


ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL

 Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 5 No. 02 Apr-Jun 2026. Page#. 634-646

 Print ISSN: [3006-2497](https://issn.org/3006-2497) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](https://issn.org/3006-2500)

Platform & Workflow by: Open Journal Systems

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20081444>

University Faculty Attitudes towards Inclusive Education for Students with Special Educational Needs: A Case Study of the University of Karachi
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Abstract

This study investigates university Faculty attitudes towards inclusive education for students with special educational needs at the University of Karachi. Utilizing a quantitative descriptive survey design, data were collected from a sample of 250 faculty members across various departments using stratified random sampling. The instrument was adapted from the SACIE-R scale and administered through both online and printed questionnaires. The findings reveal that university teachers generally hold positive attitudes and strongly support the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. However, they demonstrated lower confidence in actual teaching practices due to insufficient training, lack of resources, inadequate assistive technologies, large class sizes, and limited institutional support. Gender-based differences were not significant, while confidence and perceived support varied across faculties. The study highlights the gap between positive attitudes and practical readiness. It recommends targeted professional development programs, better resource allocation, and stronger institutional policies to promote effective, inclusive education in higher education institutions in Pakistan.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, University Teachers, Faculty Attitudes, Special Educational Needs, University of Karachi, Higher Education, Pakistan.*

Introduction

Inclusive education is an educational approach that aims to educate all students, including those with special educational needs (SEN), in mainstream learning environments with appropriate supports and accommodations. This paradigm promotes equity, diversity, and participation by removing barriers that hinder access to quality education (UNESCO, 1994). Globally, inclusive education has been advocated through key frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement and has been reinforced by Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education for all (United Nations, 2015). In higher education, inclusive practices are essential for enabling students with disabilities to participate in academic and social university life fully (Schmidt et al., 2025).

Teachers' attitudes play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Positive attitudes among faculty members encourage the adoption of inclusive teaching strategies, differentiated instruction, and necessary accommodations, while negative or

ambivalent attitudes can create significant barriers to inclusion (Forlin et al., 2011; Guillemot et al., 2022). Research indicates that university teachers generally hold positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with SEN; however, concerns frequently arise regarding lack of resources, increased workload, inadequate training, and potential impacts on academic standards (Schmidt et al., 2025; Jury et al., 2023). Factors such as gender, academic discipline, prior experience with students with disabilities, and professional development opportunities significantly influence these attitudes (Hernandez, 2016).

In the Pakistani context, inclusive education remains a developing priority despite constitutional provisions under Article 25-A and national policy commitments. Major challenges include insufficient infrastructure, limited teacher preparation programs, societal stigma, and resource constraints that affect the practical implementation of inclusion at all levels of education (Bhutta, 2025; UNESCO, 2021). The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) introduced the Policy for Students with Disabilities at Higher Education Institutions (2021) to promote accessibility, reasonable accommodations, and inclusive environments in universities (Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, 2021). Nevertheless, there is limited empirical research on how university teachers perceive and respond to these inclusive education initiatives.

The University of Karachi, one of Pakistan's largest and oldest public universities, offers a relevant setting for this investigation. The university houses a dedicated Department of Special Education and enrolls a diverse student population, including students with SEN (University of Karachi, n.d.). Understanding the attitudes of university teachers toward inclusive education in this context is crucial for identifying existing gaps and developing targeted interventions to strengthen inclusive practices.

The present study aims to examine university teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education for students with special educational needs at the University of Karachi. By exploring their perceptions, concerns, and readiness, the research seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform policy, faculty development programs, and institutional support systems for advancing inclusive higher education in Pakistan.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the attitudes of university teachers towards inclusive education for students with special educational needs at the University of Karachi.
2. To identify the key factors influencing university teachers' attitudes and concerns regarding the implementation of inclusive education practices.
3. To explore teachers' perceived challenges and recommendations for strengthening inclusive education in higher education settings.
4. To investigate gender-based differences in university teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education for students with special educational needs.

