



Teachers' Experiences of Implementing Inclusive Education Practices in Private Early Years Schools in Karachi: An Exploratory Investigation

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is a goal of providing learning opportunities and participation for children with diverse abilities and learning needs. The present study aimed to examine the experiences of implementing inclusive education practices in private early years school setting in Karachi from the teacher perspective with special focus on how the teachers understand inclusive education, their teaching strategies and challenges. Qualitative exploratory research design was used. Semi-structured interviews with 10 early years' teachers who were chosen through purposive sampling were used to gather data and thematic analysis was employed for data analysis. The results showed that, in general, the teachers had a positive approach and awareness of inclusive education focusing on the main aspects of equal opportunities, participation, diversity, belonging and supportive classroom environments. Teachers reported implementing a range of inclusive practices such as using visual aids, offering differentiated instruction, providing cues that made instructions easier to follow, repeating, or over-explain tasks, activities where students are able to learn through doing, peer learning, and interactive presentations. Nonetheless, the implementation was hampered by insufficient teacher training, poor support of the lesson materials in the classroom, large class size, behavioural problems and time-management pressure. The need for ongoing professional development and networking with parents and other professionals, supportive leadership, and sufficient institutional resources were also highlighted. It is concluded that teachers are dedicated to inclusive education but in private environments of early years need greater institutional support, suitable training and better resources to ensure that this is being realized in practice.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, Teachers' Experiences, Early Years Education, Inclusive Teaching Practices, Private Schools, Teacher Challenges.*

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Background of the Study

The concept of inclusive education has gained attention in education systems all over the world in recent years. Inclusive education is based on the belief that every child deserves to learn together, irrespective of abilities, backgrounds, and individual differences. Inclusive education helps schools provide an environment where all children can participate effectively instead of being separated because they require additional support (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024). Inclusion is particularly important in early years' education because this stage represents the beginning of formal learning and development. During early childhood, children develop essential communication, social, emotional, and literacy skills that form the foundation for future learning. When children are excluded or unsupported during these years, it can negatively affect their long-term academic and social development (Artipah et al., 2024). Pakistani educational policies have also emphasized the importance of inclusive and supportive early childhood learning environments (Government of Sindh, School Education and Literacy Department, 2024).

The role of teachers in early years' classrooms is extremely important in the process of inclusion. Teachers are responsible for creating learning environments that are welcoming and supportive for all children, including those who learn at different rates or require additional academic, behavioral, or emotional support. Early years classrooms therefore require flexible, adaptive, and child-centered teaching approaches. Pakistani studies highlight that teachers require proper support, training, and resources to successfully implement inclusive education practices in classrooms (Rehman et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the implementation of inclusive education into practice is not an easy task. It is common to ask the teachers to address the diverse needs of the students in a main classroom but they might lack the required training and resources. Kamanzi et al. (2026) describe that the teaching of inclusive pedagogy by the teachers has a direct influence on the way they support the learning of the children. When teachers clearly understand, they tend to employ effective strategies. Conversely, they can be confused or intimidated in case if they are not trained.

The classroom environment is another crucial element of inclusive education. Teaching methods are not the only meaning of inclusion. It also requires the provision of an environment where children are made to feel accepted and valued. According to Kuutti et al. (2025), the concept of inclusive classrooms implies a social environment where the relationships between students and teachers help each other to form the learning process. This implies that the attitude and behavior of teachers are important in ensuring successful inclusion teaching. Inclusive policies may be implemented in some schools but they might not be fully implemented in the classroom. Educators can make efforts to accommodate every child, however, they are usually confronted with several problems like high classes, insufficiency of resources, and professional training. Alahmari et al. (2025) emphasize that even such simple areas of learning as literacy can be complicated to deal with in an inclusive environment when educators are not adequately trained as well. Although inclusive education is increasingly becoming a popular topic of attention, a gap between theory and practice remains. Numerous studies give an idea of what inclusion should appear to be, but only a few studies investigate the practice of inclusion in classrooms. Educators can be supportive of the concept of inclusion, but they might be challenged when attempting to implement it in practice. This gap indicates the necessity of the research that puts emphasis on the teacher experiences. Knowing their experiences could offer great evidence as to what works and what does not. It can also assist in determining viable strategies and challenges.

