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Predicting Teacher Readiness for Inclusive Education: The Role of Self-Efficacy and Institutional Support in Sokoto State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Despite policy commitments to inclusive education in Nigeria, empirical evidence identifying the key predictors of teacher readiness remains limited. This study addresses that gap by examining how teacher self-efficacy, perceived school support, and attitudes toward inclusion influence readiness to implement inclusive practices in Sokoto State. A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 408 public primary school teachers selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using validated scales measuring Teacher Self-Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TSEIP), Perceived School Support (PSS), and Attitudes Toward Inclusion (ATI), with Teacher Readiness for Inclusion (TRI) as the dependent variable. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and multiple linear regression analyses were performed using SPSS Version 28. Results revealed low overall readiness ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 0.78$), with self-efficacy emerging as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .52$, $p < .001$), followed by perceived support ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$). Attitudes toward inclusion were not a significant unique predictor ($\beta = .07$, $p = .112$). Notably, 86.3% of teachers reported no formal in-service training on inclusion. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions that build teacher capacity and institutional support systems. The study offers a data-driven framework for improving inclusive education in resource-constrained settings.

Keywords: inclusive education, teacher readiness, self-efficacy, institutional support, regression analysis, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The successful implementation of inclusive education hinges critically on the classroom teacher (Sharma et al., 2012). Sokoto State, located in Northwestern Nigeria, presents unique socio-cultural and infrastructural challenges that make it a critical case for examining inclusive education implementation. In Nigeria, despite the progressive intentions of the National Policy on Inclusive Education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2017), the on-the-ground reality, particularly in states like Sokoto, remains challenging. Existing research, often qualitative in nature, has rightly identified a complex web of barriers, including negative socio-cultural attitudes, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of resources (Adeniyi, 2022; Fakolade et al., 2009). However, a significant gap exists in the quantitative, empirical evidence that can pinpoint the relative strength of different predictive factors influencing a teacher's capacity and willingness to implement inclusive practices.

Understanding which factors are most strongly associated with teacher readiness is not an academic exercise; it is a practical necessity for efficient resource allocation. For instance, if teacher attitudes are the primary driver, then large-scale sensitisation campaigns would be the logical intervention. If, however, a lack of practical skills and institutional backing is more salient, then targeted training and systemic support would yield a

greater return on investment. This study moves beyond descriptive accounts to provide a statistical model that identifies the key levers for change.

Guided by Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, which posits self-efficacy as a foundational determinant of behaviour, and situated within the context of educational systems theory, this study investigates the interplay between teacher-level and school-level factors. We focus on three core constructs: Teacher Self-Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TSEIP), Perceived School Support (PSS), and Attitudes Towards Inclusion (ATI).

The primary research question this study seeks to answer is: To what extent do teacher self-efficacy, perceived school support, and attitudes towards inclusion predict overall teacher readiness for implementing inclusive education in Sokoto State, Nigeria?

We hypothesise that:

H1: Teacher self-efficacy will be a significant positive predictor of teacher readiness.

H2: Perceived school support will be a significant positive predictor of teacher readiness.

H3: Attitudes towards inclusion will be a significant positive predictor of teacher readiness.

METHODS

Research Design and Participants

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed. The target population was all public primary school teachers in Sokoto State. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across urban and rural Local Government Areas (LGAs). Using a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, a sample size of 385 was targeted. Accounting for potential non-response, 450 questionnaires were distributed. A total of 408 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 90.7%. The sample consisted of 58.1% female and 41.9% male teachers, with a mean teaching experience of 10.4 years ($SD = 7.1$).

Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire was developed, comprising four sections:

1. Demographic Information: Age, gender, years of experience, and prior training in inclusive education.
2. Teacher Self-Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TSEIP): A 10-item scale adapted from Sharma et al. (2012). Sample item: "I am confident in my ability to adapt my teaching methods for students with disabilities." ($\alpha = .89$).
3. Perceived School Support (PSS): An 8-item scale developed for this study. Sample item: "My school provides me with necessary teaching aids to support learners with disabilities." ($\alpha = .82$).
4. Attitudes Towards Inclusion (ATI): A 12-item scale adapted from the Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education Scale (ATIES; Wilczenski, 1992). Sample item: "Students with disabilities are better off in special schools." (reverse-coded) ($\alpha = .78$).
5. Teacher Readiness for Inclusion (TRI): The dependent variable, measured by a 15-item scale assessing perceived knowledge, skill, and comfort in implementing inclusion ($\alpha = .91$).

All scales used a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was conducted over four weeks with the support of trained research assistants. Before data gathering, ethical approval was obtained from the Sokoto State Universal Basic Education Board, and informed consent was secured from all participants. To ensure confidentiality, all responses were anonymised and securely stored.