Literature Review

Inclusive education represents a global movement aimed at providing equitable learning opportunities for all students, including those with special educational needs (SEN), within mainstream educational settings. It emphasizes the removal of barriers, promotion of participation, and respect for diversity rather than segregation (UNESCO, 1994). Teachers' attitudes are consistently identified as one of the most powerful predictors of successful inclusion. Positive attitudes enable educators to adapt instructional methods, foster supportive environments, and ensure meaningful engagement of SEN students, whereas negative or ambivalent attitudes often lead to resistance, lower expectations, and ineffective implementation (Forlin et al., 2011; Sharma et al., 2018; Guillemot et al., 2022).

International research on higher education shows that university teachers generally hold moderately positive attitudes towards inclusive education. Faculty members often endorse the philosophical principle of inclusion; however, this support frequently remains stronger in theory than in actual classroom application (Schmidt et al., 2025; Cojocariu et al., 2025). Many teachers express willingness to accommodate students with disabilities but simultaneously voice substantial concerns about insufficient resources, large class sizes, lack of specialized training, and potential increases in workload (Jury et al., 2023; Papadakaki et al., 2022). These concerns appear more pronounced in resource-constrained environments, where institutional support systems are underdeveloped.

Several interrelated factors significantly influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. Prior contact and meaningful interaction with individuals with disabilities tend to foster more favorable attitudes by reducing stereotypes and increasing confidence (Hernandez, 2016; Desombre et al., 2021). Professional training and self-efficacy also emerge as strong predictors. Teachers who have received targeted preparation in inclusive strategies and those who feel competent in handling diverse learning needs demonstrate significantly more positive attitudes and greater willingness to implement accommodations (Sharma et al., 2016; Long et al., 2025). Other influential variables include years of teaching experience, academic discipline, and the level of administrative and collegial support available within the institution. Lack of resources, heavy workload, and inadequate policy implementation are repeatedly cited as major deterrents that negatively affect attitudes (Jury et al., 2023).

Gender-based differences in attitudes constitute an important dimension explored in the literature. Several studies report that female teachers tend to display more positive attitudes, greater empathy, and higher levels of willingness to adopt inclusive practices compared to male teachers (Schmidt et al., 2025; Alsolami, 2023). Researchers attribute this pattern to generally higher emotional intelligence, patience, and orientation towards caregiving roles often observed among female educators. However, findings are not entirely consistent. Some studies indicate no significant gender differences, suggesting that contextual factors such as cultural norms, workload distribution, and institutional culture may moderate or even eliminate apparent gender effects (Charitaki et al., 2022; Prisiazhniuk et al., 2024). These mixed results highlight the need for context-specific investigations, particularly in conservative and collectivist societies like Pakistan.

In developing countries, including Pakistan, the implementation of inclusive education faces unique and multifaceted challenges. Cultural beliefs, societal stigma attached to disability, and limited public awareness continue to shape both teachers' and institutional responses (Bhutta, 2025). At the higher education level, common barriers include overcrowded classrooms, lack of assistive technologies, insufficient funding, and absence of comprehensive faculty development programs. Although Pakistan has made policy commitments through Article 25-A of the Constitution and the Sustainable Development Goals, the translation of these policies into practice remains slow (Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, 2021; UNESCO, 2021).

The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan launched the *Policy for Students with Disabilities at Higher Education Institutions* in 2021, which calls for establishing disability resource centers, providing reasonable accommodations, and promoting inclusive learning environments. Despite this progressive framework, implementation gaps persist due to limited resources, inadequate monitoring mechanisms, and insufficient training of university teachers (Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, 2021; Bashir, 2025). University faculty often report feeling unprepared to address the diverse needs of students with sensory impairments, intellectual disabilities, or

specific learning difficulties. This sense of inadequacy further contributes to negative or hesitant attitudes toward inclusion.

