement; structured activities, peer-support systems, and

social integration strategies should be implemented to ensure holistic development.

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