Problem Statement

Schools are being urged to make learning opportunities equal to all children. Inclusive practices are however not well implemented especially in early years' classrooms (Government of Sindh, 2024; Pakistan Institute of Education, 2024; Rehman et al., 2025). Many schools claim to follow inclusive practices, but there is limited data on how these practices are actually implemented. Teachers are expected to manage classrooms with diverse learning needs, but they may not always receive necessary training or support. Research also suggests that differences in teacher preparation and professional development can directly affect the quality of inclusive classroom practices (Asmara et al., 2025).

The other problem is the absence of research focused on the experiences of teachers. The majority of the current research is devoted to policies or overall inclusion frameworks and provides limited understanding of teachers' day-to-day classroom experiences. As a result, there is a gap between theory and practice in the implementation of inclusive education (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024). Pakistani studies also indicate that teachers continue to face practical challenges related to classroom management, resources, and professional support while implementing inclusive practices (Rehman et al., 2025; Rafique et al., 2025). These are high student to teacher ratios, inadequate resources, insufficient professional growth, and stress to achieve academic standards. Moreover, little attention is paid to early years' education in current studies. Early years classrooms have unique characteristics, as young children require greater attention, support, and interaction, making inclusive practices particularly challenging. This paper fills this gap by considering Karachi in terms of private early years school.

Research Objectives

- To explore early years' teachers' experiences of implementing inclusive education in private school settings
- To find what strategies early years' teachers use to support children learning in inclusive education setting
- To identify challenges of private school early years' teachers faced while implementing inclusive education in their classes

Research Questions

- How do early years' teachers describe their experiences of implementing inclusive education in private school settings?
- What strategies do early years' teachers use to support children's learning in inclusive settings?
- What challenges do early years' teachers face while implementing inclusive education in private school settings?

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Inclusive Education

Inclusive education can be perceived in various ways relative to the context and viewpoint. Access is in some definitions and participation, as well as

quality of learning, in others. Rapp and Corral-Granados (2024) offer a theoretical basis of inclusive education in the system theory and constructionist views. It implies that when a child is in distress, it might not be the child who is the problem but the system itself. In Pakistani context, inclusive education is gaining momentum as a crucial strategy for providing equal opportunity in education for all learners. But it is still a challenge to implement because of institutional, social and attitude barriers. The study on inclusive education in Pakistan by Safdar et al. (2024) reveals that the policy restrictions, inadequate teacher training, and ignorance about disability and diversity in the classrooms are affecting the process of inclusive education. Likewise, current research has identified that merely providing physical access to schools is not enough to ensure inclusive education; proper learning environment and adaptive teaching practices are essential (Sarwar & Nisa, 2024). Nelis et al. (2023) are more practical and their study shows the way inclusive education models can be implemented in early childhood learning. According to their findings, inclusion is not a predetermined model. It needs to be adapted based on the context. Kuutti et al. (2025) extend the concept and concentrate on the social aspects of inclusion. They believe that the development of inclusive education is influenced by the daily interactions between children and teachers. This implies that inclusion is not just a matter of policies or strategies. It is also concerning relationships and classroom dynamics.

Inclusion Education in Early Years Situation

Inclusive education in early years' settings possesses its individualities and is not similar to inclusion in the higher levels of education. Children are at this age still building the basic cognitive, social and emotional skills. Due to this, inclusion is not merely about academic support but the development of a sense of belonging and involvement. The early childhood education in Pakistan is still being developed and has a number of problems associated with it, such as accessibility, teacher training, and the quality of the classroom. According to the research done by Artipah et al. (2024) limited access to quality ECD service and lack of trained teachers are the most dominant challenges in Pakistan. Classrooms in the early years are usually more interactive and active. Play, communication and social interaction are the means

through which children learn. This complicates the role of the teacher who must strike a balance between the structured teaching and flexible and responsive methods of teaching. The process of inclusion in these settings heavily relies on the manner in which educators handle interactions and structure activities. Kuutti et al. (2025) provide an explanation that inclusive early childhood environments are socially constructed. This means that inclusion is experienced through everyday interactions between children and teachers. Kamanzi et al. (2026) emphasize that the implementation of inclusive pedagogy in early education involves teachers modifying their teaching based on the needs of children. This involves the provision of more assistance in literacy development and application of strategies that are relevant to various levels of learning. Nonetheless, the research also indicates that there is a variation in the concept of inclusion among the teachers and this influences the implementation of these practices.