Literature also underscores the critical role of targeted interventions in improving teachers' attitudes and competencies. Continuous professional development programs, collaborative teaching models, awareness campaigns, and the establishment of functional disability support units have shown promising results in enhancing teachers' confidence and willingness to practice inclusion (Alhassan, 2025; Supriyanto, 2019). Moreover, studies emphasize that positive attitudes must be accompanied by structural support. Policy enforcement, provision of resources, curriculum adaptation, and leadership commitment are essential for transforming favorable attitudes into effective inclusive practices (Sharma et al., 2021).

Although a growing body of international literature exists on teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education, significant research gaps remain in the Pakistani higher education context. Most available studies focus on school-level education, with very limited attention given to university teachers, particularly in large public sector institutions. Furthermore, few studies have systematically examined gender-based differences or the specific challenges faced by faculty at institutions such as the University of Karachi. The University of Karachi, with its large and diverse student population and dedicated Department of Special Education, offers a rich yet under-researched setting for exploring these dynamics.

The present study addresses this gap by investigating university teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education for students with special educational needs at the University of Karachi. It specifically examines overall attitudes, key influencing factors, gender-based differences, perceived challenges, and practical recommendations. By doing so, the research aims to contribute valuable empirical evidence that can inform policy development, faculty training programs, and institutional strategies for promoting genuine inclusion in Pakistani higher education.

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design using a descriptive survey approach to investigate university teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education for students with special educational needs at the University of Karachi. The study examined teachers' overall attitudes, influencing factors, perceived challenges, and gender-based differences.

The target population consisted of all full-time faculty members (lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors) across different departments, with an estimated population of 850–900 teachers during the 2025–2026 academic year. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure proportional representation from various faculties and academic ranks. A total sample of 250 teachers was selected.

Data were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument was adapted and modified from the SACIE-R scale (Forlin et al., 2011) and related literature on inclusive education. It included sections on demographic information, attitudes towards inclusive education, influencing factors, perceived challenges, and gender-based differences. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with 25 faculty members, and reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.86, indicating good internal consistency.

Prior permission was obtained from the relevant authorities of the University of Karachi before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was ensured. Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were strictly maintained through coded responses. Data were collected during March–April 2025 using both online (Google Forms) and printed questionnaires. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were used to summarize responses. Inferential statistics

included one-way ANOVA to compare attitudes across faculties. The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Ethical considerations were strictly followed in accordance with the research guidelines of the University of Karachi.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents

Sr.	Variables	Group	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	142	56.8%
		Female	108	43.2%
2	Age	25-32 years	48	19.2%
		33-42 years	92	36.8%
		43-52 years	65	26.0%
		53 years and above	45	18.0%
3	Teaching Experience	1-5 years	52	20.8%
		6-10 years	78	31.2%
		11-15 years	55	22.0%
		More than 15 years	65	26.0%
4	Designation	Lecturer	95	38.0%
		Assistant Professor	88	35.2%
		Associate Professor	42	16.8%
		Professor	25	10.0%
5	Faculty	Faculty of Arts & Humanities	38	15.2%
		Faculty of Science	55	22.0%
		Faculty of Social Sciences	62	24.8%
		Faculty of Education	32	12.8%
		Faculty of Management & Administrative Sciences	25	10.0%
		Faculty of Islamic Studies	15	6.0%
		Faculty of Law	10	4.0%
		Faculty of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences	8	3.2%
Faculty of Engineering & Technology	5	2.0%		
6	Highest Qualification	M.Phil. / MS	148	59.2%
		PhD	102	40.8%
7	Received Training on Inclusive Education / SEN	Yes	67	26.8%
		No	183	73.2%
8	Experience with Students with Special Needs	Yes	94	37.6%
		No	156	62.4%

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents involved in the study. The sample includes a slightly higher proportion of male faculty (56.8%) compared to female faculty (43.2%). Most respondents fall within the 33–42 years age group (36.8%), followed by 43–52 years (26.0%), indicating a predominantly mid-career academic population.

In terms of teaching experience, the largest group has 6–10 years of experience (31.2%), while a considerable proportion also has more than 15 years (26.0%). Regarding designation, lecturers (38.0%) and assistant professors (35.2%) form the majority of participants.

