#### Basic Research

# Integration of Children with Special Needs into Regular Schools: Teachers and Parents Perspectives

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#### **Abstract**

Background: When it comes to a child's upbringing, safety, and growth, parents and instructors are crucial. Therefore, the attitudes of parents and teachers may significantly alter how inclusive education is seen. Aim: To explore the attitudes of school teachers and parents towards the integration of children with special needs into regular schools. Study design: This study used a descriptive research approach. Setting: The study was conducted in three government schools in October city. Sample: A multistage stratified sampling technique was used in recruiting teachers and parents. The study sample consisted of 238 parents and 248 teachers. Tools: A structured interview questionnaire, a teacher attitude toward inclusion scale, and a parent attitude toward inclusion scale were the three instruments used to gather the data. Results revealed that 50.8% and 51.5% of parents and instructors, respectively, had positive attitudes about integrating special needs students into the general class. The lack of medical care and the lack of trained instructors are the two main issues preventing the inclusion of kids with special needs in conventional classrooms. Conclusion: Slightly more than half of parents have a positive attitude towards integrating students with special needs into the regular classroom. Additionally, more than half of teachers have a positive attitude. Recommendations: The administration of schools should involve parents in the education of their children and offer sensitization seminars, meetings, and workshops as part of their ongoing professional development.

Keywords: Integration, Inclusion, Children, Disabilities, Teachers, Parents, students

#### Introduction

Children with special needs" refers to individuals who have any type of disability, learning or developmental disorder that requires additional support in order to effectively participate in mainstream educational environments. The number of children with special needs varies by country and region, but according to some studies, it is estimated that approximately 15-20% of school-aged children worldwide have a disability or other type of special need.(1)

Integration of children with special needs into regular schools is a hotly debated issue from both the teacher and parent perspectives. There are many different opinions on how best to provide support for these students while still enabling them to integrate fully into the classroom environment (1,2).

The issue of disability is one of the most significant challenges influencing countries and their growth all over the world. Recognizing people with disabilities' (PWDs') needs, satisfying their basic needs, and providing them with equal rights is the most important step toward allowing them to fully integrate into society. According to the World Bank and the WHO, more than one billion people, or 15% of the global population, have some sort of impairment, with 80% of them living in developing nations. (1).

Children with special needs have inferior care and a lack of participation in underdeveloped nations. Education is one of the significant areas from which those with special needs are excluded (2). Meanwhile, many children with special needs conflict to set up and maintain relationships with their friends. Children with impairments, for instance, frequently struggle with behavioral issues that can harm peer relationships and reason academic failure. Additionally, a lot of child with impairments struggle with communication abilities. As children age, communication space become more detectable and could negatively impact child's chances of making friends. So, children with impairments need external assistance to help them enter in social activities (3).

Educating children with special needs in accepted classrooms presents a new situation to the entire education determination. In a unconventional education setting, working with a varied class of students, including children with disabilities, is a difficulty due to the essential supports (4). A transition from integrated services and schools for children with various types of impairment to a social representation of disability necessitates a shift in professional focus from way, care, and training to assistance for people in their natural environments based on their individual needs and orientation. (5).

In the context of education, the term "teaching challenged children in regular courses" refers to integrating or involving students with special needs into regular classrooms for most of the school day as opposed to placing them in special education

classes. Tarantino and Associates, 2022, the term "inclusion" is seen to be more positive when used to describe initiatives to integrate students with special needs into regular classrooms. Inclusion might entail incorporating disabled students into the curriculum, environment, social relationships, and self-concept of the school (6).

Inclusive education is essential to help students with special needs develop friendships and achieve acceptance from their friends. Furthermore, those children may go to school alongside their peers is valued by many teachers, parents, and individuals regardless of their talents and disabilities. So equal education gives them the opportunity to improve their social skills and they can access quality education.(7)

Active communication between teachers and parents is necessary for sharing opinions and making decisions together, designing programs, and talking about methods to raise students' test score (8).s. Therefore, communication between teachers and parents must be diverse and should be one-dimensional. Meanwhile, communication between teachers and parents is essential for collaboration and information sharing. When both sides are honest and supportive of one another obligations and roles, teachers and parents can communicate effectively (9, 10).

# Importance of the study

One objective fact is that there has been an increase in recent years of children with special needs attending mainstream schools. This can cause challenges for teachers who may not have experience working with such students, as well as other children who may find it difficult to understand and accept differences.

