

# **ATTITUDE OF PEER STUDENTS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND DIFFERENTLY ABLED CHILDREN**

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## **Abstract**

Inclusive education is the concept that we develop and design our schools, classrooms, programmes and activities so that all students learn and participate together irrespective of their abilities. Inclusive education is about ensuring access to quality education for all students by effectively meeting their diverse needs. Peers are the backbone of Inclusive Education. The positive attitude of peers towards inclusive education helps the differently abled children to lessen their difficulties in their classroom. The objectives of the study were, to find the nature of attitude of peers of differently abled children towards inclusive education and to assess the nature of the attitude of peers towards differently abled children. Attitude scale and observation were used as the tool and technique to find the result by the investigator. The study found that different levels of attitude on inclusive education among the peers of differently abled children. It also showed that, there exist different levels of attitude on differently abled children among peers. The probable reason for the difference in the nature of attitude may be due to the different types of experiences they got during their lower classes. The reason for the different levels of attitude towards differently abled children may be due to the lack of proper awareness about nature of differently abled children. Inclusive Education helps the differently abled children to lessen their difficulties in their classroom. It is essential that the peers have a clear understanding of inclusive education. The Peers need to understand the problems and difficulties of Differently abled Children, it help to foster the mainstreaming of Differently abled children.

Key words: Attitude, Peers, Differently abled children, Inclusive education

## **Introduction**

Inclusion in educational process is an approach to educating children with special educational needs. Inclusive education means that all students are welcomed by their neighbourhood schools in age – appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school. Inclusive education is about how we develop and design our schools, classrooms, programmes and activities so that all students learn and participate together. In the ancient system of education all children were taught together, whether normal, gifted or physically or intellectually disabled and were seen as worthy of the benefits of education, each according to her or his abilities. Inclusive education is about ensuring access to quality education for all students by effectively meeting their diverse needs in a way that is responsive, accepting, respectful and supportive. Students participate in the education program in a common learning environment with support to diminish and remove barriers and obstacles that may lead to exclusion.

To Bartons (1998), inclusive education refers to an education system that accommodates all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. All children experience difficulty in learning at some time or the other and therefore their learning needs to be supported. Putting children into regular classroom is not inclusion. Inclusion means accepting diversity, respecting individuality and creating opportunity. Inclusion is a process. Inclusive education is about the participation of all children and young people and the removal of all forms of exclusionary practices

Kohama (2012) in his study entitled, 'Inclusive Education in India: A Country in transition' concluded that policies that are inclusive for people with disabilities, their implementation efforts have not resulted in an inclusive system of education, nor have they reached their goal of 'education for all' across the country. Lack of political will was preventing full implementation of policies, lack of governmental resources and capacity. The paper recommended that the Government of India needs to bridge the gaps in their education system to build a strong system of inclusive education in India by consolidating the responsibility for education under the Ministry of Education holding the government accountable for their policies, establishing an accurate system of monitoring policies, financially commit to inclusive education for all, and monitor the money, train teachers in inclusive teaching methods, physical and intellectual accessibility in schools.

### **Need and significance of the study**

Inclusive Education is a human right; children have the right to learn together, they should not be discriminated because of their disability or learning difficulty. Children are able to learn well in academically and socially in an integrated environment. Inclusive education should satisfy the needs of normal children as well as the differently abled children. Statements from these dimensions include understanding of students about the concept of Inclusive education.

The present study was indented to study the attitude of secondary school students towards inclusive education and differently abled children. Inclusive education diverge from earlier apprehended ideas of integration and mainstreaming, which was inclined to be deal mainly with children with special need and meant these children will change and become ready for accommodation by the mainstream. Peers are the backbone of Inclusive Education. The positive attitude of peers towards inclusive education helps the differently abled children to lessen their difficulties in their classroom.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To study the nature of attitude of Peers of differently abled children towards inclusive education.
2. To assess the nature of the attitude of peers towards differently abled children.

### **Hypotheses**

1. There exists a difference in the nature of attitude among Peers of differently abled children towards inclusive education.
2. There exists a difference in the nature of attitude among peers towards Differently abled children.

