



Exploring the Factors and Concerns of Teachers Readiness for Inclusive Education in Pakistan: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate the readiness of teachers toward inclusion in the educational process, and to explore the factors that influence special educators' readiness for inclusive education. The qualitative design was used. The semi-structured interviews were conducted till saturation by using the phenomenological approach. The interviews were conducted by the researcher using the purposive sampling method. Teachers were selected to ensure a sample of teachers teaching in inclusive schools and in segregated special schools fulfilling the purpose of the study. On the basis of the analysis, it was revealed that factors affecting the personal readiness of special educators include general school teachers' negative attitudes toward children with disabilities, financial issues and lack of infrastructure adaptations in regular schools, Parental attitude and participation toward inclusive education, inclusion looks less practical, bullying, administrative support, less commitment of the stakeholders, standardized curriculum and assessment procedures. The factors affecting the professional readiness of special educators include lack of pre-service and in-service training on inclusive education, training of special education, single course on inclusive education, and less exposure of the practical or field work related to inclusive education. The factors affecting the psychological readiness of special educators include hesitant to change, less privileged status, perceived ease of the traditional practices, less collaborative intentions of the general educators, high expectation of the stakeholders in inclusive education. The concerns regarding inclusive education include more accountability in IE, identity crisis, increased workload, job security, and new learning paradigm.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Personal Readiness, Professional Readiness, Psychological Readiness, Segregation, Special Education teachers

1. Introduction

Van derMeulen et al. (2014) advocated for full inclusion in educational settings, which they defined as an ideal scenario in which all kids, including those individuals with severe disabilities and those individuals who are exceptionally bright, are taught in ordinary classrooms. International literature actively explores inclusive education, which is now a necessary fact, and its need to implement in Pakistan demonstrates that there is a scope of organizational and economic hindrances, including the absence of readiness of the members involved in the educational process to include a special child. Some cultural-specific factors in Pakistan, along with common problems, make it hard to go to inclusive education, primarily on account of existing peculiarities of the general and special education system, pedagogical practices, and the assumptions that exist in our general public about individuals with disabilities. Pershina and Shamardina (2018) note that the psychological barrier is the fear of harm to inclusion in the educational process for different students, negative insights and inclinations, the teacher's professional insecurity, and mental ineptness to work in inclusive environments with special children.

Few inclusive schools are active in Pakistan's urban areas. In those institutions, the full-inclusion model is still not evident (Thakur & Abbas, 2017). As far as accommodation types are concerned, it has been recorded that the curriculum is marginally changed in few inclusive schools in large urban cities of the country, not taking into account the actual requirements of the child. In Pakistan's urban regions, there are not many inclusive schools operating, and the schools that do are not doing enough to meet the varied requirements of the children with disabilities. Rarely is full inclusion apparent. Mainstream schools are reluctant to attend these kids. Parents and guardians of disabled children are dissatisfied with the current inclusive learning environments (Akram & Bashir, 2012).

Even after having the legislation, the implementation of inclusive education in its real sense is still incipient. One possible reason is the discriminatory resistance of society (Alexiu et al., 2016). Special education teachers are of the view that the ideal placement for special students is a self-contained class that will accomplish the needs of the students with special needs in this situation and will further ensure that these students are not mistreated by others (Bekirogullari, et al., 2011). Opinions were sought from general education secondary school teachers in seven select schools participating in the Northwest Region of Cameroon's pilot inclusive education program. The results indicate that most teachers in Cameroon still prefer a segregated system of education for children with disabilities (Mngo & Mngo, 2018).

Teachers advocate inclusion as they believe that it promotes democratic principles of equity and human rights as well as acknowledges and respects difference. They believe that positive improvements should be employed before implementations at the school level because they are concerned about the practical realities at the level of the classroom, which they perceive as

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barriers to inclusive education. These realities, which include time constraints, crowded classrooms, and a lack of specialized training, make successful implementation of inclusion challenging (Materechera, 2020).