It's important for teachers and parents alike to work collaboratively in supporting the integration of students with special needs into regular classrooms so that everyone involved feels comfortable and included.

According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank, about 15% of the global population live with some form of disability. In Egypt, it is estimated that around 10-12% of children have special needs or disabilities. However, it is important to note that these figures may vary depending on how "special needs" are defined or identified in different contexts.

As per the literature there are many studies are available to know the overall attitudes of teachers towards integrating the special needs students, but in Egypt there is no significant studies are available especially a comparative study of teachers' attitude between the levels of standard of schools. To fulfil this gap, the current study was initiated to know the overall attitude of teachers and the level of attitude among the teachers in primary, intermediate and secondary schools. This study presents the results of one of the latest studies examining the attitudes of private and governmental school teachers and parents towards the inclusion of special need students.

# The aim of the study:

The aim of study is to assess teachers and parents perspectives on integration of children with special needs into regular schools

# The aim was met by achieving the following objectives:

- Examine teachers' attitudes toward integrating children with special needs into regular schools.
- Identify the key issues that impede children with special needs from being integrated into conventional classrooms from the perspective of a teacher.
- determine the parents' attitudes about the integration of disabled children into regular schools.

## **Research questions:**

- What is the attitude of teachers and parents regarding the inclusion of disabled children in regular schools?
- Is there a connection between the attitudes and qualities of parents and teachers?

## **Subject and Methods:**

**Research Design:** The descriptive research design was utilized to achieve the aim of this study.

**Setting:** The research was conducted at October Gardens Primary School, Omar Bin Khattab Preparatory School for Boys, and Al-Azhar Special Education School from the 1st of January to the 30th of May 2023.

# **Subjects**:

In a purposive sample of 248 teachers, 74.2% of the teachers were aged 44 to 60 years with mean age of  $47.72 \pm 8.2$  years and 59.7% of them were females. Regarding their education, 66.9% had university education. As well, 82.7% of the teachers were senior teachers and 58.9% of them were teachers of primary stage with mean years of experience 23.71  $\pm 9.2$  years . Furthermore, 41.1% of instructors taught pupils with exceptional needs, and 16.5% of them had special education training.

In a purposive sample of 238 parents. Parents were aged 21 to 36 years, with a mean  $\pm$  SD of 36.2  $\pm$ 6.5 years. 52.9% of parents were male. Moreover, the majority of parents (82.4%) were married, and 60.5%) were from rural regions. 38.7% of parents hold a postgraduate degree. In addition, 51.7% of the parents (67.2%) have a sufficient income. Moreover, 96.6% of these parents had children in elementary school. Moreover, 13.9% of them have kids who require special education. 7.1% of parents have kids who are visually impaired.

**Subjects** were selected based on the next inclusion criteria: Both sexes, parents had children between 6 to 19 years, teachers worked in previous schools, and were willing to participate in the study. Exclusion criteria: The presence of either mental or chronic problems.

The sample size was estimated using the EPI info 7.0 program based on these parameters; parents size: 1021, expected frequency: 7% (3), acceptable error: 5%, confidence coefficient: 95%, design effect: 1, the minimum sample size was 215 reached to 238.

#### **Data Collection Tools:**

# **Too I- A Structured Interview Questionnaire: it contains:**

**Part 1:** The teachers' characteristics, including their age, gender, educational attainment, profession, years of experience, and education training.

Part two: Parents' characteristics: It encompasses age, gender, residence, marital status, educational level, work status, income, having child with special need, type of disability.

Too II- Teacher Attitudes Toward Inclusion Scale (TATIS) developed by Cullen, Gregory, & Noto, (2010). an instrument based on three well-researched components of teacher attitudes toward inclusive teaching: (a) attitudes toward students with special needs in inclusive settings, (b) beliefs about professional roles and responsibilities, and (c) beliefs about the efficacy of inclusion. The measure is made up of ten items that are scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). All items were utilized in the same way for the three groups (in-service teachers, preservice teachers, and parents) in this study. (13)

Tool III- Parent Attitudes Toward Inclusion (PATI) scale developed by Palmer, Borthwick-Duffy, and Widaman (1998). It responds to the 11-item questionnaire. Parent attitudes (e.g., attitudes on and interactions with children who require special assistance); perspectives on features of school organization that support inclusion; and perspectives on a number of statements regarding their child's education in a typical classroom (14).