Teachers' Role in Inclusive Education

The core of inclusive education are teachers. Their work is not to just give lessons. It is their duty to ensure that all children feel like they belong and that they are supported. Kamanzi et al. (2026) underline that the knowledge of inclusive pedagogy by teachers is critical. Their research indicates that effective strategies are more prone to be used by teachers who have an understanding of inclusion. They, however, also determined that a significant number of teachers are not confident in the practices of inclusion. Atanasova and Papen (2026) discuss the views of teachers and emphasize that teachers tend to be positive towards inclusion. They are of the view that equal opportunities should be given. Nevertheless, they too have practical challenges, which may also influence their capacity to institute inclusive practices. These research findings demonstrate that teachers have an essential role to play, although they cannot act in isolation. They require school, training and policy support. Even motivated teachers might not be able to do this without this support. In the Pakistani context, teachers are also facing emotional and professional stress for implementing inclusive practices, especially if there is a shortage of support and training in schools (Rehman et al., 2025). The other significant aspect is that the experience of the teachers may be diverse. Teachers might be relaxed and contented, but other teachers might be

overwhelmed and stressed. This diversity underscores the need to investigate the experiences of teachers under certain circumstances.

Teaching Strategies in Inclusive Classrooms

The set of strategies, which teachers apply in the classroom, is one of the most significant areas of inclusive education. These interventions have a direct impact on the way children learn and how they can be able to engage fully. Teaching in inclusive classrooms cannot be based on one particular way of teaching. Rather, it involves the flexibility and constant adaptation according to the needs of children. Wade et al. (2023) address the idea of inclusion-supporting classroom activities that are carefully planned. They study structured activities where all children are involved in the activities, irrespective of their abilities. They indicate that, when teachers design activities that consider inclusion, it would be easier to involve children who may not feel involved. This indicates that planning is not simply about the accomplishment of the syllabus but the participation. Nevertheless, planned activities are beneficial although they are not always sufficient. Teachers must frequently change the teaching process in the lesson. Flexibility comes in at this point. Junarti and Rauf (2025) stress contextual teaching, in which a teacher can adjust the approach to the needs of students. The main problem with the literature is that most studies provide strategies as best practices. They propose what teachers ought to do, yet, they do not necessarily take into account the practical challenges, which teachers have to cope with. In practical classrooms, educators might lack sufficient time, resources and support to effectively apply these strategies.

Problems in the implementation of inclusive Education

Although inclusive education has numerous advantages, it also poses a series of challenges especially to the teachers. These obstacles may interrupt on the quality of teaching and learning of children. Alahmari et al. (2025) raise issues associated with the development of literacy in inclusive environments. In their work, they find that teachers find it difficult to accommodate children with varying learning requirements simultaneously. This is even more challenging when the teachers do not have the right training or resources. Xue et al. (2023) list a variety of factors that affect the

capacity of teachers to introduce inclusive education. These are professional training, teaching experience and institutional support. The research indicates that effective and confident teachers in inclusive classes are those that are well trained. But in the absence of such support, teachers might not be ready.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study guided by two theoretical perspectives, constructionist perspective and systems theory, these theories offer a basis of researching the implementation of inclusive education in early years' classrooms and the experiences of teachers in this process.

Constructionist Perspective

Through the interaction and experience that knowledge and meaning are constructed according to the constructionist perspective. Rather it is constructed in terms of teacher-child relationships, classroom activities and interactions. The constructionist view is especially applicable in this study as the research is about the experiences of teachers. Inclusive education is, actually, not a natural occurrence. It is built using what teachers practice in their day-to-day activity.

Systems Theory

This research is also guided by the systems theory, along with the constructionist view. The systems theory considers education as a system consisting of various interconnected components. These components encompass teachers, school administration, policies, resources and the school environment in general. Rapp and Corral-Granados (2024) have noted that the classroom level is not sufficient to comprehend inclusive education. It is influenced by the wider system in which the classroom exists. Systems theory can be used in this research to understand the difficulties teachers experience during the implementation of inclusive education. Teachers do not work independently. Availability of resources, support by school leadership, and institutional expectations are some factors that affect their practices.