Teachers in Finland claimed that inclusion was successful because of practical steps like pedagogical and technical support (Takala & Sume, 2017). According to studies, parents of disabled children have expressed concerns that their kids cannot perform well in inclusive schools and their academic performance suffers. They consider that the poor performance of their kids is essentially due to the lack of trained teachers, or their inadequately imparted training (Ehsan, 2018; Skrebneva, 2015). More research is being conducted on teachers' knowledge and comprehension related to teacher readiness for inclusive education (Ekstam, et al., 2018; Unianu, 2012; Moti et al., 2016). The majority of this research focused on two distinct but frequently converging areas: (1) knowledge of inclusive or special education, and (2) knowledge of the subjects that teachers are assigned to teach. Moti et al. (2016) came to a similar conclusion and confirmed that teachers' understanding of inclusivity in education greatly influenced the practices of inclusive education. These studies emphasize the significance of inclusive teacher training curricula for raising inclusion-ready teachers (Sharma et al., 2018). Teachers must possess subject-specific expertise in addition to knowledge of inclusive education theory and practice. The development of teachers' professional readiness is a component and a prerequisite for the adoption of inclusive educational practices (Slusareva et al., 2019).

Special education teachers are usually working in the two systems in Pakistan. Teachers working in public sector special education schools are providing services to exceptional learners with a belief in the psycho medical paradigm of special education. They usually believe that exceptional learners can better learn in a special education institution with specialized instructions. Whereas some special education teachers are working with children with special needs in the private sector inclusive schools by following the sociological paradigm of special education. It is the need of the hour to compare and explore the factors that contribute toward the readiness of special educators (working in special and inclusive schools) for the inclusion of learners with disabilities.

The current study aims at describing the individual experience of teachers in self-contained classrooms of special needs students and special educators working in inclusive schools following inclusive pedagogy, highlighting whether their achievements and difficulties they come across have contributed to a change in their perspectives, beliefs, and readiness. Furthermore, exploring the factors affecting the readiness of special educators for inclusive education.

1.1. Research Questions

- What is the level of readiness of special educators for the inclusion of learners with disabilities?
- What are the factors of personal, psychological, and professional readiness of special educators for inclusive education?
- What are the perceived concerns of special educators for the implementation of inclusive education?
- How to improve the readiness of special educators for the inclusion of students with disabilities?

1.2. Significance of the Study

This study is substantial in the following ways: This study provides insight into the factors that affect the readiness of special educators (working in special and inclusive schools) for inclusion. The findings of the study may be useful in understanding the ethos and mindset of special educators (working in special and inclusive schools), which shape their opinion and will lead toward the readiness for inclusion or segregation of the learners with disabilities. Previous studies in Pakistan have contributed toward the perceptions and opinions and efficacy of the general and special educators concerning inclusive education. But we have limited local and contextual studies regarding the factors that positively or either negatively contribute toward the readiness for inclusion. The study is an attempt to uncover, disclose, or reveal how the particular ideologies affect the readiness for the inclusion of learners with disabilities.

2. Methodology

The qualitative design was used in the present study. The semi-structured interviews were conducted till saturation by using the phenomenological approach. This method “allows the researcher to collect open-ended data, to explore participant thoughts, feelings and beliefs about a particular phenomenon, and to derive deeply into personal and sometimes sensitive issues” (Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

The interviews were conducted by the researcher using the purposive sampling method. This method of sampling is employed in qualitative research because the size of the research sample depends on the purpose of the study. Hence, the target population must consist of relevant individuals and according to the research purpose (Patton, 2015; Zikmund et al., 2013). The rationale to use this technique was that it identifies information-rich participants to seek an understating of the phenomenon. Twelve special educators were selected as research participants through purposeful sampling techniques (Patton, 2015), because this research presents multiple perspectives from diverse participants of different schools. Teachers were selected to ensure a sample of teachers teaching in inclusive schools and in segregated special schools fulfilling the purpose of the study. Twelve special education teachers (6 from special / segregated schools and 6 from inclusive schools) were selected as the participants of the study.

