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CHALLENGES FACED BY SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of the present study was to observe the challenges faced by the special needs students in inclusive classrooms at the university level in Multan, Punjab. Pakistan. The objectives of the study were (i) to explore the problems faced by the student with special needs at the university level, (ii) To identify where the student needs special support (iii) to analyze the perceived inclusion dimension of quality of the educational process of special students. The study was qualitative. The study was delimited to three (03) different departments (Education, Psychology and Sociology) of BZU Multan Pakistan. The sample size was eighteen (18) special students of these three departments. An interview schedule was designed a semi-structured. The mode of data collection was a survey to get responses from the special students by semi-structured interview questions. The data of the study were analyzed by using the thematic analysis technique. The present study showed that students with disabilities face lack of expectations in their educational process, and a positive attitude of classmates was found towards special students. The results suggested that the students with special needs require additional support in their educational process, develop peer relationships. The policy of inclusion of education is still not well implemented into our educational process.

INTRODUCTION

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is located in South Asia, India on its east, China on the far northeast, Iran and Afghanistan on the west and the Arabian Sea on the south, covering an area of 796,095 km² (340,403 square miles) with a population of 163.76 million inhabitants with a 1.73% population growth rate

(Kermani, 2019). In Pakistan, the presence of disability as estimated in the fifth population census conducted by Govt of Pakistan in 1998. It shows the common terminology used for the special persons in Pakistan along with their population. Approximately 2.54% of the population is identified as having a disable person. There are 531 organizations that serve to the needs of disable persons. Out of these, 423 organizations (79.7%) are providing the educational services to disable persons (Ahmad at al., 2021).

Table 1: The distribution (%) of disability on the basis of the type of disability and gender

Nature of disability	All Areas			Rural			Urban		
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Blind	8.06	7.61	8.68	7.92	7.44	8.59	8.32	7.93	8.88
Deaf & Mute	7.43	7.27	7.66	7.53	7.40	7.71	7.24	7.02	7.56
Crippled*	18.93	19.84	17.65	20.52	21.40	19.30	15.81	16.83	14.34
Insane**	6.39	6.22	6.63	5.94	5.72	6.23	7.28	7.18	7.44
Mentally Retarded	7.60	7.02	8.41	7.32	6.78	8.07	8.15	7.50	9.62
With multiple disabilities	8.23	7.33	9.48	8.23	7.37	9.41	8.22	7.25	9.60
Unclassified	43.36	44.71	41.49	42.55	43.89	40.69	44.97	46.29	43.07
Overall	2.54	2.85	2.21	2.52	2.83	2.19	2.59	2.88	2.26

(Source: Pakistan Population Census 1998), (*Physically disabled, ** Mentally ill)

Persons with special needs are seen everywhere in the World with different socio-economic status because there are no restricted boundaries for the presence of disability in terms of geographical borders, gender, or socioeconomic characteristics. It is a common feature worldwide that society notice the actual cause of education, rehabilitation, and other support programs for all persons with special needs. The United Nations celebrates the year of Disabled Person in 1981, it is a milestone for the awareness about the problems, issues and prospects of special need persons. Due to this international initiative, the govt of Pakistan takes some serious steps for the betterment of special need persons by establishing different ministries and institutes for them.

For the special need persons, the policy development was started in 1985 and finally first National Policy for Disabled Persons was approved in 2002. A National Plan of Action (NPA) was presented in 2006 at the national level to truly implement and translate this policy into action. This policy provides a large range of services like education, assessment, medical care, rehabilitation, vocational training, employment, early intervention, research and development, funds donations, designing parks, buildings and other public places to meet the needs special persons (Ludwig, 1998).

In Pakistan, the Department of Special Education was established in Punjab province (i.e., province with 60% of the total population). Special education centers were established in all cities of Punjab for the four types of special needs children (i.e.) hearing impaired/deaf, visually impaired/blind, physically impaired and mentally retarded. For teachers' motivation, they were given double salaries compared to the general education teachers.

Due to this rapid increase in the number of organizations that servers this community, education and training of special need student but still a serious concern for experts, policymakers and the teachers. Besides the question of *'How to teach?'* The focus was changed a new question, *'Where to teach?'* 'These questions arouse to new dimensions of equity and equality in education for children with special needs. This move towards inclusive education settings is going on to provide educational services to make them useful and independent citizens of the society (Ainscow, 2005; Ali, Mustapha & Jelas, 2006; Mason, 2005).