Research Gap

Despite a substantial amount of research on inclusive education, it is possible to outline several gaps. To begin with, a lot of the literature that is available is based on theoretical ideas and policy

frameworks. Although these studies offer valuable information, they do not comprehensively describe the implementation of inclusive education in actual classrooms. Research that concentrates on the day-to-day experiences of teachers is limited. Second, a lot of research is undertaken in developed nations. The results of such studies might not directly apply to the context, such as Karachi, where schooling might possess various resources, issues, and demands. Third, the research that specifically deals with early years' education is not widely conducted. There is uniqueness in Early years' classrooms. At this age child need more attention, support and interaction. This complicates inclusion, which is not covered sufficiently in the literature.

The other gap is lack of integrated research. There are numerous studies on strategies or challenges, but not many studies have looked at both simultaneously and the experience of teachers. This brings about the partial vision of inclusive education. Lastly, private schools are not given much attention in Karachi. Inclusive practices are being embraced in these schools more but very little studies have been conducted on the implementation of the practices. Moreover, in the context of private early years setting, there is a dearth of studies in Pakistan that specifically address inclusive practices (Artipah et al., 2024). Due to these gaps, a research study into the perspectives of teachers on inclusive education in a given setting is needed.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study used a qualitative, exploratory research design. This design was appropriate because this study gained an in-depth insight into the experiences of the teachers instead of quantifying variables or testing hypotheses. Qualitative research is concerned with the meaning and interpretation. It enables researcher to explore the way people think, feel, and experience some situations. In this paper, the emphasis is on the experiences of teachers in inclusive education that cannot be completely explained with the help of numerical data. The reason is the use of an exploratory design due to the lack of research conducted on this issue in relation to the context of Karachi and the presence of private early years schools. The research does not seek to validate the existing theories. Rather, it is an attempt to explore a phenomenon and acquire new knowledge. Flexibility is one of the benefits of

qualitative research. The researcher is able to modify questions, ask follow-up questions and investigate unanticipated concepts. This is significant in the investigation of complex issues such as inclusive education.

Research Setting

The research is carried out in the private early year's schools in Karachi. These schools offer a relevant background to the study as they are becoming more and more inclusive in their education practices. They can possess varying resources, policies and expectations. However, it does not imply that it is simple to introduce inclusion. Teachers at the private schools could still encounter problems of inadequate training and pressure to achieve academic standards. There is a difference in the resources, teaching practices and student numbers in the private schools in Karachi. The need for enhancing the quality of the classroom and inclusive learning opportunities in early childhood education is also highlighted in the recent educational reports of Pakistan (Pakistan Institute of Education, 2024). The emphasis on the private schools provides the opportunity to concentrate the study on a particular environment.

Population of the Study

The population of study included all the teachers working in early years' classrooms of Karachi based private schools.

Selection criteria

The teachers are chosen as the subjects of the investigation since they are the direct participants of the implementation of the inclusive practices. They have a daily contact with children and they control the classroom atmosphere. The teachers have diverse backgrounds and experience. Teachers can either be trained in the inclusive education or they can be dependent on their experience. This diversity assists in comprehending other views. The research targeted teachers by trying to understand the experience of inclusive education and how it is implemented in actual classroom contexts.

Sample Size

This study included a sample of 10 teachers teaching in early years' classes in private schools in Karachi. This scope is believed to be suitable in qualitative research where depth is more important than the quantity.

Sampling Technique

The type of sampling used in this research is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling refers to a non-probability type of sampling where sample participants are chosen according to certain criteria that are relevant to the study. Here, the researcher selected the teachers that have firsthand experience of inclusive education in their early year's classrooms. This makes sure that the data obtained is significant and useful to the research aims.

Participation criteria

The participants were selected based on the following criteria:

- The teachers were already serving in early years' classes of private schools in Karachi.
- They were experienced in teaching children with different learning needs.
- They ought to be open to join and share their experiences.

Data Collection Method

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data relating to this study. This approach was selected as it gives the participants the opportunity to discuss their experiences in their own language but still give the conversation some structure.

Procedure of Data Collection

To make the entire process of data collection systematic and ethical, the process is conducted in a number of steps. The researcher first identified the private schools in Karachi that provided early years' education. The school administration contacted to allow the study to be carried out. Second, the potential participants were determined according to the selection criteria. Those teachers who fit the requirements were contacted and talked about the aim of the study. Third, participants were informed and give their consent. They are explained that they can pull out anytime. They are free to do so. Fourth, semi structured interviews were being conducted in a convenient time to the participants. Interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants in order to be accurate. The interviews are transcribed after the interviews. The information is then tabulated to be analyzed.