Faculty distribution shows representation from a range of disciplines, with the highest participation from Social Sciences (24.8%) and Science (22.0%). Most respondents hold an M.Phil./MS degree (59.2%), while 40.8% are PhD holders.

The data further indicates limited exposure to inclusive education training, as 73.2% reported no formal training in this area, and only 37.6% have experience teaching students with special needs. Overall, the table reflects a diverse academic sample with relatively low prior training in inclusive education.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Faculty Attitudes towards Inclusive Education (N = 250)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
<i>I support the inclusion of students with special educational needs in regular classrooms.</i>	8 (3.2%)	12 (4.8%)	25 (10.0%)	95 (38.0%)	110 (44.0%)	4.14	0.912
<i>Inclusive education improves learning for all students.</i>	10 (4.0%)	18 (7.2%)	35 (14.0%)	102 (40.8%)	85 (34.0%)	3.94	1.018
<i>Students with special educational needs can succeed in higher education with support.</i>	12 (4.8%)	15 (6.0%)	28 (11.2%)	98 (39.2%)	97 (38.8%)	4.01	1.045
<i>I feel confident teaching students with diverse learning needs.</i>	35 (14.0%)	48 (19.2%)	62 (24.8%)	68 (27.2%)	37 (14.8%)	3.10	1.214
<i>Inclusive education is an important responsibility of universities.</i>	7 (2.8%)	10 (4.0%)	22 (8.8%)	88 (35.2%)	123 (49.2%)	4.24	0.956

Table 2 shows how university teachers feel about inclusive education. Overall, their responses are quite positive, which means most teachers support the idea of including students with special educational needs in regular classes.

The strongest agreement is on the idea that universities should take responsibility for inclusive education (mean = 4.24). Many teachers also strongly support the inclusion of these students in normal classrooms (mean = 4.14). In addition, most respondents believe that students with special needs can do well in higher education if they are properly supported (mean = 4.01), and they also feel that inclusive education helps improve learning for all students (mean = 3.94).

On the other hand, teachers are less confident when it comes to actually teaching students with different learning needs (mean = 3.10). This shows that while they support the idea of inclusive education, some of them still feel unsure about how to handle it in practice. Overall, the results suggest positive attitudes, but also highlight the need for training and support to help teachers feel more confident in inclusive classrooms.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Factors Influencing Attitudes (N = 250)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
<i>I have received adequate training on inclusive education.</i>	48 (19.2%)	72 (28.8%)	55 (22.0%)	52 (20.8%)	23 (9.2%)	2.72	1.218
<i>Lack of resources affects implementation of inclusive education.</i>	5 (2.0%)	12 (4.8%)	18 (7.2%)	95 (38.0%)	120 (48.0%)	4.25	0.892
<i>Large class sizes make inclusive teaching difficult.</i>	8 (3.2%)	15 (6.0%)	25 (10.0%)	88 (35.2%)	114 (45.6%)	4.14	0.978
<i>Institutional support is essential for inclusive education.</i>	4 (1.6%)	7 (2.8%)	12 (4.8%)	78 (31.2%)	149 (59.6%)	4.45	0.812
<i>I am aware of strategies to support students with special needs.</i>	22 (8.8%)	45 (18.0%)	58 (23.2%)	82 (32.8%)	43 (17.2%)	3.30	1.156

Table 3 shows the main factors that affect teachers’ views about inclusive education. In simple words, it explains what helps or makes it difficult for teachers to include students with special needs in regular classes.

Most teachers feel they have not been properly trained for inclusive education, which shows a clear gap in their preparation. Many also believe that a shortage of resources and large class sizes create real problems in applying inclusive teaching in classrooms.