### **Methodology of the Study**

The first objective was to study the attitude of peers of differently abled children towards inclusive education. Attitude scale was used as a major tool to realize this objective.

The second objective is to study the attitude of Peers towards differently abled children. Attitude scale was used as a tool to realize this objective. Here, also used observation as the technique to understand the attitude of peers towards differently abled children.

**Sampling method**

Stratified random sampling technique was used for the collection of data for the study. The sample was selected from secondary schools and representative samples were selected for the study. The sample for the study comprised of 600 peers of differently abled students.

**Tools and techniques used for the Study**

Attitude scale was used to check the attitude of secondary school students towards inclusive education and differently abled children.

Participant observation as a technique was also used in inclusive classrooms to check the attitude of secondary school students towards differently abled children.

**Statistical techniques.**

The statistical techniques used for this study include preliminary statistics and percentage Analysis.

**Attitude of peers of differently abled children towards Inclusive Education**

The researcher intended to find the nature of the attitude of peers of Differently abled Children towards Inclusive Education. Attitude scale is used to find the perception of peers towards inclusive education. The number of peer students in three levels such as High, Average and low level was estimated. The procedure of standard deviation from the mean was used for the classification of these groups.

For this distribution, the mean is 78.64 and standard deviation is 9.31. Hence,  $M+SD = 87.96$  and  $M - SD = 69.32$ . For the convenience of calculation, the value  $M+SD$  rounded to 88 instead of 87.96 and  $M - SD$  rounded to 69 instead of 69.32. Based on these, the peer students who scored 88 or above are considered high level of attitude, who scored 69 or below are considered low level of attitude and those who scored in between 88 and 69( both values excluded) are average level of perception.

Table 1

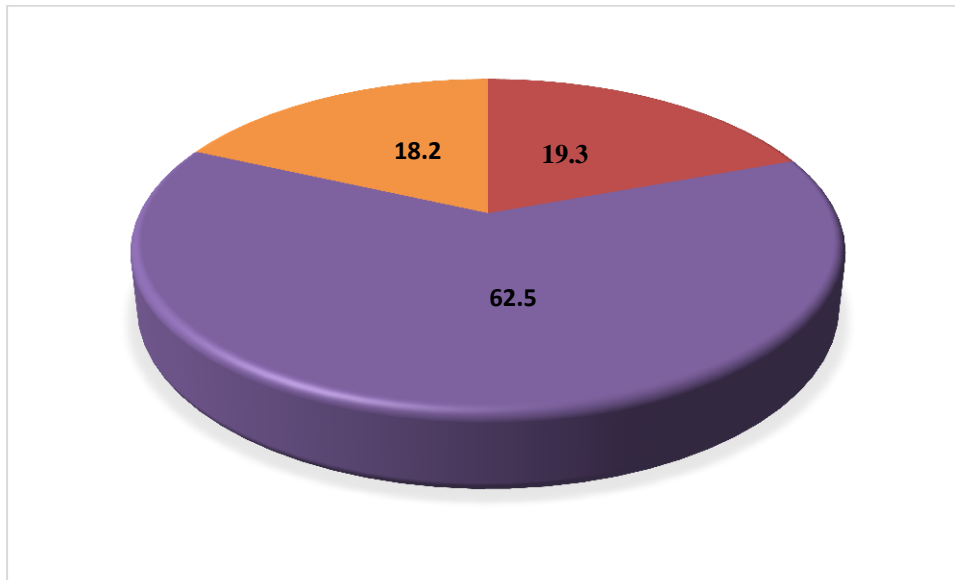
*Details of nature of Attitude of Peers of Differently abled Children towards Inclusive Education ( N=600)*

Levels	Number of peer students	Percentage
High	116	19.3
Average	375	62.5
Low	109	18.2

**Discussion**

From the above table, it is clear that 19.3% of the secondary school students have high levels of attitude towards inclusive education, 62.5% of the students have shown average level, 18.2% of students falling into low group. It is found that for the whole sample the attitude of students towards inclusive education is moderate. 62.5% of students from the whole sample were showing moderate level. Thus the result pointed that there exist different levels of attitude towards inclusive education by the secondary school students.