Analysis of Data (Thematic Analysis)

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data obtained in the semi-structured interviews. The

approach is common in qualitative studies since it assisted in uncovering patterns and themes in the data. Thematic analysis enabled the researcher to shift the raw data to meaningful interpretation. It was concerned with what was being said by the participants and the similarities of ideas in various interviews. The thematic analysis process in the current study has a number of steps. To begin with, the researcher familiarizes himself with the data. This was done by repeatedly reading the interview transcripts. In this step, the researcher attempted to learn the general meaning of the data. Some preliminary thoughts and observations were also recorded. Second, the researcher started coding the data. Coding implies pinpointing significant words, phrases, or sentences that address the research questions. All the relevant data was labeled or coded. Third, the codes were divided into groups. Codes which were similar are grouped to make larger categories. This assists in the arrangement of the data in a meaningful manner. Fourth, the themes were created out of the categories. Themes are the primary concepts that were based on the data. Themes identified in this research were connected with the experience of teachers, their strategies and challenges. Fifth, the themes were checked and improved. The researcher verified that the themes were a true reflection of the data. Any themes overlapping or not clear were adjusted. Lastly, the themes were explained and connected to the research questions. The researcher clarifies the meaning of the themes and how they are connected with inclusive education practices. Thematic analysis fits in this study since it is flexible. It is also beneficial in capturing the complexity of the experiences of teachers. The researcher needs to make sure that the results are not grounded on the data, but rather on personal bias.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, reliability and validity are concepts that are usually defined in terms of trustworthiness. Credibility provides integrity to the findings of the research. In this study, a number of

measures are used to make it trustworthy.

Credibility

Credibility is the correctness of the findings. In this research, credibility was achieved by gathering comprehensive information in the form of interviews. The participants were also provided with the chance to express their opinions. Follow-up questions were also utilized by the researcher to explain answers.

Dependability

Dependability is the consistency of the research process. In order to be reliable, the researcher adheres to a well-laid-out and methodical process. All the steps of the research, including data collection, data analysis were well recorded.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the objectivity of the research. The researcher had not personal bias and the results were not being based on the data. Records and notes are kept to back the findings.

Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the results can be generalized to other situations. In this research, the research setting and participants were detailed. This enabled other to know whether the findings were applicable to their similar settings. Such approaches assisted in enhancing the quality of the research and making sure that the results are credible.

Data Analysis and Findings

Thematic Analysis

Interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to chart patterns and meanings from the data. Responses were coded initially and subsequently into themes. The coding process enabled the data to be organized into categories that made sense with regard to teachers' experiences, teaching strategies, challenges, and support systems.

4.2.2: Coding Table

Initial Codes	Categories	Themes
Equal learning opportunities	Understanding inclusion	Teachers' Understanding of Inclusive Education
Participation of all students	Understanding inclusion	Teachers' Understanding of Inclusive Education
Diversity in learning	Understanding inclusion	Teachers' Understanding of Inclusive Education
Sense of belonging	Understanding inclusion	Teachers' Understanding of Inclusive Education
Supportive classroom environment	Understanding inclusion	Teachers' Understanding of Inclusive Education
Respect for individual differences	Understanding inclusion	Teachers' Understanding of Inclusive Education
Visual aids	Teaching strategies	Teaching Strategies and Classroom Practices
Hands-on activities	Teaching strategies	Teaching Strategies and Classroom Practices
Simplified instructions	Teaching strategies	Teaching Strategies and Classroom Practices
Repetition of concepts	Teaching strategies	Teaching Strategies and Classroom Practices
Interactive learning	Teaching strategies	Teaching Strategies and Classroom Practices
Differentiated instruction	Teaching strategies	Teaching Strategies and Classroom Practices
Peer learning	Student engagement	Teaching Strategies and Classroom Practices
Group activities	Student engagement	Teaching Strategies and Classroom Practices

Theme 1: Teachers' understanding of Inclusive Education

The findings showed that teachers perceived inclusive education to be an opportunity for all learners to have equal opportunities irrespective of their ability or learning differences. Participation, diversity, and supportive classroom environments were key elements highlighted by participants. The majority of teachers felt that inclusion is about making sure all children don't feel left out of the classroom learning and activities.

