



Primary Grade Teachers' Perspectives and Dedication to Inclusive Education

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Abstract

This study explored the relationship between teachers' demographic profiles (age, gender, educational attainment, rank, years of teaching, and training) and their attitudes and affective commitment toward inclusive education in kindergarten to Grade 4 settings. Using a descriptive-correlational research design and quantitative methods, the study surveyed 32 teachers from selected schools in Bohol Province. Statistical analyses, including Pearson's *r* and Chi-square tests, revealed no significant relationships between the demographic profiles and teachers' attitudes or affective commitment toward inclusive education. The findings align with existing literature, which suggests that contextual factors, such as professional development, institutional support, and direct experience with inclusive practices, play a more critical role in shaping positive attitudes and commitment than demographic variables. The study underscores the importance of providing targeted training, fostering collaborative school environments, and enhancing institutional support systems to empower teachers and strengthen inclusive education practices. These findings contribute to a growing understanding of how systemic factors can better address the challenges of implementing inclusive education, ensuring that all learners, including those with special educational needs, receive equitable and quality education.

Keywords: Affective Commitment, Demographic Profiles, Inclusive Education, Teachers' Attitudes.

1. Introduction

Inclusive education has become a global priority, emphasizing the integration of students with diverse abilities into mainstream classrooms to ensure equitable access to quality education (Kenny et al., 2023). This approach recognizes the value of diversity in fostering a supportive and collaborative learning environment where every learner can thrive. International frameworks, such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, underscore the importance of inclusive education in achieving global equity and social justice. The Salamanca Statement highlights the necessity of accommodating all children within mainstream education systems, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, while Goal 4 advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all learners (UNESCO, 1994; United Nations, 2015). These frameworks aim to create a world where all learners, including those with special educational needs (SEN), have access to the tools and resources necessary for academic and personal success, ensuring no one is left behind (Karagianni et al., 2023).

Primary grade teachers play a pivotal role in implementing inclusive education policies (Dignath et al., 2022). Their attitudes, beliefs, and dedication significantly influence the effectiveness of inclusive practices within classrooms (Khaleel et al., 2021; Kyamko et al., 2024). Research indicates that teachers' perspectives on inclusion are shaped by various factors, including professional training, access to resources, school policies, and personal experiences with diverse learners (Rowan et al., 2021; Robellos et al., 2024). For instance, Avramidis and Norwich (2002) found that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are influenced by their beliefs about the nature of disabilities and the perceived efficacy of inclusive practices. Similarly, Mukhopadhyay (2009) highlighted the importance of adequate teacher training in fostering positive attitudes towards inclusive education especially in education that promotes educational technology (Suson, 2024).

Despite increasing global emphasis on inclusive education, many teachers encounter significant challenges in adapting to the demands of inclusive classrooms (Aas, 2022). Common barriers include insufficient professional development, large class sizes, inadequate access to specialized resources, and limited support from educational systems (Starks & Reich 2023). These obstacles often undermine the effective implementation of inclusive practices, leaving teachers underprepared to meet the diverse needs of their students (Rowan et al., 2021). Understanding teachers' attitudes, experiences, and dedication to inclusive education is essential for identifying gaps and creating targeted interventions (Ayada et al., 2022). Addressing these challenges, stakeholders can develop strategies to empower educators and enhance the overall success of inclusive education initiatives.

This study explores the perspectives and dedication of primary grade teachers toward inclusive education. Specifically, it seeks to examine their attitudes, challenges, and professional needs in implementing inclusive practices. Analyzing these factors, the research aims to provide insights into how educators can be better supported in fostering inclusive classrooms, ultimately contributing to improved educational outcomes for all learners. This research focused on Tamboan Elementary School, Tagaonan Elementary School, Villarcayo Elementary School, and Lapulapu Elementary School under the DepEd Bohol Province Division. These schools represented a cross-section of rural educational setting, where unique challenges such as resource limitations, geographical isolation, and socio-economic factors could significantly influence teachers' capacity to implement inclusive education. Understanding teachers' perspectives and commitment within this context was essential to identifying strengths, gaps, and opportunities for enhancing inclusive practices. This research assessed the profile, attitudes, and affective commitment of primary grade teachers toward inclusive education and analyzed the relationship between these factors. The findings informed the development of an evidence-based action plan aimed at addressing gaps and strengthening inclusive practices. Insights generated from this study contributed to identifying strategies for capacity building and empowering teachers in these schools to implement inclusive education effectively.

2. Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to explore the relationships between kindergarten teachers' demographic profiles, attitudes, and affective commitment toward inclusive education in Canlaas Elementary School, Bohol. Following Creswell's (2014) framework, the quantitative approach allowed for the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, trends, and correlations without manipulating variables. The study employed universal sampling, automatically including all 32 Kindergarten to Grade 4 teachers from the identified schools to ensure comprehensive and representative data. A survey questionnaire, adapted from Wanderi (2015), served as the primary data collection tool. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: demographic profiles, attitudes toward inclusive education, and affective commitment to inclusive education. Teachers responded to both closed-ended and open-ended questions, with the attitude and commitment sections utilizing a 5-point Likert scale to gauge agreement with various statements. The study adopted the IPO (Input-Process-Output) continuum model to ensure a structured and systematic approach to achieving research objectives. Statistical tools, including Pearson's *r* and Chi-square tests, were employed to analyze the data. Pearson's *r* assessed the strength and direction of relationships between quantitative variables, such as age, educational attainment, and attitudes, while the Chi-square test examined associations between categorical variables like gender and affective commitment. This methodological approach provided robust insights into the demographic, attitudinal, and commitment factors influencing inclusive education practices. The findings informed the development of a targeted action plan aimed at addressing challenges and enhancing the implementation of inclusive practices in rural educational contexts.

Table 1: Age and gender.

Age	Gender		Total	%
	M	F	f	
51 years above	0	2	2	6.25
46-50	0	3	3	9.38
41-45	1	5	6	18.75
36-40	0	4	4	12.50
31-35	0	11	11	34.38
26-30	0	6	6	18.18
Total	1	31	32	100

3. Results and Discussion

Table 2 presents the distribution of respondents based on age and gender, highlighting a predominantly female teaching workforce. Out of the 32 respondents, 31 were female (96.88%), and only one was male (3.12%), underscoring the significant gender disparity in the teaching profession at the kindergarten to Grade 4 levels. The majority of the respondents, 11 teachers (34.38%), were within the 31-35 age range, reflecting a relatively young teaching population. This was followed by the 41-45 age group, comprising six teachers (18.75%), and the 26-30 age group, which included six teachers (18.18%). The 36-40 age group accounted for four teachers (12.50%), while three teachers (9.38%) were within the 46-50 age range. Only two teachers (6.25%) were aged 51 years and above, suggesting fewer older educators in these grade levels. The data indicates a diverse age range among the respondents, with a notable concentration of younger teachers. This demographic composition provides insights into the workforce's potential energy and adaptability in implementing inclusive education practices, while also highlighting the importance of ongoing professional development to address the needs of younger and mid-career educators.

Table 2. Highest educational attainment.

Highest educational attainment	f	(%)
Doctor degree	0	0
Doctor with units	0	0
Master degree	4	12.50
Master with units	23	71.88
Bachelor degree	5	15.63
Total	32	100

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Table 3. Academic rank.

Academic rank	f	(%)
Master Teacher 2	1	3.13
Master Teacher 1	1	3.13
Teacher 3	12	37.50
Teacher 2	0	0.00
Teacher 1	17	53.13
Total	32	100

Table 3 presents the academic rank distribution of the 32 respondents, highlighting the varying levels of professional progression within the teaching workforce. The majority of respondents, 17 teachers (53.13%), held the rank of Teacher 1, indicating that more than half of the participants were at the entry-level rank. This suggests a relatively early stage in their teaching careers or limited opportunities for promotion. Twelve teachers (37.50%) were classified as Teacher 3, demonstrating a significant proportion of teachers who had advanced beyond the entry level. Only one respondent (3.13%) was ranked as Master Teacher 1, and one respondent (3.13%) held the rank of Master Teacher 2, indicating a small number of teachers who had reached higher levels of professional expertise and recognition. These findings highlight the need for professional development opportunities and clear career pathways to support teachers in advancing their academic ranks and fostering a more balanced distribution across all levels.