There are many hurdles to the inclusion of special student needs in ordinary schools classrooms such as Negatives attitudes of people towards education of special student needs; physical hurdles creating inaccessibility to students with physical disabilities; rigid, inflexible and centrally designed curriculum; behavior, abilities and attitudes of teachers; second language as a mode of communication; socioeconomic factors; lack of funding for infrastructure and teaching-learning helping materials; and education policies of the country in working (Pajares et al., 2011; UNESCO, 2011). It is widely recognized that detached education that was being largely followed the World during the eighties and early nineties has not achieved the desired results outcomes. It is believed that more than 80 million physically challenged children worldwide have been systematically excluded from main stream education, while 90% of the children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend schools due to the lack of facilities and resources.

Statement of the Problem

According to this context and current delivery of educational services to special students, the research starts from the hypothesis that special students face more difficulties in educational settings. Their responses were analyzed to highlight the students' problems with a special student in the domain of inclusion of education studying at the university level. All the opinions were collected from the special students.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because this study is helpful for teachers, parents, and policymakers to find out the real problems faced by students with special needs. It is anticipated that this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge in teaching training of students with special needs at the university level.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions of the study were

1. What are the problems faced by students with special needs at the university level?
2. What are the special supports?
3. What recommendations do the students suggest for these problems?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were

4. To explore the problems faced by students with special needs at the university level.
5. To identify where the student needs special supports.
6. To analyze the perceived inclusion dimension of the quality of the educational process of special students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Extensive work has been done on the obstacles that disabled students encounter in the educational setting. Using data from a survey, Hodges and Keller (1999) attempted to determine how students perceived the process of integrating disabled students into higher education. The findings of their study revealed that visually challenged pupils encountered many difficulties, particularly in transportation and building social interactions with their peers. Hougann (1999) did a study to determine the difficulties that visually impaired students confront while enrolled in institutions of higher learning. The findings revealed numerous issues. For example, the lack of counseling services, a lack of Braille printed books, a lack of visual readers, the complexity of adjusting to university life, teachers' neglect of their additional needs, the difficulty of taking exams, and the difficulty of getting to and from campus were some of the most significant issues. Fuller and colleagues (2004) investigated the difficulties that disabled students faced while attending university.

According to the study's findings, there were numerous difficulties, such as the rapid rate at which the lecturers spoke during the lectures and difficulty participating in the debate and answering questions. In addition, some lectures were displeased that disabled students were permitted to video lecture, and it was challenging to gain access to the educational centers. Appropriate computer programs were scarce. Masaedeh's (1995) research aimed to determine the difficulties faced by disabled students at Jordanian universities. The findings revealed that the most significant problems were those related to the provision of services to customers. Many people were also concerned about the future of impaired pupils and the challenges they would face in terms of psychological, social, and health.

On the other hand, the study did not reveal any statistically significant differences based on the gender of the disabled grade level or the type of disability. Ibrahim (2001) researched the issues faced by visually impaired students at the University of Jordan. The study results suggest the existence of issues such as difficulty in accessing the library and transportation, as well as difficulties in instructors' understanding of their students' requirements. The study found no statistically significant differences in handicapped gender, degree of disability, or educational level among those who were handicapped. The author says that this is due to various factors, including a lack of connection between children with special needs and ordinary students and that teachers do not have adequate knowledge and abilities in teaching strategies needed to handle the inclusive curriculum. As a result, in order for an inclusive program

to be successful, it requires a regular classroom that is attentive to and attentive to the needs and skills of the kids.

He concludes that the following issues exist due to his findings: Itinerant and classroom instructors complain about a lack of training in inclusive education, and they believe that training is still needed. Some lessons are tough for itinerant teachers, and some not visually impaired pupils are cruel to those who are. Classrooms and educational resources in conventional schools, for example, are still deemed insufficient. Some teachers are not supportive of inclusive education, and some parents are not communicative in their interactions with their children.