One participant explained “Inclusive education is defined as providing equal opportunities for learning for all children, and ensuring that no child feels excluded” (P3). Another participant stated “Each child learns in a different way and teachers need to adapt to the needs of children” (P5).

The results indicate that generally teachers have a positive understanding of inclusive education and they appreciate the value of inclusive education in achieving equality and participation. The results confirm recent Pakistani research which suggested that inclusive education is about making learning

environments supportive for diverse learners and minimizing barriers to learning (Rafique et al., 2025). This has also been found by Artipah et al. (2024) who noted that inclusive education equates equal opportunities for children to learn and participate in early years' settings.

The majority of teachers had a concept of inclusion as providing equal opportunity for education. The themes of 'every child deserves to be able to learn whatever they can, no matter their learning ability or disability' were repeated in all the interviews.

P6 explained “Inclusive education is a concept of equality and no child is left behind.” Similarly, P10 described inclusion as creating learning opportunities where children feel capable and confident regardless of their learning differences. Participants also felt that inclusive classrooms foster empathy and cooperation among students. Children learn to be accepted and understand others through interaction with others. Participants highlighted that belonging is an important aspect of inclusion. Teachers felt that the children should be emotionally secure and accepted in the classroom, socially.

P7 shared “Children should feel at ease to take part confidently.” Teachers described how children feel more emotionally safe and valued by teachers and peers in the classroom, which in turn enhances classroom participation. In recent years, the literature written in Pakistan has also highlighted the importance of participation, emotional well-being, and creating a supportive learning environment in early childhood education and care settings for inclusive education (Artipah et al., 2024). In addition, Rehman et al. (2025) explain that, in emotionally supportive classrooms, children become more confident, motivated and engaged in learning activities. The results suggest that teachers actively try to adjust their teaching based on a variety of student learning needs. The results are in accordance with the previous studies as reported by Asmara et al. (2025) that adaptive teaching strategies are significant for effective inclusive education in early years’ education. Likewise, Zaheer (2025) notes that the classroom quality and flexible approaches to teaching have an effect on children's participation and learning experiences in Pakistani early childhood classrooms.

Theme 2: Teaching Strategies and Classroom Practices

Teachers reported implementing a variety of strategies with children of diverse learning needs. The most frequently used instructional methods were: visual aids, hands-on activity, group activity, peer activity, simplified instructions, and modification of curriculum. Teachers also emphasized the need for interesting and interactive activities that would enhance participation. P2 shared “I use Visual Aids, Group Work and Individual Support as children speak in different ways.” Another participant explained “Activities should be adapted or modified to suit the child's level sometimes” (P6). P8 stated “I try to simplify tasks as much as possible.” P9 mentioned “Repetition and group work help children remain engaged and improve understanding.”

Teachers also shared ideas on peer learning and interactive teaching strategies for inclusive practices. Participants report that collaboration between students helps to enhance communication and confidence. This is corroborated by Kamanzi et al. (2026) which revealed that teachers adjust their approach to teaching to meet children's learning needs. Likewise, Wade et al., (2023) note

interactive and flexible teaching methods to assist in the participation of children in the classroom. The most frequently mentioned visual learning strategies were those mentioned in the participants' descriptions. Teachers felt that the use of visuals enhances understanding and attention of children. P10 stated: “During activity-based lessons, students understand concepts better because they can physically participate and explore learning materials.” P3 explained: “Children who have difficulty reading and comprehending abstract ideas are helped by the use of visuals.” One of the participants explained about the use of practical activities in science lessons. P3 stated “Rather than lecture, I used a hands-on string phone activity to allow students to experience the vibration”.

Children who had difficulties in concentration or low attention span seemed to benefit from hands-on activities. Differentiation in instruction was a topic that was often addressed by teachers. There are often changes to tasks as they relate to the learners' abilities and understanding, participants explained.