The following were the demographic information of the study participants.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Study Participants

Participant Code	Gender	Qualification	Experience (Years)	School Setting
Spe-1	Female	MPhil Special Education	4	Special / Segregated School
Spe-2	Female	Mphil Special Education	11	Special / Segregated School
Spe-3	Female	MA Special Education	11	Special / Segregated School
Spe-4	Male	M.A Special Education	5	Special / Segregated School
Spe-5	Male	Mphil Special Education	6	Special / Segregated School
Spe-6	Male	M.A Special Education	4	Special / Segregated School
Inc-1	Female	MA Special Education	2	Inclusive School
Inc-2	Female	ADCP (Advance Diploma in Clinical Psychology)	11	Inclusive School
Inc-3	Female	BA	1	Inclusive School
Inc-4	Female	BS Psychology	2	Inclusive School
Inc-5	Female	ADCP	2	Inclusive School
Inc-6	Female	MA Special Education	3	Inclusive School

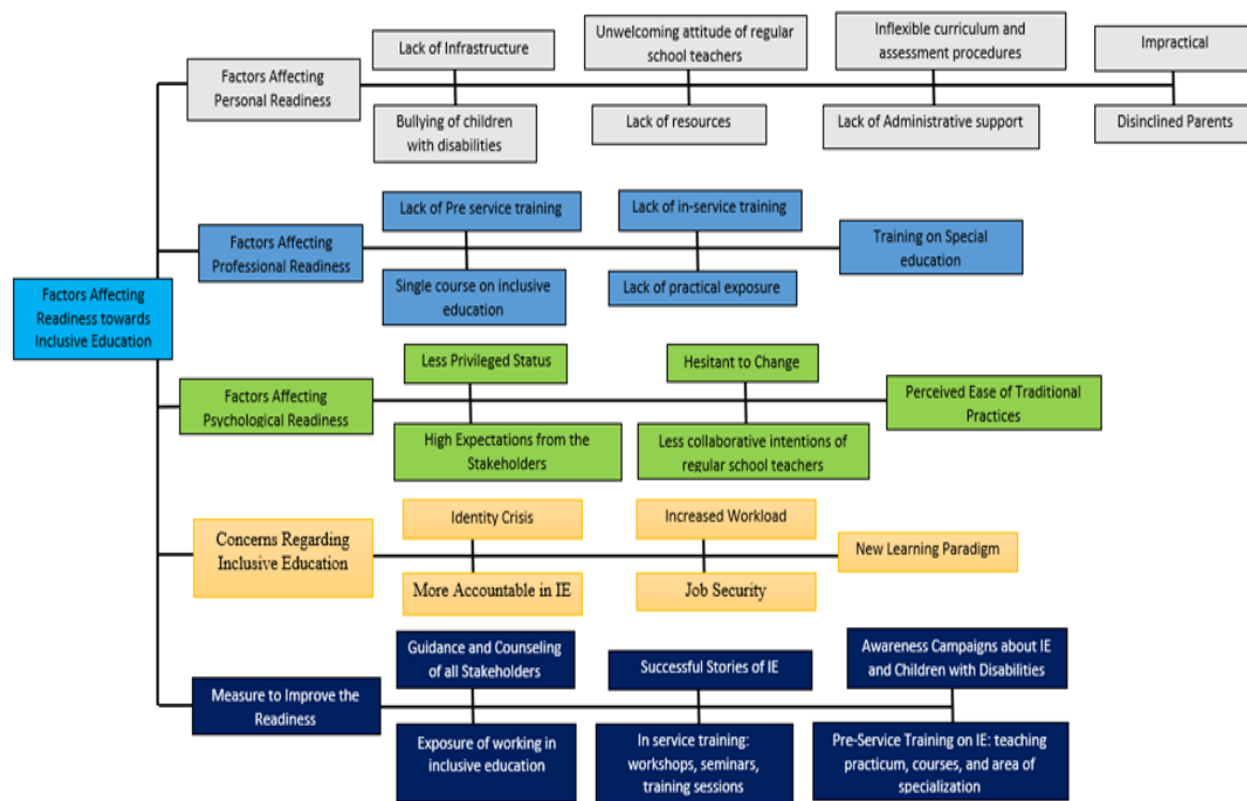
A semi-structured interview schedule was developed. The interview questions were asked from the teachers (working in special and inclusive schools) to investigate the factors that affect the readiness of teachers for inclusion. Interviews were conducted and recorded in the local language Urdu keeping in view the convenience and comfortability of the teachers. Interviews were conducted in order to explore the factors affecting the readiness of special educators for inclusive education. Their level of readiness regarding personal, professional and psychological aspects toward inclusive education was also investigated.