Diagrammatic representation of the Attitude of Peers of Differently abled children towards Inclusive Education for the total sample is shown in Figure 1.



*Figure 1* Graphical Representation of levels of the Attitude of Peers of Differently abled Children towards Inclusive Education.

Based on these results, it can firmly state that there exist different levels of attitude on inclusive education among the peers of differently abled children. In other words, the attitude on inclusive education of peers of differently abled children varied among three levels as high, average, low. The major reason for the different levels of value of attitude may be the different types of practices and approaches that the peers of differently abled children experienced from their classes.

**Attitude of Peers towards Differently abled Children**

The second objective of the study was to identify the attitude of peers towards differently abled children in their classrooms. Two techniques were used for data collection such as attitude scale for peers in classroom towards differently abled children and observation by the investigator. The researcher intended to find the nature of the attitude of peers towards differently abled children. The attitude of peer students in three levels such as High, Average and low level was estimated. The procedure of Standard Deviation from the Mean was used for classification of these groups.

For this distribution, the mean is 28.74 and Standard Deviation is 4.16. Hence,  $M+SD = 32.91$  and  $M - SD = 24.57$ . For the convenience of calculation, the value  $M+SD$  rounded to 33 instead of 32.91 and  $M - SD$  rounded to 25 instead of 24.57. Based on these, the peer students who scored 33 or above are considered High level of Attitude, who scored 25 or below are considered low level of Attitude and those who scored in between 33 and 25( both values excluded) are Average level of perception. The number and percentage of teachers coming in each group are detailed in table 2.

Table 2

*Details of nature of Attitude of Peers towards Differently abled Children ( N=600)*

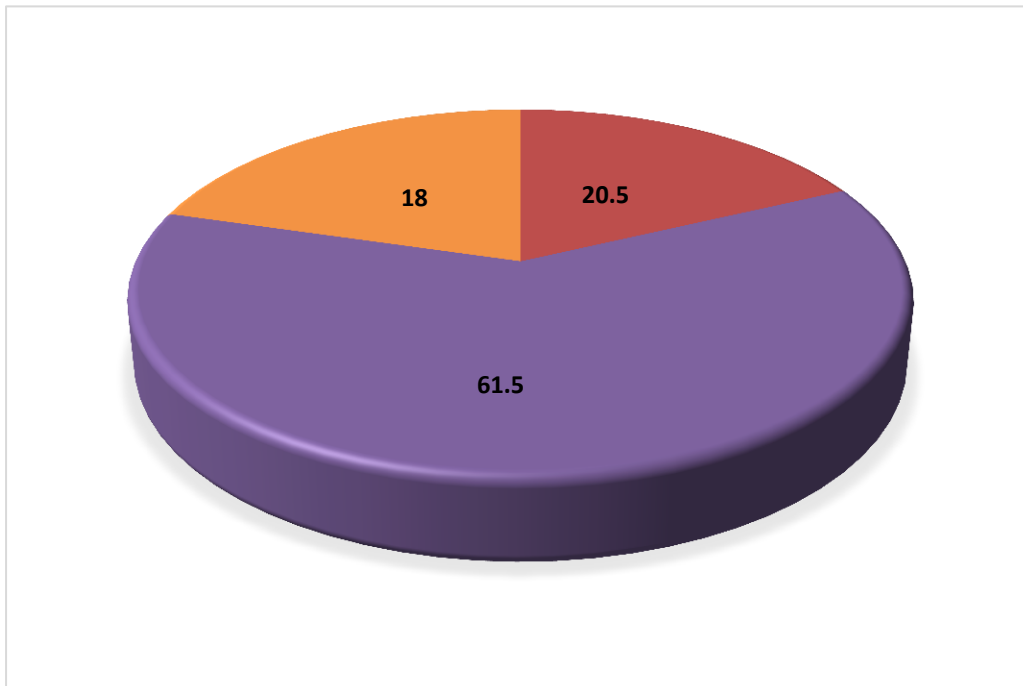
Levels	Number of Peer students	Percentage
High	108	18

Average	369	61.5
Low	123	20.5

**Discussion**

From Table 2, it is clear that 18% of the secondary school students have high levels of attitude towards differently abled children, 61.5% of the students have shown average level, 20.5% of students falling into low group. It is found that, for the whole sample the attitude of students towards inclusive education is moderate. 61.5% of students from the whole sample were showing moderate level. Thus the result pointed that there exist different levels of attitude towards Differently abled children by the peer students.