P2 shared “I aim to differentiate tasks with regards to students' level”. P7 also explained “Adjusts activities to accommodate varying abilities of students and allows sufficient time to complete.” Participants felt that differentiation is a way to enable children to participate comfortably and successfully. Peer support and group work help classrooms to be more inclusive, many participants explained. P6 stated “Pair work and group activities enable students to learn from one another”. Children were often seen as feeling a sense of belonging and self-esteem when working collaboratively, the teachers observed. P9 mentioned “Students are motivated by positive reinforcement and group interaction.” The results indicated that collaborative learning strategies foster academic and social inclusion. Participants highlighted that classroom atmosphere plays a very important role in the participation and learning. Teachers informed that children do better when they are emotionally safe and supported. P4 shared “Children should be able to use their voice and do as they please!” Another participant explained “Small efforts are appreciated because it helps children to be more confident.”

Participants felt that good relationships between teacher and child is a key component of successful inclusion. However, it is worth mentioning that

recent literature from Pakistan also underlines the significance of providing supportive learning environments in the context of inclusive early childhood education (Zaheer, 2025). Government of Sindh, School Education and Literacy Department (2024) further reiterates the need for a child-centred and inclusive classroom learning environment during the implementation of ECCE policy.

Theme 3: Challenges in implementation

Participants identified several issues related to implementation of inclusive education, despite the general support of teachers. Lack of training, lack of resources, large classes, time management problems, small classrooms, and behavior management were the most frequently reported problems.

Over and over, participants described the need for more planning and preparation for inclusive teaching. Unfortunately, there is a lack of time and workload that could allow for more individualized support. P3 explained “The main challenges are time and resources, differentiation for each individual lesson requires a lot of planning time.” Similarly, P1 stated “One of the greatest challenges is time management.” In addition to this, teachers recognized that the large class sizes make it challenging to give individual attention. P2 shared “Two diverse need students, plus 24 students, means it's difficult to give 1:1 attention.” Children with various learning needs are often emotionally in need of support, guidance and supervision, participants said. One of the most important concerns among participants was that they didn't have any specialized training. A large number of teachers reported that they had to find out how to implement inclusive practices by trial and error. P4 stated “The beginning was very difficult, “I was not trained to work with inclusive classrooms.” P9 explained “More workshops and professional training are needed to get to know the needs of children better.” Teachers felt that training would help them to become more confident, better at classroom management and better at teaching.

The results of this study align with Pakistani research that inadequate professional learning hinders the implementation of inclusive education (Rehman et al., 2025). Other education reports in Pakistan also indicate that considerable teachers' training and hands-on assistance is needed to

support the diverse learning needs within classroom settings (Pakistan Institute of Education, 2024). Teachers also shared that there are specific materials, visual supports, activity corners and flexible spaces needed for an inclusive classroom. P8 stated “Due to limited resources, large class size and small space, difficulties arise.” P2 also shared “More space and varied resources are needed for effective learning to be available for children.” Participants felt that classroom environment influences children's participation and comfort level. Several teachers indicated that they are faced with an inadequate number of teaching aids and sensory resources in the school. P4 mentioned “The need for more practical resources and learning materials.” P10 shared “Sometimes lack of specialized tools and support limits how much we can adapt lessons for different learners.” The challenges related to behavioral management were also discussed by the teachers. Some children reported having mood swings, attention problems or emotional regulation problems, the participants explained. Lack of time was also noted as an important challenge by the participants. Teachers described the challenge of planning for the differentiated needs of learners and for individual students. P3 stated “Extra planning and preparation time is needed to differentiate lessons.” Participants also reported that it can be challenging to balance curriculum completion with individual support. P5 mentioned “Sometimes the learning process is slowed down by the need for different support for each child.” The results suggest that teachers feel pressure in the context of balancing inclusion and academic expectations.

Theme 4: Need for Support and Professional Development

Institutional support, collaboration and professional development is the final major theme that emerged from the interviews. Participants stated that teachers cannot be successful with inclusive education without the support of schools, parents, specialists and administrators. Training opportunities and workshops were mentioned by many participants. P9 stated “More training, resources and working together with fellow professionals are needed.” Similarly, P3 shared “Consistent professional development and collaborative planning time are essential in order to excel in inclusive practice.” Teachers felt that with professional support they will achieve better levels

