

## Article

## Parental Mindsets on Inclusive Education for Empowering Tomorrow's Learners

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the attitudes of parents of children with and without disabilities towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classrooms. Data were collected on various indicators, including perceived academic and social benefits, and potential compromises to their own child's education and well-being. Results show that parents of children with disabilities have a generally neutral attitude, highlighting positive views on social and academic benefits but also concerns about negative impacts on their child's education. Similarly, parents of children without disabilities also exhibit a neutral attitude, strongly favoring social benefits while expressing mixed perceptions regarding academic impacts. Statistical analysis reveals no significant difference between the two groups. These findings indicate that both groups of parents share similar perspectives, emphasizing the importance of social inclusion but wary of potential educational compromises.

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**Keywords:** Special education, parental mindset, inclusive education, comparative analysis

### Introduction

Inclusive education aims to ensure that all learners, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, receive equitable access to quality education (Lim, 2020). This approach not only enhances academic outcomes but also fosters social inclusion and personal development (Kart & Kart, 2021). The role of parents in this context is crucial as their attitudes and mindsets significantly influence the success of inclusive practices. Understanding parental mindsets on inclusive education is vital for empowering tomorrow's learners and promoting an inclusive society (Gonzales, 2020).

Education is a fundamental right and a powerful tool for individual and societal development. It opens doors to opportunities,



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improves quality of life, and fosters economic growth (Aman et al., 2022). Special education, which caters to the unique needs of learners with disabilities, ensures that these individuals receive the necessary support to achieve their full potential (Bovey, 2023). Providing tailored educational experiences, special education helps bridge the gap between learners with disabilities and their peers, promoting equity and inclusion (UNESCO, 2020). Moreover, inclusive education practices have been shown to benefit all students by fostering a diverse learning environment that values differences (Smith, 2019). Special education plays a critical role in society by addressing the needs of students with disabilities and ensuring their integration into mainstream education (Kauffman & Hornby, 2020). It provides specialized instructional strategies, assistive technologies, and supportive services that enable these learners to access the general curriculum (Fernandez et al., 2022). This integration is essential for building a more inclusive society where individuals with disabilities can participate fully and contribute meaningfully (WHO, 2021). Additionally, special education helps in reducing social stigmas and breaking down barriers that often isolate individuals with disabilities (Florian & Spratt, 2022).

Parental attitudes towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classes are pivotal to the success of inclusive education (Paseka & Schwab, 2020). Positive attitudes from parents, especially those without prior exposure to disabilities, can significantly enhance the integration process (Babik & Gardner, 2021). However, research indicates that some parents harbor reservations due to concerns about the quality of education and the potential impact on their non-disabled children (de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2019). These attitudes can be shaped by personal experiences, cultural beliefs, and the perceived effectiveness of inclusive practices (Yada & Savolainen, 2020).

Emmers et al. (2020) emphasized that a positive attitude towards inclusion among parents is essential for creating a supportive learning environment. When parents believe in the benefits of inclusive education, they are more likely to advocate for necessary resources and support systems (Rossetti et al., 2021). This advocacy can lead to improved educational outcomes for all students, as inclusive classrooms are designed to accommodate diverse learning needs (Lindsay et al., 2019). Moreover, a positive parental attitude can help reduce stigma and foster a culture of acceptance and empathy among students (Katz, 2021). Ensuring that parents understand and support inclusive practices is therefore critical for their successful implementation (Paseka & Schwab, 2020).

Despite the recognized importance of parental attitudes, there is limited research on the specific perspectives of parents of children with and without disabilities regarding inclusion. For instance, there is a need to understand how these two groups of parents differ in their

views on inclusive education. Parents of children with disabilities might have unique insights and concerns compared to those without direct experience with disabilities (Gasteiger-Klicpera et al., 2021). Furthermore, research is needed to explore the factors that influence these attitudes, such as socioeconomic status, educational background, and cultural context (Szumski et al., 2020).