Parents were asked to react on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to strongly disagree,' with 1 being the most agreeable and 6 being the most disagreeable. In the current study, reverse scoring was utilized to ensure that the lowest score always reflects the most favorable view. Choices of agreement range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

# Validity of the tools:

The content validity of the tools was checked by five expert professors in the field of pediatric nursing and community health medicine to ensure that the questions were clear,

relevant, applicable, and complete. No changes were made according to the judge of experts.

## **Reliability of the tools:**

The internal consistency of the tools was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Study tools revealed reliability at Cronbach's alpha 0.89 for the tool.

#### Administrative and ethical considerations:

Permission for the conduct of the study was obtained from the responsible authorities after an explanation of its purpose. The researchers explained to parents and teachers the aim and benefit of the study. Written consent was obtained. Parents and teachers are informed that their participation is voluntary and that they have the ethical right to participate or refuse participation in the study. It was further emphasized that their responses were confidential and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving further explanation.

## **Pilot study:**

A pilot study, including 10% of parents and teachers, was carried out. Its purpose was to evaluate the time, cost, and feasibility of doing a comprehensive research investigation before any data was collected. Included in the research was the pilot experiment, because no modifications were made.

# **Data collection procedure:**

#### Field of work:-

During the interview, the researchers discussed the purpose of the study as well as the components of the instruments to the investigated samples. Data on their opinions about and thoughts on the inclusion of students with special needs into general education classrooms were collected through surveys and interviews. The researchers were present at the study settings three days each week and delivered the questionnaire to the parents and teachers for data collection, which took 25 minutes to complete.

**Teachers** completed a paper-and-pencil version of the questionnaire

**Parents** participated in semi-structured telephone interviews and completed the questionnaire. Only those parents whose children were enrolled in compulsory education were interviewed to ensure that they had recent encounters with schools. For the oldest child enrolled in compulsory school, who is typically between the ages of six and 15, answers to questions related to the parents' children were always required. The range of ages was 21 to 53 (M = 36.2, SD = 6.5). parents (have/do not have) a special needs child.

#### **Ethical Considerations**

The Faculty of Nursing's institutional review board accepted the ethics. This research was entirely voluntary. Subjects were informed that their input would have no impact on their performance assessments, job status, or pay. The ethical problem committee allowed the lack of written agreement because the surveys had no personal identification. The questionnaire was completed anonymously, and the data was kept secret and used solely for research reasons.

## **Statistical Analysis**

The information was sorted and categorized, and the findings were shown in tables. On a suitable personal computer, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Inc., version 27; IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were employed to characterize the demographic information of the individuals. For categorical variables, data were reported as frequencies and percentages, whereas continuous variables were given as means and standard deviations. Fisher's exact test is a statistical significance test used in contingency table analysis.

A chi-square ( $\chi$ 2) statistic is a measure of the difference between the observed and expected frequencies of the outcomes of a set of events or variables. Statistical significance was set at p < 0.05 and highly significant if p <0.01.

#### **Results:**

Teachers' reports of the biggest issue that keeps special needs children in regular schools are shown in **Table 1**, which was the unavailability of medical services needed by children in regular schools, unqualified regular teachers to deal with children in regular classes, unavailable auxiliary facilities for children within regular schools, unavailability of appropriate facilities and teaching methods for children in regular school, there are a large number of students in the classes, Inflexibility of the curriculum to accommodate the educational needs of the children, Society's negative attitude toward the person, and at final refusal of normal children's parents to deal with ones (1.71, 1.70, 1.59, 1.49, 1.48, 1.44, 1.29& 1.09) respectively.

**Figure 1** displays that 50.8% and 51.5% of parents and teachers had positive attitude towards integrating students with special needs into the regular class respectively.

**Table 2** shows that gender, career, and prior experience working with students with special needs were shown to be statistically significant negative predictors of teachers' attitudes in the multivariate analysis (-2.273, -1.756, and -2.657), respectively. On the

other hand, prior instruction and housing were shown to be statistically significant positive predictors of teachers' attitudes in the multivariate analysis (3.811 and 4.638), respectively.

As shows in **Table 3**, the educational level of parents and the presence of a kid with special needs in their children's class were statistically significant positive predictors of their attitude. According to the r-square value, the model explains 12% of the attitude score.

