

Article

Exploring Parent's Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education

Aileen Sayson

Raymond Espina

Honorio Anora

Anabelle Pantaleon

Veronica Calasang

Corresponding Author: aileensayson20@gmail.com

Abstract: This study examined the attitudes of parents of children with and without disabilities towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classrooms. Utilizing a descriptive-comparative research design and employing universal sampling, the research gathered data from 40 parents using a modified rating scale questionnaire. The findings indicated that both groups of parents generally held neutral to positive attitudes towards inclusive education, recognizing the social and academic benefits of integrating children with disabilities into general education classrooms. Moreover, data revealed a no significant difference in attitudes between the two groups. Despite minor variations, the results suggest that parents' attitudes are similar regardless of whether they have children with disabilities or not. The study highlights the importance of continued education and involvement of parents in the inclusive education process to create a supportive and accepting environment for all students.

Keywords: Inclusive education, special education needs, parental attitudes, parental involvement

Introduction

Inclusive education is a transformative approach that aims to provide equitable educational opportunities to all students, regardless of their diverse backgrounds and abilities (Shields & Heshbol, 2020). It emphasizes the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms, promoting an educational environment where all students can learn together (Molina et al., 2021). This approach not only benefits students with disabilities by providing them with a sense of belonging and access to quality education but also enriches the learning experiences of their peers by fostering a culture of diversity and acceptance (Volker et al., 2023). Inclusive education has significant benefits for all students. Research indicates that inclusive education promotes social interactions and friendships among students with and



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without disabilities, leading to improved social skills and increased empathy (Molina Roldán et al., 2021). Additionally, students without disabilities gain a deeper understanding of diversity and develop the ability to collaborate with peers of different abilities, which is crucial for their personal and professional lives in an increasingly diverse society (Roldán et al., 2021).

The significance of inclusive education extends beyond the classroom, influencing societal attitudes and promoting a more inclusive and equitable society (Norwich, 2022). Inclusive education equips students with the values, attitudes, and skills necessary for supporting the inclusion of all citizens, which is crucial in a world characterized by increasing diversity and interdependence (Lim & Ireland, 2001). Furthermore, inclusive education lays the foundation for future social cohesion by ending all forms of discrimination and fostering a culture of respect and understanding (Saharan & Sethi, 2009). Moreover, inclusive education has been shown to positively impact both students with and without disabilities. It enhances social skills and empathy among all students, fostering a sense of community and mutual support (Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009). This inclusive environment encourages students to value diversity, which is essential for thriving in a multicultural and interconnected world (Desombre et al., 2021).

Parents play a crucial role in the success of inclusive education. Their attitudes and beliefs significantly influence the implementation of inclusive practices and the overall acceptance of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Positive parental involvement can foster a supportive environment for both students and teachers, encouraging the development of inclusive policies and practices (Hegarty, 2001). On the other hand, resistance or lack of understanding from parents can pose significant challenges to the effective implementation of inclusive education (Zhu & Wang, 2010). Research indicates that when parents are actively involved in their children's education, it leads to better educational outcomes for all students, including those with special educational needs. Parental involvement enhances children's academic performance, social skills, and overall school experience (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Parents who engage in their children's education at home and maintain open communication with teachers contribute to a more inclusive and supportive educational environment (Sukys et al., 2015).

Despite the benefits of inclusive education, parents often encounter various challenges. These include inadequate teacher training, insufficient resources, and a lack of proper support systems to address the diverse needs of students with disabilities (Sánchez et al., 2019). Additionally, societal stigma and misconceptions about disabilities can create barriers, making it difficult for parents to advocate effectively for inclusive practices (Haug, 2017).

There is a significant research gap in understanding the attitudes of parents towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classrooms. This gap is particularly evident when comparing the perspectives of parents of children with disabilities and those without disabilities. Further research is needed to explore how these attitudes influence the success of inclusive education and the factors that contribute to positive or negative perceptions. Addressing this gap can provide valuable insights for policymakers and educators to enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education programs.

The proposed research will focus on Langtad Elementary School located in Langtad, City of Naga. This study will investigate the attitudes of parents towards inclusive education, comparing those with children who have disabilities and those without. The research will aim to identify specific challenges and support needs, providing recommendations for improving parental involvement and fostering a more inclusive educational environment. This direction is essential to ensure that inclusive education policies are effectively implemented and that all students receive the support they need to succeed.