At the same time, teachers strongly feel that support from the university is very important for inclusive education to work properly. Without that support, it becomes difficult to manage. However, when it comes to knowing practical teaching methods for special needs students, the responses are only average, which means many teachers are still learning in this area. The results show that teachers are positive about inclusive education, but they need better training, proper resources, and strong institutional support to make it successful in real classrooms.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Perceived Challenges (N = 250)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
<i>Teaching students with special needs increases workload.</i>	12 (4.8%)	25 (10.0%)	38 (15.2%)	92 (36.8%)	83 (33.2%)	3.84	1.078
<i>Lack of assistive technology is a major challenge.</i>	6 (2.4%)	10 (4.0%)	22 (8.8%)	88 (35.2%)	124 (49.6%)	4.26	0.912
<i>Administrative support for inclusion is insufficient.</i>	8 (3.2%)	15 (6.0%)	35 (14.0%)	95 (38.0%)	97 (38.8%)	4.03	1.012
<i>Curriculum limitations hinder inclusive education.</i>	10 (4.0%)	18 (7.2%)	45 (18.0%)	85 (34.0%)	92 (36.8%)	3.92	1.085

<i>Time constraints affect support for special needs students.</i>	9 (3.6%)	22 (8.8%)	40 (16.0%)	96 (38.4%)	83 (33.2%)	3.89	1.045
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Table 4 explains the main challenges teachers face while working with students who have special educational needs. In general, most teachers agree that there are several practical difficulties in making inclusive education work smoothly. Many teachers feel that teaching students with special needs increases their workload, as shown by a relatively high mean score (3.84). A bigger concern is the lack of assistive technology, which most respondents strongly agree is a major issue (mean = 4.26). This suggests that basic support tools are not easily available in many cases. Teachers also feel that administrative support is not strong enough (mean = 4.03), which adds to their difficulties. In addition, limitations in the curriculum (mean = 3.92) and lack of time to properly support students (mean = 3.89) are also seen as important challenges.

The results clearly show that teachers are facing real, practical barriers in implementing inclusive education, especially related to resources, support systems, and time management.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on Gender-Based Attitudes (N = 250)

<i>Statement</i>	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
<i>Gender influences attitudes towards inclusive education.</i>	18 (7.2%)	35 (14.0%)	68 (27.2%)	85 (34.0%)	44 (17.6%)	3.41	1.112
<i>Gender affects confidence in teaching special needs students.</i>	22 (8.8%)	42 (16.8%)	72 (28.8%)	78 (31.2%)	36 (14.4%)	3.26	1.145
<i>Female teachers are more supportive of inclusion than male teachers.</i>	25 (10.0%)	38 (15.2%)	65 (26.0%)	82 (32.8%)	40 (16.0%)	3.30	1.178
<i>Male teachers face more challenges in inclusive teaching.</i>	35 (14.0%)	55 (22.0%)	78 (31.2%)	62 (24.8%)	20 (8.0%)	2.91	1.152
<i>Gender does not significantly affect attitudes towards inclusion.</i>	28 (11.2%)	45 (18.0%)	55 (22.0%)	72 (28.8%)	50 (20.0%)	3.28	1.245

Table 5 shows how teachers perceive the role of gender in shaping attitudes towards inclusive education. In general, the responses are somewhat mixed, suggesting that teachers do not hold a very fixed or extreme opinion on this issue. A noticeable number of respondents feel that gender can have some influence on attitudes towards inclusive education (mean = 3.41) and may also affect a teacher’s confidence when working with students who have special needs (mean = 3.26). Some teachers also think that female faculty tend to be slightly more supportive of inclusion compared to male faculty (mean = 3.30).

However, opinions are not strongly one-sided. Several teachers do not fully agree that male teachers face greater difficulties in inclusive classrooms (mean = 2.91). At the same time, many also feel that gender does not play a major role in shaping attitudes towards inclusion (mean = 3.28), which shows a level of disagreement or neutrality in responses.