In most cases, the introduction of itinerant instructors to classroom teachers is not adequately facilitated. When it comes to learning or studying new things, the age aspect can hinder itinerant teachers (Bob, 2002). According to Bob (2002), those born blind and visually handicapped may have limited idea development due to their lack of vision. It is because vision is a critical component of environmental input. What children observe is assimilated and integrated into their brains by the time they are adults. In addition to making it more difficult for children to learn from their experiences without their parents or teachers doing anything out of the ordinary to teach them, visual impairments generally delay development in another aspect. This is referred to as "accidental learning." Aside from inadequately qualified teachers, another barrier that hinders effective inclusion is the lack of early identification of children with disabilities. Teachers must be well-versed in the screening, identification, and management of children who are blind or have limited vision. If the resources allocated to inclusion are insufficient, it will not address the issues listed above. The government has purchased a vehicle and a Braille printing press for youngsters who are blind or have impaired eyesight at the moment (Otyola et al., 2017).

However, if there are insufficient resources available to support inclusion programs, inclusion will remain a buzzword. Inclusive education does not imply placing students who are blind or have low vision in conventional schools, but rather a commitment to providing enough resources in the form of finances for mobile teaching services, teaching/learning materials, and improving school accessibility and inclusion. Aside from allocating resources, a negative attitude toward children who are blind or have impaired vision can also contribute to the exclusion of these children from mainstream society. Most people consider blindness and impaired eyesight to be disadvantaged, and they do not treat them with dignity or accord them their proper place in society (Ibrahim, 2001; Masaedeh, 1995; Irbid, Jordan; Musazizi, 2009).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was design in qualitative and based on descriptive research methodology. The universe of study was Bahauddin Zakariaya University Multan and the target population was disable student studying in Bahauddin Zakariaya University Multan in various educational programs. The sample of eighteen students was selected using the convenient sampling technique after selecting three departments (Sociology, Education, and Psychology) through

simple random sampling technique due to the shortage of time. An interview schedule was designed as the research instrument and the survey method for data collection. The interview schedule was based on five questions finalized after the discussion with relevant experts to validate it. Two interviews were conducted for the piloting of this study. Questions were given below;

1. What do you feel that the university environment is suitable according to your study's needs?
2. What do you feel the teaching methods of university teachers are comprehensive/easy according to your ability?
3. What do you feel that classmates are cooperative / helping in your studies?
4. How do you feel the examination system of the university is adjustable for your requirements?
5. What is your opinion about the solution of your problem?

FINDINGS

Question No. 1

What do you feel that the university environment is suitable according to your study's needs?

After the analysis of data collected regarding question no. 1, leads the researcher towards five issues presented in the geographical figure.

1. Approach to department
2. Overcrowded classrooms
3. Structured problems of building
4. Uncomfortable chairs
5. No special transport for special student.

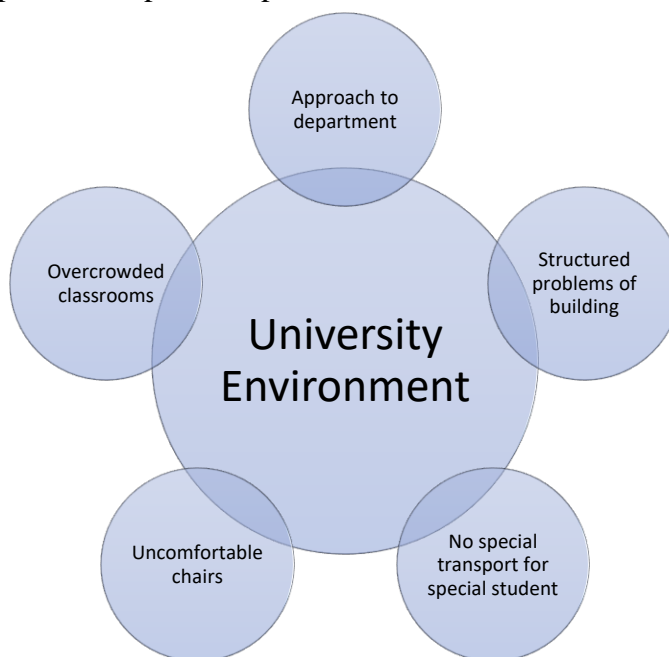


Figure No. 1: Response regarding University Physical Environment.