Recorded interviews were translated and transcribed from Urdu to English by the researcher for further analysis. Coding and further analysis processes were made based on transcribed data in English. Because the researcher is from the same province where the research was conducted, she was familiar with both the culture and Urdu language of the participants. For translation accuracy, five random transcripts were reviewed by an English language expert. All ethical considerations like confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were kept in mind during the process involved in the conduction of semi-structured interviews. Interviews were transcribed and coded. Tesch's guidelines for open coding were used to code the data as collected (Creswell, 2009). The following steps were followed when performing the data analysis for the qualitative phase: Formulating the interview guide, carrying out the interviews, Analyzing the data (Krefting, 1991; Shenton, 2004). After reviewing all available options, the researcher decided to use Ary's (2018) approach to analyze the interview data. This strategy was chosen because it was comprehensive and offered simple steps that could be used to analyze qualitative data. In the current study, the interview data were analyzed using three stages of this approach, which were as follows; organizing and familiarizing; coding and reducing; and interpreting and representing.

As in qualitative research, it is important to use the concept of trustworthiness instead of three concepts used in quantitative research, that is, reliability, validity and generalizability. Trustworthiness was dealt with in three aspects which are, credibility, dependability and transferability (Elo et al., 2014). Regarding the current study member checking technique was practiced, as this is also one of the important techniques to establish the credibility of qualitative research. This technique was employed by letting participants review the interpretations and findings of the relevant researcher. The findings of the teachers' interviews were shared with the participants of the study allowing them to add or edit their statements. External audit was carried out through a few PhD researchers after monitoring the procedure of the researcher. The focus was to monitor all the data systematically since an external auditor monitors the findings and interpretation relevant to the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, the readers had evidence that the findings of the study would be made applicable in different situations, populations and contexts. This aspect was completed by providing complete demographic information of the participants. Therefore, to facilitate the reader, all the demographic information about the participants of the study such as qualification, experience and school setting were provided for the current study.

3. Data Analysis

Following figure illustrates the themes and sub-themes derived from the categories of semi-structured interviews:



This section presents the qualitative analysis of interviews conducted to explore the readiness of special education teachers related to IE. Moreover, the concerns affecting the readiness of special education teachers toward IE were also explored.

3.1. Personal readiness

Most of the participants were in favor of IE. They demonstrated an inclination, and willingness to its implementation and expressed strong beliefs to make serious efforts to remove barriers for children with disabilities and make the learning environment more accessible for all. They opined that it is a way of creating an educational environment which is non-discriminatory and believes in the equitable learning opportunities for all in society. One of the participants expressed a favorable opinion in the in the following words:

“IE helps to remove the stigma of disability from the individuals. The children get an opportunity to play and learn with normal peers and IE helps to groom the children with disabilities” (Inc-2)

One of the participants added:

“Disability indicates a diversity but society excludes those with disability and because of the attitudes of the society parents of the children with disabilities suffer a lot. My mother wanted my elder sister (who was blind) to get enrolled in a regular school but the school didn't give her admission. Hence, IE is a great initiative and should be implemented in Pakistan “ (Inc-3)

Some of the participants were disinclined toward IE, and their attitude was unwelcoming. They were of the view that it is not possible to implement it in Pakistan keeping in view the challenges it involves. It is a daunting task which does not seem feasible. The ground realities, and the pros and cons should be considered, because unrealistic goals are not achievable and as it is a Eurocentric approach based on foreign agenda which is not in accordance with our society and due to certain barriers, it is not an achievable goal to implement IE in Pakistan. One of the teachers of special education working in special schools expressed her concerns in the following words:

“There are several ground realities and multiple factors which need to be gauged. We usually try to follow the global practices of education but we ignore indigenous ground realities and local context in which we are living. So there are many barriers due to which we cannot implement IE in Pakistan. In my opinion, IE should not be implemented for children with disabilities” (Spe-2).

Another teacher of special school stated:

“The notion of IE appears to be very appealing in books and sounds appealing in speeches but it is not practically possible. Unfortunately, it is a flop project which will end in total failure in Pakistan. In fact, you will ruin the future of the children with disabilities if Inclusion is put into practice” (Spe-3).