To address these research gaps, a study focusing on the attitudes of parents towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classrooms at Punta Princesa Elementary School, located in Tres de Abril St., Barangay Punta Princesa, Cebu City, is proposed. This study will examine the differences in attitudes between parents of children with disabilities and parents of children without disabilities. By understanding these perspectives, the research aims to provide insights into how inclusive practices can be better implemented and supported within this community. The findings will contribute to developing strategies that foster positive parental attitudes and enhance the overall effectiveness of inclusive education.

## **Methodology**

The study utilized a descriptive comparative research design, as described by Mary Ann Cantrell (2011) and Formplus Blog (2020). This quantitative approach aims to clarify differences between groups within a population without altering the independent variable. To enhance the methodology's reliability and ensure active participation in data collection, the researcher personally distributed the questionnaires to the respondents. This method not only ensured a comprehensive understanding of group differences but also underscored the rigorous methodology employed to gather data from participants. Universal sampling was used, as defined by Richard and Margaret (1990), where each member's probability of being chosen is unknown and not equal. This technique was preferred to gather crucial information from parents, the key respondents. The study was conducted at Punta Princesa Elementary School, Cebu City, involving 47 parents of children with and without disabilities in inclusive education sections. The respondents' children had classmates with learning and intellectual disabilities, making them suitable for the study. Data were collected using a modified rating scale questionnaire from Prado, A.A. (2002), which included respondents' profiles and their attitudes towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities. The Likert Scale with five options was used to gauge these attitudes. The t-Test was employed to compare the means of two groups to determine if there was a significant difference between them, which is a common method for assessing whether average scores differ significantly between groups.

## Results and Discussion

Table 1. Age and Gender of the Parents Respondents

Age (in years)	Female		Male		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
50 and above	11	23.40	3	6.38	14	29.79
42-49	6	12.77	2	4.26	8	17.02
34-41	11	23.40	0	0.00	11	23.40
26-33	14	29.79	0	0.00	14	29.79
Total	42	89.36	5	10.64	47	100.00

The data in Table 1 provides a breakdown of the age and gender distribution among parent respondents. A total of 47 parents participated, with a significant majority being female (89.36%) and only a small portion being male (10.64%). Among the female respondents, the largest age group was those aged 26-33 years, comprising 29.79% of the total respondents. This age group was also notable for having no male respondents. The second largest group of females was aged 34-41 years, representing another 23.40% of the total respondents, again with no males in this age range. In the 50 and above age category, 23.40% were female, and 6.38% were male, making it the only age group with a relatively higher proportion of male respondents compared to other age groups. Lastly, the 42-49 age category included 12.77% female and 4.26% male respondents. Overall, females dominated across all age categories, particularly in the younger age groups, while the presence of male respondents was minimal and primarily observed in the older age brackets.

Table 2. Highest Educational Attainment of the Respondents

Educational Attainment	f	%
With Master's Units	5	10.64
College Graduate	9	19.15
College Level	11	23.40
High School Graduate	13	27.66
High School Level	4	8.51
Elementary Graduate	1	2.13
Elementary Level	4	8.51
Total	47	100.00

The data in Table 2 illustrates the highest educational attainment among the 47 parent respondents. The largest group of respondents, making up 27.66%, were high school graduates. This is followed by those who had completed some college education (college level), representing 23.40% of the respondents. College graduates constituted 19.15% of the total, indicating a significant portion had attained higher education degrees. A smaller but notable group had pursued postgraduate education, with 10.64% having completed some master's units. High school level and elementary level respondents each accounted for 8.51%, showing that a minor segment of the respondents

did not complete high school or only completed some elementary education. Finally, only 2.13% of the respondents were elementary graduates, the smallest group in the dataset.

Table 3. Respondents' Number of Children

Number of Children	f	%
More than 4	5	10.64
3-4	24	51.06
1-2	18	38.30
Total	47	100.00

The data in Table 3 outlines the number of children among the 47 parent respondents. A majority of the respondents, 51.06%, reported having 3-4 children, making this the most common family size in the sample. Following this, 38.30% of the respondents had 1-2 children, indicating that smaller family sizes are also prevalent among the respondents. A smaller portion of the respondents, 10.64%, had more than 4 children, reflecting that larger families are less common in this group. This distribution suggests that while medium-sized families (3-4 children) are predominant, there is also a significant representation of smaller families, with larger families being relatively uncommon.