Table 4. Years of teaching.

Academic rank	f	(%)
Above 11 years	14	43.75
9-10	1	3.125
7-8	1	3.125
5-6	6	18.75
Below 4 years	10	31.25
Total	32	100

Table 4 outlines the respondents' years of teaching experience, providing insights into the teaching workforce's distribution across various experience levels. The largest group of respondents, 14 teachers (43.75%), had over 11 years of teaching experience, indicating a strong presence of highly experienced educators within the workforce. Conversely, 10 teachers (31.25%) had less than four years of experience, reflecting a significant portion of relatively new teachers in the profession. Six teachers (18.75%) fell within the 5-6 years of experience range, while only one teacher (3.125%) had 7-8 years of experience and another (3.125%) had 9-10 years of experience. The data suggests a workforce with a diverse range of teaching experience, from highly seasoned educators to newcomers. This diversity highlights the opportunity for experienced teachers to mentor their less experienced colleagues, while also emphasizing the need for targeted professional development programs to support both early-career teachers and those seeking to enhance their expertise.

Table 5. Number of relevant training and seminars attended.

Academic rank	f
4-5	10
2-3	26
0-1	8

Table 5 shows the number of relevant training and seminars attended by the 32 respondents, shedding light on their professional development efforts related to inclusive education. The majority of respondents, 26 teachers, attended 2-3 relevant training sessions, indicating a moderate level of exposure to professional development opportunities. Ten teachers attended 4-5 training sessions, reflecting a smaller but significant group with more extensive training experience. However, eight teachers had attended only 0-1 training sessions, suggesting limited exposure to relevant professional development. This data highlights the need for increased and more equitable access to training and seminars focused on inclusive education to ensure that all teachers are adequately prepared to meet the diverse needs of their students. Teachers with limited training opportunities may benefit from targeted programs to enhance their skills and knowledge. Meanwhile, those with extensive training could play a mentoring role, sharing their expertise with their peers to strengthen overall inclusive education practices.

Table 6. Teachers attitude.

Indicators	Mean	Verbal description
Inclusion is the best way to meet the needs of all students	4.29	SA
Inclusion causes more problems than it solves.	3.30	A
Diversity in the classroom enriches learning.	4.32	SA
Leadership of the head teacher is necessary for inclusion.	4.81	SA
Head teachers enable regular and special education staff to communicate with each other.	4.71	SA
Inclusion would work well in your school.	4.19	A
Inclusion of students with special needs is detrimental to the education of other students	3.71	A
Inclusion creates too much additional work for teachers.	3.83	A
Inclusion depends solely on staff/teacher involved	3.87	A
Inclusion of students with special needs into regular classrooms.	3.48	A
Grand Mean	4.05	A

Table 6 presents the mean scores of teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, providing insights into their perspectives on inclusive education. The overall grand mean of 4.05, with a verbal description of "Agree (A)," indicates a generally positive attitude toward inclusion among the respondents. Teachers strongly agreed (SA) with several statements, such as the importance of diversity enriching learning (mean = 4.32), the necessity of leadership from head teachers for inclusion (mean = 4.81), and the role of head teachers in facilitating communication between regular and special education staff (mean = 4.71). These high scores emphasize the recognition of strong leadership and collaboration in fostering successful inclusive practices. Statements like "Inclusion is the best way to meet the needs of all students" (mean = 4.29) and "Inclusion would work well in your school" (mean = 4.19) also received favorable ratings, reflecting optimism about the potential of inclusion to benefit students. However, some concerns were noted, as teachers agreed (A) that inclusion creates additional work for teachers (mean = 3.83) and that it can be detrimental to the education of other students (mean = 3.71). These scores suggest that while teachers generally support inclusion, they are mindful of the challenges it poses in practice. The results highlight a balanced view, with strong support for inclusive education but acknowledgment of its complexities. These findings underscore the need for leadership, collaboration, and professional development to address concerns and enhance teachers' confidence in implementing inclusive practices.