Diagrammatic representation of the attitude of peers of differently abled children towards inclusive education for the total sample is shown in Figure 2.



*Figure 2.* Graphical Representation of levels of the Attitude of Peers towards Differently abled Children.

Based on these results, it can firmly state that there exist different levels of attitude on differently abled children among peers. In other words, the attitude on differently abled children by the peers varied among three levels as high, average, low.

The major reason for the different levels of value of attitude may be the different types of practices and approaches that the peers of differently abled children experienced from their classes.

**Attitude of Peers towards Differently abled Children in their classroom: through Observation**

As a part of the data collection to understand the attitude of peers towards differently abled children in their classroom, the investigator used observation as a technique. The observation focused on to identify the attitude of peers towards differently abled children.

An observation schedule was prepared to conduct the observation. The researcher has conducted 8 observations in 8 schools and selected one class from each school. Details of the observation of the class are given together. The major observations are discussed below.

### **Discussion**

All 8 schools include different types of differently abled children in the observed class. Some of them have physical disabilities, some with mental disabilities and some, cerebral palsy. The children faced difficulty to follow the class of the regular teacher. But their peers in the class was always expressed their willingness to help such children. Peers helped the differently abled children in the class to take notes and in group activities. The peers and all other teachers were always helpful to the children in all their activities. In few schools, some students have a negative attitude towards the differently abled children. They are always tried to irritate those students by laughing at them. But the majority of the other students in the same class helped students in group activities and try to make a healthy relationship with them. In one class, the differently abled child was restless and more aggressive. The student walked in the class during the time of instruction and peers and the teachers are not bothering about that. The student make noise in the class and it makes distraction in the attention of other students.

Peers are the backbone of an inclusive education setting. Peers support differently abled children to a great extent. The students face many difficulties in the classroom, but majority of the problems are tackled by them with the help of peers. When the differently abled children face any difficulty, peers are always willing to help them. The positive approach of the peers makes the inclusive education more successful.

During the observation, it is observed that differently abled students in some schools are more aggressive and they make difficulties to the peer students. But the peers do not show any negative attitude towards those children, instead of that, they help them to engage in other activities. The teachers and the resource teachers have a great role in developing this positive attitude in peers.

### **Tenability of Hypotheses**

The first hypothesis states that, 'There exists a difference in the nature of attitude among peers of differently-abled children towards inclusive education'. Analysis of the result indicates that the attitude of peer students towards inclusive education for the total sample is found differs among them and hence, it can evidently state that the first hypothesis is accepted.

The second hypothesis states that, 'There exists a difference in the nature of attitude among peers towards differently-abled children'. Analysis of the result indicates that the Attitude of Peer students towards Differently abled Children for the total sample is found differs among them and hence, it can evidently state that second hypothesis is accepted.

### **Conclusion**

There exists a difference in the nature of attitude among peers of differently-abled children towards inclusive education. The probable reason for the difference in the nature of attitude may be due to the different types of experiences they got during their lower classes. There exists a difference in the nature of attitude among peers of differently-abled children towards differently abled children. The probable reason for the different levels of attitude

towards differently abled children may be due to the lack of proper awareness about nature of differently abled children.

Peers are the backbone of Inclusive Education. The positive attitude of Peers towards Inclusive Education helps the differently abled children to lessen their difficulties in their classroom. It is essential that the peers and teachers have a clear understanding of inclusive education. The Peers need to understand the problems and difficulties of Differently abled Children, it help to foster the mainstreaming of Differently abled children. From the lower class itself, awareness classes should be provided to the Peers to improve their Attitude on Inclusive Education.

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