Table 4. Respondents' Combined Family Monthly Income

Monthly Income (in pesos)	f	%
Above 30,000	13	27.66
25,001-30,000	3	6.38
20,001-25,000	3	6.38
15,001-20,000	5	10.64
10,001-15,000	13	27.66
10,000 and below	10	21.28
Total	47	100.00

The data in Table 4 presents the combined family monthly income of the 47 parent respondents. The income brackets show a diverse economic background among the respondents. Both the highest income bracket, above 30,000 pesos, and the 10,001-15,000 pesos bracket have the largest shares, each constituting 27.66% of the respondents. This indicates a bimodal distribution with significant representation at both higher and moderate-income levels. The lowest income bracket, 10,000 pesos and below, includes 21.28% of the respondents, highlighting a considerable portion of families with limited financial resources. In the mid-range income brackets, 10.64% of the respondents fall into the 15,001-20,000 pesos category. Smaller portions of the respondents, each at 6.38%, reported monthly incomes of 25,001-30,000 pesos and 20,001-25,000 pesos respectively.

The data in Table 5 provides insights into the attitudes of parents of children with disabilities towards the inclusion of learners with

disabilities in regular classrooms. The aggregate weighted mean of 2.92 suggests a generally neutral overall attitude.

Table 5. Level of Attitudes of the Parents of Children with Disabilities towards Inclusion of Learners with Disabilities in Regular Classrooms

S/ N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	A child with a disability can benefit academically from being integrated into a general education classroom.	3.80	Positive
2	A child with a disability can benefit socially from being integrated into a general education classroom.	4.04	Positive
3	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a disability in his/her class.	1.84	Negative
4	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a physical disability in his/her class.	1.84	Negative
5	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a learning disability in his/her class.	2.20	Negative
6	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a behavior disability in his/her class.	3.08	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.	2.04	Negative
8	My child's education would be compromised by having a child with mild or moderate mental retardation in his/her class.	3.04	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.	3.36	Neutral
10	My child's overall well being would be compromised by having a child with disabilities in his/her class.	1.76	Very Negative
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.	2.08	Negative
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	3.76	Positive
14	I would invite a child with disabilities to my child's birthday party	4.44	Very Positive
15	I would encourage my child to go to a child with disabilities birthday party	4.12	Positive
16	I would hesitate to have my child become friends with a child with disabilities	2.08	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.	1.72	Very Negative
18	If a child with disabilities were to enroll in my child's class, I would want to be notified:	2.56	Negative
19	It is important for me to be educated about my child's classmate's disability.	3.44	Positive
20	It is important for my child to be educated about his/her classmate's disability	4.00	Positive
Aggregate Weighted Mean		2.92	Neutral

However, there are distinct variations among the individual indicators. Parents show positive attitudes towards the academic (WM=3.80) and social (WM=4.04) benefits for children with disabilities when integrated



into general education classrooms. They also believe it is important for both themselves (WM=3.44) and their children (WM=4.00) to be educated about classmates' disabilities. Conversely, there are strong negative sentiments regarding the potential compromise of their child's education, particularly with behavioral disabilities (WM=3.08) and severe disabilities (WM=3.36), with weighted means indicating neutral attitudes. More critical views are reflected in the concerns about the impact of having children with disabilities in their child's class on their decision-making (WM=1.72) and overall well-being (WM=1.76). Additionally, parents express reluctance to have their children become friends with children with disabilities (WM=2.08) and a desire to be notified if a child with disabilities enrolls in the class (WM=2.56). On a positive note, parents are highly supportive of social interactions, as evidenced by the very positive attitude towards inviting children with disabilities to birthday parties (WM=4.44) and encouraging their children to attend such parties (WM=4.12). Overall, while there is a mix of positive, neutral, and negative attitudes, the general sentiment leans towards a cautious acceptance of inclusion, with significant concerns about potential impacts on their own children's education and well-being.

The data in Table 6 presents the attitudes of parents of children without disabilities towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classrooms. The aggregate weighted mean of 3.07 indicates an overall neutral attitude among these parents. However, the individual indicators reveal a more nuanced perspective.