Student response that they face difficulty in the transportation system. They face much difficulty getting transport to department, many departments have no entrance track for wheelchair, long stairs, unavailability of lift, have no proper chair arrangement for special student, overcrowded classroom make difficulties in movement within the classroom.

Question No. 2

What do you feel the teaching methods of university teachers are comprehensive/easy according to your ability?

After the analysis of data collected regarding question no. 2, leads the researcher towards four issues presented in the geographical figure 2.

1. Teacher favoritism
2. Lack of teacher cooperation
3. Unavailability of regular progress check
4. Unable to learn from abstract term and concept
5. Lack of repeat instruction.

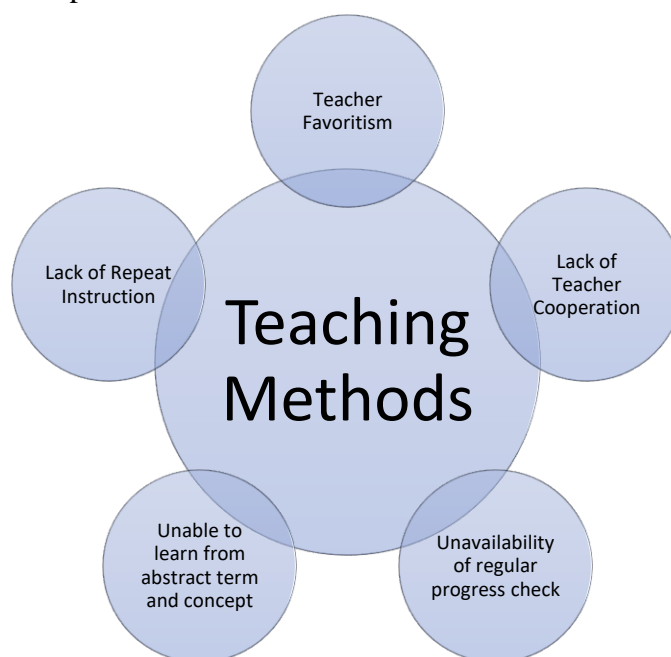


Figure No. 2: Teaching Method of University Teachers.

The participant opinion regarding teaching methods was that they face teacher favoritism at university level, lack of cooperation of teacher, unavailability of regular progress check of student, special student are unable to learn from abstract terms and concept, and face lack of repeat instruction from teachers.

Questions No. 3

What do you feel that classmates are cooperative / helping in your studies?

After the analysis of data collected regarding question no. 3, the researcher found that eighteen out of eighteen students responded that their classmates showed cooperative behaviors towards the student with special needs.

Question No. 4

How do you feel the examination system of the university is adjustable for your requirements?

After the analysis of data collected regarding question no. 4, leads the researcher towards five issues presented in the geographical figure 4.

1. No comfortable sitting arrangement in examination
2. Unavailability of writer
3. No extra time
4. Did not follow the HEC right for special student
5. Invigilator issues

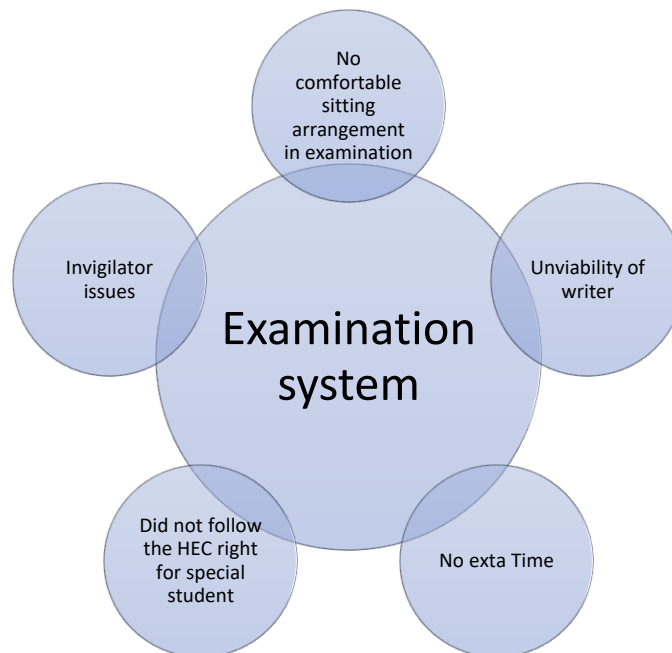


Figure No. 4: Examination System.