Methodology

The study utilized a descriptive-comparative research design, which, as articulated by Seeram (2019), involves identifying or confirming the existence of relationships or interdependencies between two or more aspects of a situation without manipulating the variables. This approach allowed for a detailed exploration of the connections between variables, providing a comprehensive understanding of the observed phenomena. Universal sampling was employed as the sampling strategy, which, according to Richard and Margaret (1990), involves selecting a sample where not every member of the population has the same probability of being included, and the probability of selection is unknown. The study was conducted at Langtad Elementary School in Langtad, City of Naga, with 40 parents per environment of children with and without disabilities in sections implementing Inclusive Education. Data were collected using a modified version of Prado, A.A.'s (2002) rating scale questionnaire, where respondents selected one of five options for each statement: 5-strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-undecided, 2-disagree, and 1-strongly disagree. The T-test was utilized to determine if there were significant differences between the means of two groups or if a single group's mean deviated significantly from a predetermined value. The collected data were handled using appropriate statistical tools to ensure accurate analysis and interpretation.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the age and gender distribution of the respondents. The total sample consisted of 40 parents, with 26 females (65%) and 14

males (35%). The majority of respondents were aged between 34 and 42 years, comprising 42.5% of the total sample, with 30% of the females and 12.5% of the males falling within this age range.

Table 1. Age and Gender of the Respondents

Age (in years)	Female		Male		Total	
	f	%	f	%	F	%
52 and above	1	2.50	0	0.00	1	2.50
43-51	4	10.00	6	15.00	10	25.00
34-42	12	30.00	5	12.50	17	42.50
25-33	9	22.50	3	7.50	12	30.00
Total	26	65.00	14	35.00	40	100.00

This was followed by the 25 to 33 years age group, which included 30% of the respondents, with a higher proportion of females (22.5%) compared to males (7.5%). The age group of 43 to 51 years accounted for 25% of the respondents, with 10% females and 15% males. Only one respondent was aged 52 years and above, representing 2.5% of the total sample, and this individual was female. This distribution indicates a predominance of female respondents across all age groups, with the highest representation in the 34 to 42 years category.

Table 2. Highest Educational Attainment of the Respondents

Educational Attainment	f	%
College Graduate	5	12.50
College Level	6	15.00
High School Graduate	19	47.50
High School Level	7	17.50
Elementary Graduate	2	5.00
Elementary Level	1	2.50
Total	40	100.00

Table 2 details the highest educational attainment of the respondents. The majority of the respondents, 47.5%, are high school graduates, indicating that nearly half of the surveyed parents completed high school. Those who reached high school level but did not graduate constitute 17.5% of the respondents. College graduates make up 12.5% of the sample, while 15% attended college but did not complete their degree. A smaller percentage, 5%, are elementary school graduates, and only 2.5% of the respondents did not complete elementary education. This data highlights that the educational background of the respondents is predominantly at the high school level, with fewer individuals having attained higher education degrees.

Table 3. Respondents' Number of Children

Number of Children	f	%
More than 4	7	17.50
3-4	14	35.00
1-2	19	47.50
Total	40	100.00

Table 3 shows the distribution of the respondents based on the number of children they have. The majority of respondents, 47.5%, have 1 to 2 children, indicating that nearly half of the parents surveyed have smaller families. Those with 3 to 4 children make up 35% of the sample, suggesting a significant portion of the respondents have medium-sized families. Meanwhile, 17.5% of the respondents have more than 4 children, representing the smallest group. This data highlights a trend towards smaller family sizes among the respondents, with almost half having only one or two children, and a smaller proportion having larger families.

Table 4. Respondents' Combined Family Monthly Income

Monthly Income (in pesos)	f	%
Above 30,000	5	12.50
25,001-30,000	0	0.00
20,001-25,000	0	0.00
15,001-20,000	1	2.50
10,001-15,000	6	15.00
10,000 and below	28	70.00
Total	40	100.00

Table 4 illustrates the combined family monthly income of the respondents. The data reveals that a significant majority, 70%, have a monthly income of 10,000 pesos or below, indicating that most families fall within the lower-income bracket. Only 15% of the respondents have a monthly income between 10,001 and 15,000 pesos. A small proportion, 2.5%, report a monthly income in the range of 15,001 to 20,000 pesos. Notably, there are no respondents with a monthly income between 20,001 and 30,000 pesos. On the higher end of the income scale, 12.5% of the respondents have a monthly income above 30,000 pesos. This distribution highlights a substantial income disparity, with the majority of families earning relatively low monthly incomes, while a small percentage earn significantly higher amounts.