Table (1): The Mean of main problems that prevent the inclusion of children with special needs in regular schools as reported by teachers (n=248)

Problem		SD
Unavailability of medical services needed by children in regular school	1.71	.47
Unqualified regular teacher to deal with children in regular classes	1.70	.46
Unavailability of appropriate facilities and teaching methods for children in regular school	1.49	.53
Inflexibility of the curriculum to accommodate the educational needs of the children.	1.44	.57
Society's negative attitude toward the person	1.29	.82
Refusal of normal children's parents to deal with ones	1.09	.79
Large number of students in the classes	1.48	.61
Unavailable auxiliary facilities for children within regular schools	1.59	.56

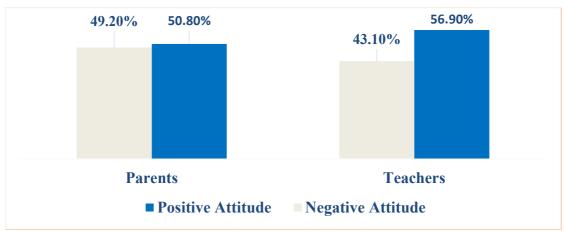


Figure 1: Total attitude of teachers and parents towards integrating children with special needs into the regular class

Table (2): An attitude score for teachers using a multiple linear regression model

		ndardized ficients	The Standardized Coefficients		
	В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.569	.343		4.588	.000
Gender	226	.100	173	-2.273	.024
Occupation	112	.064	111	-1.756	.080
Previous teaching for children with special needs	175	.065	165	-2.657	.008
Previous attending training for teaching	.360	.085	.287	3.811	.000
Residence	.469	.087	.361	4.638	.000

R-square=0.20

Model ANOVA: F=4.39, p<0.001

	The standardized Coefficients		The Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	В	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	66.248	5.712		11.597	.000
Education level	1.817	.972	.134	1.868	.063
Presence of child with special needs in their children's class	7.266	1.606	.290	4.524	.000

Table (3): An attitude score for parents using a multiple linear regression model

R-square=0.12

Model ANOVA: F=3.05, p<0.001

#### **Discussion:**

Inclusive education has several benefits, particularly for children with special needs, yet its application has yet to be maximized in providing classroom learning services. Not just children, but also their peers, teachers, and even their parents must contend with a variety of school-related challenges (15).

Concerning the problems that prevent the inclusion of disabled children in regular schools, the finding of the current study illustrated that the highest was the unavailability of medical services needed by children in regular school, unqualified regular teacher to deal with children in regular classes. These results cohort with the study by Ogba et al., 2020 who stated that school and classroom structure and administration, community involvement and participation in inclusive education, and the lack of auxiliary facilities for handicapped students in ordinary schools (16). According to Obi and Ashi (2016), inadequately qualified workers and inadequate resources are to blame for Nigeria's insufficient implementation of inclusive education (17). According to McManis (2017), study who found the necessity for administrators to receive training that will enable them to manage and manipulate both available students and human resources. This is necessary for inclusive education to function (18). Effective training programs can equip administrators with the ability to enhance decisions, improve communication, performance, make sound and handle challenging situations in a professional manner.

According to the study findings, more than half of parents have positive attitude towards integrating students with special needs into the regular class. This can be attributed to several factors such as increased opportunities for socialization, improved academic performance for students with disabilities, and reduced stigmatization of these students. Moreover, inclusive education has been found to benefit all students in the

classroom by promoting diversity, fostering empathy and understanding, and enhancing their ability to work collaboratively with others who may have diverse abilities or backgrounds.

These results cohort not because different % with Paseka & Schwab, (2020) who revealed that majority of studied parents had positive attitude related to inclusive education (19). However, According to Ogba, (2020) & Danie et al. (2016), ordinary teachers have adverse attitudes toward students with special needs(20,21). Additionally, according to Ogba et al.'s (2020) study, they illustrated that administrators and instructors have different understandings of the inclusive education concept (20). Furthermore, Sokal and Katz (2017) demonstrated the various benefits of training, including improved attitudes, less worries, increased self-efficacy, and more knowledge (22). Paseka & Schwab, (2020) study, parents' attitudes towards inclusive education and their perceptions of inclusive teaching practices and resources. they found that only 3.6 percent of the sample overall had entirely positive sentiments, while 27.9 percent were opposed to inclusion (19). According to Adzanku et al., (2021), teachers at inclusive schools do not feel at ease and only utilize assessments they have created themselves, which are inappropriate for students with special educational needs (23).