Parents strongly believe that children with disabilities can benefit socially from being integrated into general education classrooms, as indicated by a very positive weighted mean of 4.52. There is also a positive attitude towards encouraging their children to attend the birthday parties of children with disabilities (WM=4.29) and inviting children with disabilities to their own child's birthday parties (WM=4.19). Conversely, parents are more skeptical about the academic benefits for children with disabilities, with a neutral mean of 2.67. There is a generally neutral perception regarding the compromise of their own child's education by having children with disabilities in the classroom, with specific concerns about behavioral disabilities (WM=3.43) and severe disabilities (WM=3.90) showing positive attitudes, while concerns about learning disabilities (WM=2.33) and sensory impairments (WM=2.29) show negative attitudes. Notably, parents are neutral or negative regarding the academic benefits for their own children from having classmates with disabilities, with a mean of 2.38 indicating a negative attitude. Additionally, there is a strong desire to be informed if a child with disabilities enrolls in their child's class (WM=1.81) and a negative view on how this might impact their decision to place their child in a particular class or school (WM=2.00). Finally, parents exhibit a positive attitude towards the importance of being

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

Indicators	W M	Verbal Description
A child with a disability can benefits academically from being integrated into a general education classroom.	2.67	Neutral
A child with a disability can benefits socially from being integrated into a general education classroom.	4.52	Very Positive
My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a disability is his/her class.	3.05	Neutral
My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a physical disability in his/her class.	2.62	Neutral
My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a learning disability in his/her class.	2.33	Negative
My child's education would be compromised by having a child with a behavior disability in his/her class.	3.43	Positive
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.	2.29	Negative
My child's education would be compromised by having a child with mild or moderate mental retardation in his/her class.	3.76	Positive
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.	3.90	Positive
My child's overall well being would be compromised by having a child with disabilities in his/her class.	2.76	Neutral
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.	2.43	Negative
My child can benefit academically from having a child with disabilities in his/her class.	2.38	Negative
My child can benefit socially from having a child with disabilities in his/her class	3.24	Neutral
I would invite a child with disabilities to my child's birthday party	4.19	Positive
1 would encourage my child to go to a child with disabilities birthday party	4.29	Very Positive
1 would hesitate to have my child become friends with a child with disabilities	3.00	Neutral
Having a child with disabilities m my child's class would impact my decision to have my child placed in that class or school.	2.00	Negative
If a child with disabilities were to enroll in my child's class, I would want to be notified:	1.81	Negative
It is important for me to be educated about my child's classmate's disability.	3.48	Positive
It is important for my child to be educated about his/her classmate's disability	3.33	Neutral
Aggregate Weighted Mean	3.07	Neutral

educated about their child's classmate's disability (WM=3.48) and a neutral stance on the importance of their child being educated about it (WM=3.33). Overall, while there is a balance of positive, neutral, and negative attitudes, parents of children without disabilities tend to view social integration more favorably than academic integration and express concerns about potential impacts on their own children's education.



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	58.40	9.67	-3.08	-1.247	0.219	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Parents of Children Without Disabilities	61.48	6.38					

\*significant at  $p < 0.05$

The data in Table 7 presents the results of a test of difference on the attitudes of parents of children with disabilities versus 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 58.40 with a standard deviation of 9.67, while for parents of children without disabilities, the mean score is slightly higher at 61.48 with a standard deviation of 6.38. The mean difference between the two groups is -3.08. The computed t-value is -1.247, and the p-value is 0.219. Since the p-value is greater than the significance level of 0.05, we do not reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). This result indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of parents of children with disabilities compared to those without disabilities towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classrooms. Therefore, it can be concluded that both groups of parents hold similar attitudes regarding this issue.

## Conclusion

The analysis of parents' attitudes towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classrooms shows that both parents of children with and without disabilities generally have a neutral stance. Parents of children with disabilities and those acknowledge the social benefits of inclusion but have mixed views on its academic impact. The mean attitude scores (58.40 for parents of children with disabilities and 61.48 for those without) and the statistical analysis (t-value of -1.247 and p-value of 0.219) reveal no significant difference between the two groups. Therefore, both groups share similar perspectives, valuing social integration while expressing concerns about potential educational compromises.

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