Table 5 presents the attitudes of parents of children with disabilities towards inclusive education, as reflected in their responses to various indicators. The weighted mean (WM) scores provide insight into their perceptions and concerns. Indicators 1 and 2, with WMs of 3.55 and 3.70 respectively, suggest a positive outlook on the academic and social benefits of integrating children with disabilities into general education classrooms. However, indicators 3 through 11 generally reflect neutral to negative perceptions about the potential compromises to their child's education when children with various types of disabilities are included in the classroom. The WMs for these indicators range from 2.25 to 3.20, indicating mixed feelings and concerns about educational outcomes. Notably, indicators 14 and 15, with very positive WMs of 4.35 and 4.45, show strong support for social inclusion, as parents would invite

children with disabilities to birthday parties and encourage their own children to attend parties hosted by children with disabilities. Indicators 19 and 20, both with a WM of 4.25, emphasize the importance parents place on being educated about disabilities, highlighting a desire for better understanding and awareness.

Table 5. Perception of parents of Children with Disabilities

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	A child with a disability can benefits academically from being integrated into a general education classroom.	3.55	Positive
2	A child with a disability can benefits socially from being integrated into a general education classroom.	3.70	Positive
3	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a disability is his/her class.	2.65	Neutral
4	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a physical disability in his/her class.	2.55	Negative
5	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a learning disability in his/her class.	2.55	Negative
6	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a behavior disability in his/her class.	3.20	Neutral
7	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a sensory impairment (i.e. hearing or visually impaired) in his/her class.	2.80	Neutral
8	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with mild or moderate mental retardation in his/her class.	2.80	Neutral
9	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a severe disability (i.e. severe mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or autism) in his/her class.	2.70	Neutral
10	My child's overall wellbeing would be compromised by having a child with disabilities in his/her class.	2.65	Neutral
11	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a health impairment (i.e. diabetes, asthma, or other) in his/her class.	2.65	Neutral
12	My child can benefit academically from having a child with disabilities in his/her class.	3.20	Neutral
13	My child can benefit socially from having a child with disabilities in his/her class	3.00	Neutral
14	I would invite a child with disabilities to my child's birthday party	4.35	Very Positive
15	I would encourage my child to go to a child with disabilities birthday party	4.45	Very Positive
16	I would hesitate to have my child become friends with a child with disabilities	2.40	Negative
17	Having a child with disabilities in my child's class would impact my decision to have my child placed in that class or school.	2.25	Negative
18	If a child with disabilities were to enroll in my child's class, I would want to be notified:	2.90	Neutral
19	It is important for me to be educated about my child's classmate's disability.	4.25	Very Positive
20	It is important for my child to be educated about his/her classmate's disability	4.25	Very Positive
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.14	Neutral

Overall, the aggregate weighted mean of 3.14 suggests a neutral stance on the part of parents towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education settings. This neutrality reflects a balance between

recognizing the potential benefits of inclusion and concerns about its impact on their own children's education and wellbeing.

Table 6. Level of Attitudes of the Parents of Children without Disabilities towards Inclusion of Learners with Disabilities in Regular Classrooms