Table 7. outlines the affective commitment of teachers toward their school, measured through various indicators. The overall grand mean of 3.49, with a verbal description of "Agree (A)," suggests that teachers generally demonstrate a positive emotional attachment and loyalty to their school. Several indicators received a "Strongly Agree (SA)" rating, including "Working at this school has a great deal of personal meaning for me" (mean = 4.65), "I feel a strong sense of belonging to this school" (mean = 4.55), and "I am proud to tell others that I work at this school" (mean = 4.84). These scores reflect a deep sense of pride, belonging, and personal connection among the teachers.

Table 7. Affective commitment.

Indicators	Mean	Verbal description
Working at this school has a great deal of personal meaning for me	4.65	SA
I feel a strong sense of belonging to this school	4.55	SA
I enjoy discussing my school with people outside it	4.36	SA
This school does not deserve my loyalty	1.87	D
I am proud to tell others that I work at this school	4.84	SA
I owe a great deal to this school	4.45	SA
I really feel as if this school's problems are my own	3.83	A
I think I could easily become as attached to another school as I am to this one	3.25	A
I do not feel like a member of the family at this school	1.42	SD
I do not feel emotionally attached to this school	1.65	D
Grand Mean	3.49	A

Conversely, statements such as "This school does not deserve my loyalty" (mean = 1.87, Disagree [D]) and "I do not feel emotionally attached to this school" (mean = 1.65, Disagree [D]) indicate a rejection of negative sentiments, further emphasizing the teachers' strong commitment. However, some ambivalence was noted in statements like "I really feel as if this school's problems are my own" (mean = 3.83, Agree [A]) and "I think I could easily become as attached to another school as I am to this one" (mean = 3.25, Agree [A]), suggesting room for improvement in fostering an even stronger sense of attachment. Overall, the findings highlight a generally high level of affective commitment among teachers, with strong emotional ties to their school. This commitment provides a solid foundation for collaborative efforts to enhance inclusive education practices.

Table 8. Significant relationship between the teacher's profile and teachers attitudes.

Profile variable	Chi-square statistic test	Degrees of freedom (df)	P-value
Age	3.733532	5	0.588382
Gender	1.922123	1	0.165623
Educational attainment	1.046753	2	0.592516
Rank	1.511714	4	0.824565
Years of teaching	3.760771	5	0.584347
Trainings	6.271935	5	0.291284

Table 8 summarizes the results of the Chi-Square Test, analyzing the significant relationship between teachers' demographic profiles and their attitudes toward inclusive education. None of the profile variables demonstrated a statistically significant relationship with teachers' attitudes, as all p-values exceeded the standard significance threshold of 0.05. For age, the Chi-Square statistic was 3.73 with a p-value of 0.588, indicating no significant relationship. Gender also showed no significant relationship, with a Chi-Square statistic of 1.92 and a p-value of 0.166. Similarly, educational attainment (Chi-Square = 1.05, p = 0.593), academic rank (Chi-Square = 1.51, p = 0.825), years of teaching (Chi-Square = 3.76, p = 0.584), and number of training sessions attended (Chi-Square = 6.27, p = 0.291) all failed to exhibit significant associations with teachers' attitudes. These results suggest that demographic factors such as age, gender, educational attainment, rank, teaching experience, and training do not significantly influence teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. This finding highlights the potential universality of teachers' perspectives on inclusion, regardless of their personal or professional characteristics. It also underscores the importance of addressing external factors, such as school policies and resources, to further enhance teachers' attitudes and practices in fostering inclusive classrooms.