Overall, teachers’ responses suggest that gender might have some effect, but it is not seen as a decisive or dominant factor in influencing attitudes towards inclusive education.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics on Recommendations (N = 250)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
<i>Universities should provide training on inclusive education.</i>	5 (2.0%)	8 (3.2%)	12 (4.8%)	85 (34.0%)	140 (56.0%)	4.39	0.845
<i>Institutional policies should support inclusion.</i>	4 (1.6%)	6 (2.4%)	15 (6.0%)	78 (31.2%)	147 (58.8%)	4.43	0.812
<i>More assistive technologies should be provided.</i>	3 (1.2%)	7 (2.8%)	18 (7.2%)	82 (32.8%)	140 (56.0%)	4.40	0.798
<i>Awareness programs should be conducted for faculty.</i>	6 (2.4%)	10 (4.0%)	22 (8.8%)	88 (35.2%)	124 (49.6%)	4.26	0.912
<i>Inclusive education should be part of teacher development programs.</i>	4 (1.6%)	9 (3.6%)	15 (6.0%)	80 (32.0%)	142 (56.8%)	4.39	0.845

Table 6 shows the recommendations given by teachers for improving inclusive education. Overall, the responses are very clear and strongly positive, showing that most teachers support practical steps to strengthen inclusive practices in universities. A large majority of teachers believe that universities should provide proper training on inclusive education (mean = 4.39). They also strongly agree that institutional policies must actively support inclusion (mean = 4.43), which is the highest score in this table, showing how important policy-level support is for them. Teachers also emphasize the need for more assistive technologies in classrooms (mean = 4.40), as these tools can make teaching and learning easier for students with special needs. In addition, they support the idea of conducting awareness programs for faculty members (mean = 4.26) so that more teachers understand how to handle inclusive classrooms effectively. Finally, many respondents strongly feel that inclusive education should be included in teacher development programs (mean = 4.39), highlighting the need for long-term professional preparation. Overall, the feedback shows strong agreement that training, policies, resources, and awareness are all necessary to improve inclusive education in universities.

Table 1.7: One-Way ANOVA Results for Differences in Attitudes and Related Variables across Faculties (N = 250)

Variable	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<i>Awareness of Inclusive Education</i>	Between Groups	7.245	8	0.906	1.652	0.112
	Within Groups	132.185	241	0.548		
<i>Attitudes towards Inclusive Education</i>	Between Groups	5.872	8	0.734	1.128	0.346
	Within Groups	156.785	241	0.651		
<i>Confidence in Teaching Students with SEN</i>	Between Groups	9.458	8	1.182	2.347	0.019
	Within Groups	121.364	241	0.504		

<i>Perceived Challenges in Implementation</i>	Between Groups	6.912	8	0.864	1.395	0.198
	Within Groups	149.285	241	0.619		
<i>Perceived Institutional Support</i>	Between Groups	8.675	8	1.084	2.156	0.032
	Within Groups	121.245	241	0.503		

Table 1.7 presents the results of One-Way ANOVA conducted to examine differences in university teachers' attitudes and related variables towards inclusive education across different faculties at the University of Karachi (N = 250).

The analysis revealed no statistically significant differences among faculties in Awareness of Inclusive Education ($F = 1.652$, $p = 0.112$) and Attitudes towards Inclusive Education ($F = 1.128$, $p = 0.346$). This suggests that teachers across various faculties hold relatively similar levels of awareness and overall attitudes toward inclusive education.

However, significant differences were found in Confidence in Teaching Students with Special Educational Needs ($F = 2.347$, $p = 0.019$) and Perceived Institutional Support ($F = 2.156$, $p = 0.032$). These results indicate that faculty members from different disciplines vary significantly in their self-confidence to teach students with SEN and in their perception of institutional support for inclusive practices. No significant differences were observed in Perceived Challenges in Implementation ($p = 0.198$).

These findings partially support the study objectives by highlighting that while general attitudes toward inclusion are consistent across faculties, important variations exist in teachers' confidence and perceived support, which may be influenced by the nature of their respective academic disciplines. Further post-hoc analysis is recommended to identify which specific faculties differ significantly.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that university teachers at the University of Karachi generally demonstrate a positive attitude towards inclusive education for students with special educational needs (SEN). Most faculty members support the inclusion of SEN students in mainstream classrooms and recognize inclusive education as an essential responsibility of higher education institutions. However, despite this positive orientation, teachers reported comparatively lower confidence in their ability to effectively manage diverse learning needs, suggesting a clear gap between supportive attitudes and practical classroom readiness.