According to the study findings, Previous attending training for teaching were statistically significant positive, this accepted with **Stevens & Wurf**, **2020** who revealed that training courses improved attitude toward inclusive school (24). Additionally, **Hutzler et al.**, **2019** stated that gender and the professional and academic training and experience with persons with special needs at school of teachers had significant relation with their attitude (25).

According to the study findings, the educational level of parents and the presence of a kid with special needs in their children's class were statistically significant positive predictors of their attitude (**Table 3**). These results disagreement with the study by **Torgbenu et al., (2021)** who observed a lack of parental knowledge had an unfavorable attitude toward parents (26). While, **Bariroh,(2018)** detected that the educational level of parents had relation with parents' attitude relation inclusion classroom at schools (27). Even though parents of disabled children have less confidence in certain areas and report feeling more tired, research has shown that parents typically trust teachers (**Paseka, 2023**) (28)

#### **Conclusion:**

Based on the findings of the current study, aim, and hypotheses, it was concluded that more than half of parents and teachers have a positive attitude towards integrating students with special needs into the regular classroom.

The key issues that impede children with special needs from being integrated into conventional classrooms from the perspective of a teacher were the unavailability of

medical services needed by children in regular school and the unqualified regular teacher to deal with children in regular classes

**Recommendations:** The administration of schools should involve parents in the education of their children and offer sensitization seminars, meetings, and workshops as part of their ongoing professional development.

#### Limitations

This study, while descriptive in nature in order to understand the attitudes of educators and parents regarding the integration of children with special needs and their parents in public schools, also highlighted a number of significant issues, including the influence of education, location, experience, and training on attitudes.

However, while evaluating the data, some restrictions need to be considered. Initially, there was a limited sample size. Second, parents who had more favorable opinions about their kids' involvement in school may have been more likely to participate in the study if the convenience sampling approach had been used for recruitment.

#### **Author Contributions**

All authors participated in the study's idea and design, as well as the formulation of the survey, data gathering, and statistical analysis, and writing the initial draft of the publication. Each author participated in the editing of the text, reviewed it, and approved the published version.

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There were no possible conflicts of interest disclosed by the authors regarding the research, writing, and/or publishing of this paper.

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# الملخص العربي

# دمج الأطفال ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة في المدارس العادية :وجهة نظر المعلمين وأولياء الأمور

خلفية: عندما يتعلق الأمر بتربية الطفل وسلامته ونموه، فإن للآباء والمعلمين أهمية كبيرة ولذلك، فإن مواقف أولياء الأمور والمعلمين قد تغير بشكل كبير في التوجه إلى التعليم الشامل الهدف :استكشاف اتجاهات معلمي المدارس وأولياء الأمور نحو دمج الأطفال ذوي الإعاقة في المدارس العادية تصميم الدراسة :استخدمت هذه الدراسة منهج البحث الوصفي .مكان الدراسة: أجريت الدراسة في ثلاث مدارس حكومية فيمدينة اكتوبربالقا العينة :تم استخدام تقنية أخذ العينات الطبقية متعددة المراحل في تعيين المعلمين وأولياء الأمور وتكونت عينة الدراسة من 238 ولي أمر و 248معلما الأدوات الطبقية المستخدمة لجمع البيانات وكشفت النتائج أن %50.8 و %51.5 من أولياء الأمور والمعلمين، على التوالي، لديهم مواقف إيجابية .حول دمج الطلاب ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة في الفصل العام .إن نقص الرعاية الطبية ونقص المدربين هما المسألتان الرئيسيتان اللتان تمنعان دمج الأطفال ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة في الفصول الدراسية التقليدية .الاستنتاج :أكثر من نصف أولياء الأمور بقليل لديهم موقف إيجابي تجاه دمج الطلاب ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة في الفصول الدراسية التقليدية والمدارس إشراك أولياء الأمور في تعليم أبنائهم وتقديم ندوات واجتماعات وورش إيجابي .التوصيات :يجب على إدارة المدارس إشراك أولياء الأمور في تعليم أبنائهم وتقديم ندوات واجتماعات وورش عمل توعوية كجزء من التطوير المهني المستمر لهم.