Table 9. Significant relationship between the teacher's profile and teachers' affective commitment.

Profile variable	Chi-square statistic test	Degrees of freedom (df)	P-value
Age	7.479021	5	0.187382
Gender	0.0276	1	0.868053
Educational attainment	2.046795	2	0.359372
Rank	5.304813	4	0.257427
Years of teaching	6.593651	5	0.252657
Trainings	3.138140	5	0.763201

Table 9 presents the results of the Chi-Square Test analyzing the significant relationship between teachers' demographic profiles and their affective commitment toward their school. The analysis revealed that none of the profile variables demonstrated a statistically significant relationship with teachers' affective commitment, as all p-values exceeded the standard threshold of 0.05. For age, the Chi-Square statistic was 7.48 with a p-value of 0.187, indicating no significant relationship. Gender also showed no significant relationship, with a Chi-Square statistic of 0.03 and a p-value of 0.868. Similarly, educational attainment (Chi-Square = 2.05, p = 0.359), rank (Chi-Square = 5.30, p = 0.257), years of teaching experience (Chi-Square = 6.59, p = 0.253), and the number of trainings attended (Chi-Square = 3.14, p = 0.763) did not exhibit significant associations with affective commitment. These results suggest that factors such as age, gender, educational attainment, rank, years of teaching, and training do not significantly influence teachers' emotional attachment and loyalty to their school. This finding implies that affective commitment may be more influenced by intrinsic motivations, school culture, or organizational factors rather than individual demographic characteristics. Addressing broader organizational and environmental factors could be more effective in fostering greater emotional commitment among teachers.

4. Discussion

Research highlights that teacher attitudes towards inclusive education are influenced more by contextual and experiential factors than demographic variables. For instance, De Boer et al. (2011) found that variables like direct teaching experience with students with special needs and the availability of support systems play a more critical role in shaping positive attitudes than demographic characteristics (De Boer et al., 2011). Similarly, Desombre et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of social and institutional support, finding that perceived support systems significantly enhance teacher attitudes, irrespective of individual profiles (Desombre et al., 2021). Affective commitment, which reflects teachers' emotional attachment and loyalty, also appears to depend on institutional culture and experiences rather than demographic factors. Deng et al. (2024) found that organizational factors like a supportive environment and opportunities for professional growth correlate more strongly with affective commitment than age or gender (Deng et al., 2024). Additionally, teacher training and exposure to inclusive education concepts are pivotal. Varcoe and Boyle (2014) demonstrated that targeted training significantly improves attitudes and self-efficacy toward inclusion, regardless of personal demographics (Varcoe & Boyle, 2014). These findings highlight that improving teacher attitudes and commitment toward inclusive education may be more effectively achieved through systemic and experiential interventions, such as enhanced support systems, opportunities for collaboration, and targeted professional development, rather than focusing on demographic factors. This underscores the importance of institutional policies and practices in fostering inclusive education.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed no significant relationships between teachers' demographic profiles (age, gender, educational attainment, rank, years of teaching, and training) and their attitudes or affective commitment toward inclusive education. This suggests that these individual characteristics do not substantially influence teachers' perspectives or emotional attachment to inclusive practices. Instead, existing literature underscores the importance of contextual factors, such as professional development opportunities, institutional support, and hands-on experience, in shaping positive attitudes and strong affective commitment. Research shows that teacher training, social support, and leadership are pivotal in fostering inclusive education. Creating a supportive school culture, providing resources, and implementing effective professional development programs tailored to the challenges of inclusion can strengthen teacher attitudes and commitment. Therefore, to enhance inclusive education practices, educational stakeholders should focus on improving institutional environments, building collaborative frameworks, and addressing challenges faced by educators in implementing inclusion. This study reinforces the notion that inclusive education success relies more on systemic factors and institutional support rather than individual teacher demographics. Addressing these broader elements, schools can create an environment where all learners, including those with special needs, are supported, and educators feel empowered to implement inclusive practices effectively.

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