Some teachers were of the belief that IE is appropriate for children with mild to moderate levels of disabilities. The children with severe to profound levels of disabilities should be accommodated in special / segregated schools since their needs can be addressed and met in special schools more appropriately. It is impossible rather than challenging to accommodate such learners in regular schools. One of the participants stated it in the following words:

"We cannot include all the learners in an IE system. Yes, children with mild level of disability can be accommodated in IE and for the rest of the children with disabilities segregated system is far better than IE" (Spe- 2)

There are certain factors which affect the personal readiness of special educators for IE. According to the special educators, regular / general school teachers have a very disapproving attitude toward children with disabilities. They are not ready to include such learners in their classroom. They show an unwelcoming attitude to the inclusion of the learners with disabilities in regular classrooms. One of the teachers working in inclusive setup explained that in the following words:

"Because of the behavior of the regular school teachers' children with disabilities may face discrimination which will end in an inferiority complex" (Inc-5).

One of the participants explained this in the following words:

"General education teachers may not accept such children in regular classrooms. In fact, I am dealing with mentally challenged children. Such children can't be accommodated in centers by special education teachers. Only the teachers with specialization in MCC are supposed to be addressed by their children" (Spe- 4).

Furthermore, they added that due to financial issues and lack of infrastructure adaptations in regular schools, IE is challenging yet impossible. Parental attitude and participation play an essential role in this regard. It was explained by a teacher in the following words:

Schools should be accessible for children with disabilities. We need to work on the infrastructure in regular schools for accommodating the children with disabilities. We need to work on a differentiated curriculum for them with reference to IE (Spe- 1).

Parents of the children without exceptionalities will also show reluctance to let their children get education in regular schools with special children. Due to the lack of awareness about the disabilities, people stigmatize such persons and have misconceptions about them. Parents have concerns regarding IE due to lack of or zero awareness. They usually believe that such learners are not educated so they may be unwilling to let their children study in schools where they have peers with special needs in their classrooms. In fact, parents of the children with disabilities are not even willing to get their children enrolled in regular schools. They believe that the needs of their children can be better addressed in special schools. One of the participants stated it in the following words:

"Parents don't accept children with disabilities in IE. Parents having normal children don't want IE and even parents of children with disabilities also want their children in special education schools. They think their kids are safer in special education schools. They don't understand the benefits of IE. General schools are also not ready" (Inc - 4).

One of the teachers stated:

"Parents are not ready for inclusion. They are of the view that if their kids do not feel comfortable with their normal siblings, how is it possible for them to participate and achieve academically with normal peers. In fact, parents usually become over protective toward their disabled children or sometimes they ignore them due to their disabilities. They feel that their children with disabilities are different so they can't be ready for inclusion" (Spe - 2)

Special educators further added that bullying is also one of the factors that affects their personal readiness for the inclusion of the learners with disabilities in regular classrooms. It is difficult for teachers to control this issue and due to the behavior of children without disabilities special children will suffer in IE. It will shake their confidence and it will end in the inferiority complex in regular schools due to the inappropriate behavior of the regular schools' children.

One of the teachers described it in the following words:

"If you practice to include such children in regular classrooms, normal learners will not accept it. Children with disabilities face bullying. Children of general education make fun of differences. It is possible that either one or two kids in regular schools might accept children with disabilities but what if the majority of the kids in class do not accept it? In fact, children in regular schools make fun of even those kids who have minor differences (on the basis of physical appearance). Children with disabilities are safer in special schools. They should be accommodated here. They feel more comfortable in their community. Let them achieve their optimal level here in special schools. We need to work to improve this system rather than run toward inclusion. This is mere a waste of time and resources to try to make them include or try to make their presence and participation possible in inclusion" (Spe- 3)

Furthermore, another special educator added it in the following words:

"They have less sharing relations with their parents and normal siblings. They have more interactive relationships with their disabled peers. They feel safe in their community. IE will deprive them from their right to education. A child with good grades in a segregated setup will not be able to compete with normal peers in IE" (Spe- 2).

One special educator working in IE stated it in the following words:

"I have noticed a flaw of IE which I also feel in my institution. Normal children usually avoid children with disabilities. We have to convince them or force them to socialize and interact with children with disabilities. There are certain situations of bullying and avoidance which a child with disabilities faces in IE" (Inc- 5).