According to Figure 4, the participants response that there is no comfortable sitting arrangement of students. While there is no availability of writer by examination system, there is no extra time for student, examination staff did not follow the HEC rights of special student and most of the participant response invigilator misbehave or scolded when they question something or interrupt during the examination.

Question No. 5

What is your opinion about the solution of your problem?

After analyzing data collected regarding question no. 5, the researcher leads the researcher towards eight suggestions presented in the geographical figure 4.

1. Extra time should be allowed during the examination
2. Teacher training should be conduct to teach the student with special needs.
3. Give the HEC right of special student
4. Separate room should be provided during the examination for blind student.

5. There is need to improve the supportive behavior of department authorities.
6. Sitting arrange should be proper and near to door
7. Active role of complaint cell
8. Comfortable learning environment.

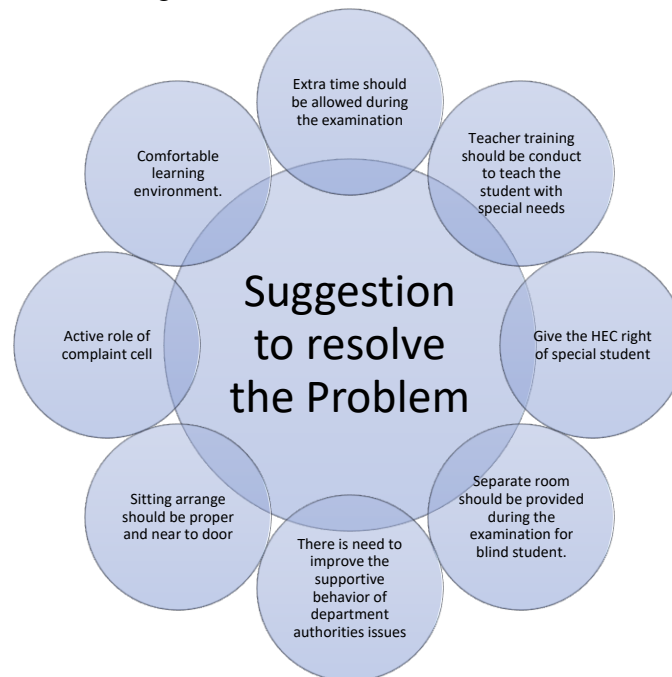


Figure No. 4: Suggestion to Resolve the Problem.

Figure mentioned above shows some suggestions to resolve the problem. Such as, the most of the teachers are not trained to give education to student with disability. Further, most of the department did not follow the HEC right of disable student, most of the time the sitting arrangement of blind student was in the corridor, disable students are not move quickly to fulfill their educational requirements so the departmental authorities show supportive behavior and provide the physical support to disable students. Most of the disable student especially for blind student there is confirm and permanent sitting arrange near to classroom door should be made by the departmental authorities, there is need to improve the active role of complaint cell, some of the disable student response that the departmental authorities did not provide the comfortable environment, there is lack of electricity, clean water, chairs are not comfortable, and not lift is available to move upper floors of building, there is need to give the extra time for build student because they are depending on their writer.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After the data analysis and findings following suggestions and recommendations may be given to address these problems;

1. There is need to open the consciousness of parents and teachers of children with special needs about feelings of their children/student studying at university level.
2. Need special training may be given to the teaching staff to avoid the inconvenience for special need students at university level.

3. Teachers can play the best role to bring change in the attitude of the people towards the student with special needs. Their training can bring a positive change in the university culture.
4. Pakistani current examination system needs to be severely changed for betterment of special need students.
5. The students suggest that they should be provided comfortable environment, active role of complaint cells, cooperative attitude of examination staff and examining body.
6. Guidance and Counseling session were regularly conduct by psychology department for the special students.
7. The student with special needs feel comfort environment in the general educational classroom then it will be positive step towards inclusive classroom.
8. There is need of active support of parents to leads the better life in the society by special needs children.
9. There is need of proper training of both teacher and student to handle the educational problems by providing them the proper guidance.
10. The inclusion of special needs students in universities can be removed by developing a positive attitude and behaviour of teacher and student towards students with special needs.
11. Future researchers may work on this issue on the broader level.

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