These findings are consistent with international literature, which highlights that university faculty often express favorable views toward inclusive education in principle, but face difficulties in implementation due to limited training, insufficient institutional support, and lack of practical experience (Schmidt et al., 2025; Guillemot et al., 2022). Similarly, research in the Pakistani context also confirms that positive attitudes alone are not sufficient unless supported by adequate resources and structured professional development (Bhutta, 2025).

The study further found that institutional support, availability of resources, and large class sizes significantly influence teachers' attitudes. Respondents strongly emphasized challenges such as lack of assistive technologies, insufficient administrative backing, and inadequate training opportunities. These findings align closely with regional evidence from public sector universities, where similar barriers—particularly resource constraints and limited institutional preparedness—were identified as major obstacles to effective inclusive education (Abbas et al.,

2025). This suggests that such challenges are systemic across higher education institutions in Pakistan rather than isolated to a single university.

Moreover, variations in confidence across faculties indicate that disciplinary context plays a role in shaping teachers' readiness for inclusive practices. However, overall attitudes remain relatively consistent across academic units, indicating a shared general acceptance of inclusive education principles. This supports earlier research suggesting that while attitudes may be broadly positive, practical readiness differs depending on subject area and teaching environment (Cojocariu et al., 2025).

Gender-based analysis revealed no strong or consistent influence of gender on attitudes towards inclusive education. Responses indicated mixed views, suggesting that gender is not a decisive factor in shaping perceptions of inclusion. This finding is in line with research indicating that institutional and contextual factors are more influential than demographic characteristics in determining attitudes towards inclusive education (Charitaki et al., 2022).

Finally, teachers strongly recommended improvements in training, institutional policies, assistive technologies, and inclusion of inclusive education in professional development programs. These recommendations reflect a clear demand for systemic reform and are consistent with international evidence emphasizing the importance of continuous professional development and institutional commitment for successful implementation of inclusive education (Sharma et al., 2021).

Conclusion

This study examined university teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education for students with special educational needs at the University of Karachi using a quantitative descriptive survey design. The findings indicate that faculty members generally hold positive and supportive attitudes towards inclusive education and recognize it as an essential responsibility of higher education institutions. This reflects a strong theoretical acceptance of inclusive practices within the academic environment. However, the study also reveals a significant gap between positive attitudes and practical implementation. Despite willingness to support inclusive education, many faculty members reported limited instructional confidence. This gap is primarily attributed to insufficient professional training, lack of institutional support, and inadequate availability of teaching resources and assistive technologies. These constraints collectively hinder the effective integration of inclusive practices in university classrooms.

Furthermore, the study highlights variations in attitudes based on demographic factors, suggesting that experience, training exposure, and institutional environment may influence faculty perspectives. Gender-based differences were also observed but were not strong enough to override overall positive trends. While the readiness for inclusive education exists among university teachers, its successful implementation requires systematic institutional intervention. Strengthening professional development programs, improving resource allocation, and developing supportive academic policies are essential to bridge the gap between attitude and practice. Addressing these areas will enable higher education institutions to move from conceptual acceptance of inclusive education towards its effective and sustainable implementation.

Recommendations

1. Higher education institutions should establish continuous professional development programs focusing on inclusive pedagogy and evidence-based instructional strategies to effectively support diverse learners.

2. Universities are encouraged to strengthen institutional frameworks by formulating clear and actionable inclusive education policies, supported by effective implementation and monitoring mechanisms.
3. The provision of assistive technologies, accessible learning materials, and adequate academic resources should be prioritized to ensure equitable learning opportunities for students with special educational needs.
4. Structured awareness and sensitization programs should be organized regularly to enhance faculty understanding of the needs, challenges, and support requirements of students with special educational needs.
5. Inclusive education should be systematically embedded within faculty training and teacher development programs to ensure long-term sustainability and the development of instructional competence in inclusive classroom practices.

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