Special educators working in segregated schools have apprehensions regarding the achievement of the learners with disabilities in regular schools. They feel that due to the standardized curriculum and assessment practices, it is possible to accommodate the learners with disabilities in regular schools. They cannot compete with their normal peers. If they are performing in segregated schools, they may not be able to achieve that in regular schools; it may lead to the inferiority complex, and they may lose their confidence. One of the participants added that in the following words:

"These children's achievement level is low and different from normal learners. We cannot judge them on their academics in regular schools. Because the assessment practices of regular schools are different from the assessment practices of special schools. So I don't think it is possible to implement IE in Pakistan". (Spe-5)

In order to improve the personal readiness of special educators for IE and to address the concerns related to the personal readiness, they suggested that guidance and counseling of special educators themselves, general education teachers, parents and even the children with disabilities and without disabilities is essential. Without proper counseling, they all cannot be personally ready for IE. Awareness campaigns are also very important. In order to give awareness to the general public about IE, its importance and requirements, and further about the potentials and rights of children with disabilities, awareness campaigns should be launched at different levels. Teachers working in inclusive settings also recommended that exposure to working in IE prepare you to work in IE. Without working in a particular situation, you just make your pre-supposed assumptions about its failure and further they added that success stories of IE should be communicated. The achievements of the learners in IE should be communicated and shared with teachers who support segregated set ups for learners with disabilities. In this way, we can make them believe in IE. One of the participants expressed it in the following words:

"When we start working with IE, we start being ready for it. We start believing in IE. When such children start to progress in IE then we start believing in IE" (Inc-3).

3.2. Professional Readiness

According to the participants of the study, they were not professionally prepared to work in IE. Most of the participants have studied a single course on IE which was offered during their pre-service teachers training program. One of the teachers explained that in the following words:

"We just studied a single course on IE. Even in teaching practice, we were supposed to get training in our area of specializations. We hadn't done any teaching practice in IE set up". (Spe - 4)

Especially teachers working in segregated schools believe that they have been trained to teach in segregated schools. They are not being trained to teach in an inclusive set-up. They are not aware of inclusive pedagogy. Their teachers' training program was for special education not for IE. In fact, their training programs offered the further area of specializations in which they were being prepared to teach a specific disability, and hence they were not provided training to cater the needs of all disabilities. So, they feel the need that professional development courses should prepare the teachers for IE. One of the teachers explained it in the following words:

"At university level there should be an area of specializations on IE. They should provide hands-on experience. Practical skills should be developed for IE". (Spe- 5).

Teachers working in inclusive settings also added that practical exposure of inclusive settings is also very fundamental. They informed that before working in an inclusive setting, they were not convinced of its practical implementation. However, after working in the setting they started believing in its effectiveness or usefulness. All the teachers recommended that preservice teachers training programs need to work with reference to prepare teachers for IE. Teaching practice in inclusive schools is also the requirement for preparing teachers for inclusion. With a single course, it is not possible to deal with learners with disabilities in a regular classroom. They have completed the teaching practice, as required for completion of the degree program only in special schools/ segregated schools.

It was recommended by the teachers that pre service training programs should include more courses on IE and diversity. In fact, there should be an area of specialization on IE that should be offered to prospective teachers. Teaching practice in inclusive schools for prospective teachers should also be mandatory if we want them to be prepared for IE. One of the participants reported it in the following words:

"There should be an area of specializations on IE and how to cater diversity in the classroom". (Inc - 5)

Another teacher explained it in the following words:

"We should train the pre-service teachers to accept inclusion and understand the concept of IE. We should fix the segregated setup in our minds. We should train them to be flexible enough to welcome these children in an IE setup. We should believe that all students can learn. We should offer courses on IE". (Spe- 5)

3.3. Psychological Readiness

Some of the teachers working in special schools believe that due to working in IE teachers may not face any psychological issues and it is not a demanding job. But teachers working in inclusive schools shared that it is a challenging task to work in

IE as compared to work in regular schools or segregated schools. They shared that in IE special education teachers are more responsible for the achievement and participation of the learners with disabilities and because of this pressure they face anxiety and stress. In fact, parents of the learners with disabilities also raise high hopes and keep expectations from the special education teachers with reference to the achievement of their children. Such issues cannot be faced by the teachers working in segregated set ups. One of the participants working in inclusive school shared it in the following words:

“In IE we are responsible for the behavior of the children with disabilities. My student couldn't wear the mask but they all consider me responsible for it. In IE parents are more concerned about the achievement of the learners”. (Inc- 1)

Furthermore, some of the teachers working in IE also shared that they face the biased attitudes of regular school teachers. Regular school teachers think that it is not a difficult task to deal with one or two learners with disabilities in a class where they are taking care of the rest of the students in the classroom. They don't value the role of the special education teachers and take their efforts worthless. One of the participants stated that in the following words:

“Biased attitude of regular school teachers creates anxiety and stress among the special education teachers. Regular teachers take us for granted. She thinks that she is only teaching or dealing with a single child and I have to deal with it during class. So her attitude takes us toward depression and anxiety. If our children shout or disturb the class then they make us responsible for their inappropriate behavior. Their discrimination affects us. We need to work on their behavior. Special education teachers should be appreciated and acknowledged for their efforts. Sometimes we work more than regular school teachers, and it should be acknowledged and discrimination should be eliminated.” (Inc- 5)

In contrast, teachers working in special schools feel that it is a less challenging task to work in IE. They feel that while working in a segregated system they have to deal with the whole class and when they will get an opportunity to work in IE then their workload will be decreased and it will be less challenging for them to work there. One of the participants shared it in the following words:

“Right now, I have been working with 24 mentally challenged students but in general education schools this ratio will be decreased’ (Spe- 1)

3.4. Concerns Regarding Inclusive Education

Special Education teachers have certain concerns about the inclusion of the learners with disabilities in regular classrooms. They feel that responsibility lies at the shoulders of teachers regarding the achievements of their students in an inclusive setup whereas they are less accountable in a segregated system. While working in inclusive set up all the stakeholders expect more from the teacher with reference to the participation and achievement of the learners with disabilities. As one of the teachers described it in the following words:

“Yes, I feel depressed and pressured sometimes. I am accountable for the achievement of my pupil. I am answerable if he/she doesn't respond. So, it is difficult for me sometimes. It is more challenging to work in inclusive settings.” (Inc 5)

Teachers don't feel themselves prepared professionally ready as they are not aware of finding solutions to preconceived notions, and concerned about the challenges in an inclusive setup. They are of the view that they are not equipped with necessary training that involves relevant expertise and development of essential skills for teaching in an inclusive environment.

Special education teachers enjoy a privileged status professionally as their field distinguishes them as specialized teachers to deal with special students. Their training in relevant fields enriches their experience, and they feel proud to be practitioners in the field. However, inclusion promotes the merging of both special and general education systems. It may discourage their role resulting in a marginalized status. It may result in diminishing their role as an individual at personal level, and a separate system at professional level. One of the participants shared it in the following words:

“Special education teachers feel the loss of individuality and inferiority complex while working in inclusive education.” (Inc- 4)

Some of the teachers working in special schools have concerns regarding workload and pay packages in IE. They also feel that apart from having an excessive workload our salaries may not decrease. We are getting our salaries due to working in segregated systems, it is possible that we might lose the privileged status of being a special educator. One of the participants expressed it in the following words:

“Yes, we do have the fear that we are getting salaries because of these children, so a segregated setup should work the way it has been working. If we switch to working in an inclusive setup, it will increase the workload. Our professional life will suffer in IE. Teaching demands will be increased in an IE system” (Spe- 1)

Some special education teachers share their concerns about working in IE that they should be treated equally in terms of respect and appreciation while working in IE. They shared that people have a common perception about disabilities that they are mentally insane or ill so the common people and regular school teachers make fun of the teachers working with special learners. There should be awareness and counseling sessions for general education teachers and administration so that the special education teachers will get the respect for what they are doing or will be done in IE. One of the participants expressed it in the following words:

“Special education teachers and children with disabilities should not be humiliated in general education schools. They should be equally respected and appreciated in those schools. Like people usually ask us, so you are teachers of insane or mental

people. Such statements hurt us and our children. These things need to be addressed. Training is very important. Pre-service and in-service training should address these things. Minds need to be opened for us. Practical field-based experience is more important than lecture-based training". (Spe- 5)