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	A child with a disability can benefits academically from being integrated into a general education classroom.	3.65	Positive
2	A child with a disability can benefits socially from being integrated into a general education classroom.	3.95	Positive
3	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a disability is his/her class.	2.85	Neutral
4	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a physical disability in his/her class.	2.70	Neutral
5	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a learning disability in his/her class.	3.00	Neutral
6	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a behavior disability in his/her class.	3.10	Neutral
7	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a sensory impairment (i.e. hearing or visually impaired) in his/her class.	2.95	Neutral
8	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with mild or moderate mental retardation in his/her class.	3.05	Neutral
9	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a severe disability (i.e. severe mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or autism) in his/her class.	2.85	Neutral
10	My child's overall well being would be compromised by having a child with disabilities in his/her class.	2.85	Neutral
11	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a health impairment (i.e. diabetes, asthma, or other) in his/her class.	3.35	Neutral
12	My child can benefit academically from having a child with disabilities in his/her class.	3.50	Positive
13	My child can benefit socially from having a child with disabilities in his/her class	3.55	Positive
14	I would invite a child with disabilities to my child's birthday party	3.60	Positive
15	1 would encourage my child to go to a child with disabilities birthday party	3.75	Positive
16	1 would hesitate to have my child become friends with a child with disabilities	3.10	Neutral
17	Having a child with disabilities m my child's class would impact my decision to have my child placed in that class or school.	3.20	Neutral
18	If a child with disabilities were to enroll in my child's class, I would want to be notified:	2.75	Neutral
19	It is important for me to be educated about my child's classmate's disability.	3.45	Positive
20	It is important for my child to be educated about his/her classmate's disability	4.00	Positive
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.26	Neutral

Table 6 displays the attitudes of parents of children without disabilities towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classrooms. The overall aggregate weighted mean (WM) is 3.26, indicating a generally neutral stance with some positive leanings. The highest WMs are seen in indicators 2 and 20, with scores of 3.95 and 4.00 respectively, reflecting a strong belief in the social benefits for

children with disabilities when integrated into general education classrooms and the importance of educating their own children about their classmates' disabilities. Indicators 1 and 12, with WMs of 3.65 and 3.50 respectively, show that parents recognize both academic and social benefits for children with disabilities in inclusive settings. Parents also positively view the social interactions, as seen in indicators 13, 14, and 15, which have WMs of 3.55, 3.60, and 3.75 respectively, indicating a willingness to include children with disabilities in social events like birthday parties. Conversely, the responses to indicators 3 through 11 generally fall within the neutral range, with WMs between 2.70 and 3.35, suggesting mixed feelings about the potential impact of including children with various types of disabilities on their own children's education. Indicator 16, with a WM of 3.10, reflects a neutral stance towards hesitating to allow their children to become friends with children with disabilities, while indicator 17, with a WM of 3.20, shows a neutral attitude towards the impact on school placement decisions. Indicator 19, with a WM of 3.45, highlights the importance parents place on being informed about their child's classmates' disabilities, suggesting a desire for greater awareness and understanding. Overall, while parents show positive attitudes towards the social benefits of inclusion, their concerns about potential academic impacts result in a more neutral aggregate stance.

Table 7. Test of Difference on the Attitudes of Parents of Children with and Without Disabilities Towards Inclusion of Learners with Disabilities in Regular Classrooms

Source of Difference	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	Computed t- value	p-value	Decision	Result
Parents of Children with Disabilities	62.85	10.11					
Parents of Children Without Disabilities	65.20	7.15	-2.35	-0.849	0.401	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 7 presents the results of a t-test examining the difference in attitudes between parents of children with disabilities and parents of children without disabilities towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classrooms. The mean attitude score for parents of children with disabilities is 62.85 with a standard deviation of 10.11, while the mean score for parents of children without disabilities is 65.20 with a standard deviation of 7.15. The mean difference between the two groups is -2.35. The computed t-value is -0.849, and the p-value is 0.401. Since the p-value is greater than the significance level of 0.05, we do not reject the null hypothesis (H_0). This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of parents of children with disabilities compared to parents of children without disabilities towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular

classrooms. The results suggest that both groups of parents have similar attitudes regarding inclusive education.

Conclusion

The study explored the attitudes of parents with and without children with disabilities towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classrooms. Analysis of the weighted mean scores indicated that both groups of parents generally held neutral to positive attitudes towards inclusive education, with some positive leanings towards the social and academic benefits of integration for children with disabilities. Parents of children without disabilities showed slightly more positive attitudes for parents of children with disabilities. The t-test results revealed no significant difference between the attitudes of the two groups. This suggests that, despite slight variations, parents' attitudes towards inclusive education are generally similar regardless of whether they have children with disabilities or not. Both groups recognize the benefits of inclusion while also expressing some concerns about its impact on their children's education. These findings underline the importance of continuing to educate and involve parents in the process of inclusive education to foster a supportive and accepting environment for all learners.

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