Quantitative data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarise demographic and scale-based responses. Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationships among the key variables: Teacher Self-Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TSEIP), Perceived School Support (PSS), Attitudes Toward Inclusion (ATI), and Teacher Readiness for Inclusion (TRI). To identify the unique predictors of teacher readiness, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. All statistical tests were two-tailed, with significance set at $p < .05$.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Preliminary Analysis

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the main study variables. The overall mean score for Teacher Readiness for Inclusion (TRI) was low ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 0.78$), indicating limited perceived capacity among teachers to implement inclusive practices. Notably, 86.3% of respondents ($n = 352$) reported having received no formal in-service training on inclusive education since entering the profession.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Key Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Teacher Readiness for Inclusion (TRI)	2.15	0.78	1.00	4.80
Teacher Self-Efficacy (TSEIP)	3.42	0.65	1.20	5.00
Perceived School Support (PSS)	2.89	0.72	1.00	4.75
Attitudes Toward Inclusion (ATI)	3.01	0.68	1.00	4.90

Note. All variables measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between TRI and both TSEIP ($r = .63$, $p < .01$) and PSS ($r = .49$, $p < .01$). ATI was also positively correlated with TRI ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), though to a lesser extent.

Regression Analysis

To determine the unique contributions of each predictor variable to teacher readiness for inclusive education, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The model included Teacher Self-Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TSEIP), Perceived School Support (PSS), and Attitudes Toward Inclusion (ATI) as independent variables, with Teacher Readiness for Inclusion (TRI) as the dependent variable.

The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 404) = 118.45$, $p < .001$, and accounted for 46.8% of the variance in teacher readiness (Adjusted $R^2 = .468$). Table 2 presents the regression coefficients and associated statistics.

Table 2. Multiple Regression Predicting Teacher Readiness for Inclusive Education

Predictor Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p
(Constant)	0.41	0.12	—	3.42	.001
Self-Efficacy (TSEIP)	0.49	0.04	.52	12.25	< .001
Perceived School Support (PSS)	0.31	0.05	.28	6.20	< .001
Attitudes Toward Inclusion (ATI)	0.08	0.05	.07	1.60	.112

Note. Dependent variable: Teacher Readiness for Inclusion (TRI). Self-efficacy emerged as the strongest unique predictor of readiness ($\beta = .52$, $p < .001$), supporting Hypothesis 1. Perceived school support also made a significant contribution ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$), confirming Hypothesis 2. However, attitudes toward inclusion did not significantly predict readiness when controlling for the other variables ($\beta = .07$, $p = .112$), thus not supporting Hypothesis 3.

DISCUSSION

This study provides one of the first quantitative models to identify the key predictors of teacher readiness for inclusive education in Sokoto State, Nigeria. The low overall readiness score ($M = 2.15$) quantitatively affirms previous qualitative findings that highlight systemic challenges in implementing inclusive education in the region (Adeniyi, 2022). The finding that over 86% of teachers had not received formal in-service training on inclusion underscores a critical gap in professional development infrastructure.

The regression analysis offers a clear hierarchy of intervention priorities. Teacher self-efficacy emerged as the most powerful predictor of readiness, aligning with Bandura’s (1997) social cognitive theory, which emphasises the central role of perceived capability in shaping behaviour. This suggests that teachers who feel confident in their ability to adapt instruction for diverse learners are more likely to embrace inclusive practices, regardless of their initial attitudes.

Perceived school support also played a significant role, reinforcing the idea that readiness is not solely an individual trait but is shaped by institutional context. Teachers who feel supported by their schools through access to teaching aids, administrative encouragement, and peer collaboration are more likely to engage in inclusive teaching. This finding places responsibility not only on individual educators but also on school leadership and policymakers to create enabling environments.

Interestingly, attitudes toward inclusion, while correlated with readiness, did not significantly predict it in the final model. This suggests that negative attitudes may stem more from feelings of inadequacy and lack of support than from entrenched beliefs. In practical terms, this implies that interventions focused solely on changing attitudes may be less effective than those that build competence and institutional capacity. As teachers gain skills and experience success, more positive attitudes may naturally follow.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides a robust, data-driven model for understanding the predictors of teacher readiness for inclusive education in Sokoto State, Nigeria. The findings reveal a significant implementation gap, with low overall readiness and a striking absence of formal in-service training among teachers. The regression analysis highlights teacher self-efficacy as the most influential factor, followed by perceived school support, while attitudes toward inclusion—though correlated—did not significantly predict readiness when controlling for other variables.

These insights carry important implications for policy and practice. To bridge the readiness gap and advance inclusive education in resource-constrained settings, a strategic, two-pronged approach is recommended:

- Implement Mandatory, Practical In-Service Training: The Sokoto State Universal Basic Education Board should prioritise hands-on, competency-based training programs that equip teachers with practical strategies for inclusive instruction. Modules should focus on curriculum adaptation, classroom management, and differentiated teaching techniques to build self-efficacy, the strongest predictor of readiness:

- Strengthen School-Level Support Systems: Institutional support must be formalised through administrative policies that provide access to teaching aids, establish peer mentoring structures, and recognise inclusive teaching efforts. Creating a small discretionary fund for inclusive resources and fostering collaborative school cultures can significantly enhance teacher engagement:

- Shift Policy Emphasis from Attitudinal Campaigns to Skill Development

While awareness-raising remains important, this study suggests that building teacher competence and institutional capacity may be more effective in fostering inclusive attitudes. Policymakers and NGOs should reorient interventions toward professional development, trusting that positive attitudes will emerge through successful practice.

Although limited to quantitative data from one state, this study offers a replicable framework for diagnosing and addressing readiness challenges in similar contexts. Future research could adopt mixed-methods designs to explore the lived experiences behind these statistical relationships, further enriching the evidence base for inclusive education reform.

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