According to all the participants of the study it was recommended that personal, professional and psychological concerns of the teachers need to be addressed in order to prepare them for IE. It is fundamental for the readiness of special educators for IE to focus on the concerns and apprehensions they have and further work to reduce those concerns for the better implementation of IE in Pakistan.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of qualitative findings revealed that factors affecting the personal readiness of special educators include general school teachers' negative attitudes toward children with disabilities, financial issues and lack of infrastructure adaptations in regular schools', Parental attitude and participation toward IE, inclusion looks less practical, bullying, administrative support, less commitment of the stakeholders, standardized curriculum and assessment procedures. The findings of the previous study by Ehsan (2018) strengthen the findings of the present study which concluded that lack of awareness about disability, discriminatory attitudes toward children with disabilities, inadequate facilities for the implementation of IE, lack availability of appropriate and accessible infrastructure for children with disabilities are need to be addressed for the successful implementation of IE in Pakistan. The results of another study by Shareefa (2016) indicated substantial challenges that may impede successful implementation of IE. These challenges include lack of knowledge and skills on IE, lack of facilities, lack of awareness among all stakeholders, and curriculum difficulties. In another study by Somma, (2020) researcher identified concerns of the special educators about the well-being of the students if they were in an inclusive class. They were concerned that the needs of the students would not be met and felt that mainstream class teachers would not be able to meet all of their needs as well as they, themselves could in the self-contained class. The findings of the present study consistent with the findings of Sharma, et al., (2019), They concluded that the most significant barriers for the implementation of IE includes inadequate teacher preparation, stigma and negative attitudes toward people with disabilities, and limited engagement with the local leaders and key stakeholders.

The factors affecting the professional readiness of special educators includes lack of pre-service and in-service training on IE, training of special education, single course on IE, and less exposure of the practical or field work related to IE. The results are in line with those of Bari et al. (2014), who found that practical training must still be provided in adequate amounts to give teachers the chance to get practical experience so they can teach in an inclusive atmosphere. Similar findings by Ehsan (2018) led to the conclusion that teachers lack the necessary expertise to cope with children with disabilities, which is a major obstacle to implementing inclusion of all types of students in their classes. Similar to this, a different study found that Pakistani teachers working in IE institutions lacked the necessary training to support pupils with special needs. Additionally, not all students' requirements are met by the infrastructure of schools, despite its accessibility. It's also necessary to alter the curriculum, tools, teaching aids, learning materials, and assessment procedures (Malik, 2011).

The factors affecting the psychological readiness of special educators and concerns include hesitant to change, increased workload, less privileged status, perceived ease of the traditional practices, less collaborative intentions of the general educators, high expectation of the stakeholders in IE. This result confirms the notion that teachers were more critical of placing special education students in mainstream classrooms (Yada & Savolainen, 2017). It further implies that Japanese educators were extremely anxious about incorporating special-needs students in regular classes even though many of them believed IE was essential (Yada, & Savolainen, 2017). In addition to the practical considerations of time, large classes, and training, some instructors' hostility toward IE can also be partly ascribed to a general resistance to change. Dramatic changes are typically difficult for people to accept and may even be perceived as issues because they are typically so devoted to their values and traditions (Materechera, 2020).

This study investigated the factors influencing the special educators in the implementation of the inclusive practices in Pakistan. Major difficulties that impede the successful implementation of IE have been highlighted. Extra-curriculum training aimed at forming the psychological readiness of future educators is required. Professional training of prospective teachers is required for the achievement of the mission of IE. In addition, to encourage good attitudes toward inclusion, initiatives should be taken to support instructors with necessary knowledge, and requisite skills through awareness campaigns and professional development programmes. It is recommended that current policies and legislation regarding IE should be shared with the special educators. Furthermore, it is proposed that effective professional development and training are crucial for establishing and maintaining inclusive classrooms. The results show that the teachers had difficulties despite their special education background and experience. Although teaching kids with disabilities in inclusive classrooms was not particularly challenging for them, the biggest problem remained figuring out how to meet the learning needs of every student in the class. Teachers admitted that they were unprepared for the inclusive classroom and that they lacked the necessary information to create an inclusive curriculum. For these reasons, regardless of a teacher's prior teaching experience and training, assumptions cannot be made about their readiness for inclusive classes.

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