of confidence and effective teaching. The participants were very enthusiastic about the need of continuous professional learning. P10 stated “Teachers need practical training and collaborative planning time to effectively manage inclusive classrooms.” Teachers described understanding of behavioral management strategies, differentiated instruction and inclusive strategies by using workshops. P4 shared “Workshops enable teachers to be aware of managing challenges in the classroom successfully.” The participants also stressed that practical training should be done, not only theoretical knowledge. Collaboration was mentioned as a key element to successful inclusion by several participants. Communication with parents helps to understand child's emotional and learning needs, said teachers. P3 stated “These challenges helped me to build stronger relationships with parents and colleagues.” Participants also suggested building a partnership with shadow teachers and therapists/supports. P1 explained “Shadow teachers can help with class management and students' engagement.” Teachers also spoke about their emotional well-being. Participants described the challenges of inclusive teaching as being emotional because of workload, management of the classroom, and student needs. P2 shared “Patience and emotional intelligence is required in inclusive classrooms.” The results are in line with that of Pakistani research that has shown that the emotional well-being of teachers highly affects the effectiveness of inclusive teaching (Rehman et al., 2025). Furthermore, other studies on emotional resilience of teachers and institutional support for enhancing inclusive practices in classrooms in Pakistan point to the importance of teacher emotions and institutional support in enhancing inclusive practices in the classroom (Rafique et al., 2025). Participants felt that there was a need for enhanced institutional support in schools. Teachers suggested the reduction of student's strength in classes, improved resources and supports within the classroom. P3 stated “There are opportunities for inclusion to be enhanced by additional guidance and support for students during lessons.” It was pointed out that the inclusive education is impossible without the right institutional planning. It is also reported that effective inclusive education is dependent on the strengthening of educational policies, quality enhancement of classrooms, and support systems for teachers in Pakistan in recent years (Pakistan Institute of Education, 2024).

ASER Pakistan (2024) also finds that in Pakistan, many children with disabilities continue to be out of school because of poor accessibility and support for them in the educational system.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the teachers in private early years settings are generally in favor of inclusive education and aware of its value in terms of equal participation and learning opportunities. Inclusion was portrayed by participants as a process of making sure all children are accepted, supported and are actively participating in classroom learning, irrespective of their learning needs and abilities. The findings indicated teachers' application of various adaptive teaching strategies to cater for the diversity of learners. Classrooms frequently employed visual aids, differentiated instruction, peer learning, repetition, simplified instruction and hands-on activities. The results are in line with earlier studies which highlighted that flexible instruction enhances participation and engagement in inclusive classrooms (Asmara et al., 2025). A study by Zaheer (2025) also found that when teachers adopt classroom strategies that are adapted to the needs of their students, it has a positive effect on children's participation and engagement within Pakistani early years settings.

The results however do show that teachers encounter many difficulties in the process of implementing inclusive education. The participants often mentioned that they lacked professional training, they did not have enough classroom resources, large classes, behavioral problems, and the time management issues. The results corroborate the Pakistani literature that currently challenges the possibility of implementing inclusive education because of lack of institutional support and lack of professional preparation (Rafique et al., 2025). In addition, Rehman et al. (2025) reported that teachers also face emotional and professional challenges when running inclusive classrooms without adequate support systems. The need for support systems, such as training opportunities, collaboration with specialists, supportive leadership, and parental involvement were repeatedly mentioned. Teachers felt that effective inclusion was not a matter for any single teacher but a matter for all teachers.

The results are also consistent with the theoretical

model for this study. The constructionist stance focuses on the way inclusion is negotiated in classroom interactions, relationships and teaching practices. Teachers' experiences showed that inclusive learning is a social construct which is created on a daily basis in the classroom. In the same way, school policies, leadership, resources, and support systems are broader institutional factors that can be explained through systems theory as a factor influencing classroom practices of inclusion. The results suggest that, overall, teachers are dedicated to inclusion despite the challenges faced. Participants showed willingness to make changes to lesson plans, support children emotionally, work in conjunction with parents and make lesson plans flexible for children with a variety of learning styles. However, a more robust institutional support, professional development, better classroom resources, emotional support systems and supportive educational policies are needed to be effective. The results also show that inclusion in early years' settings goes beyond the implementation of early years educational policy. Rather, it is about emotional understanding, relationships in the classroom, empathy, patience, flexibility and working together. Successful inclusion was considered to be largely dependent on the social and emotional management of classrooms by teachers. The results, therefore, indicate that inclusive education is an educational model that can be seen as a comprehensive approach to education that provides children with academic and emotional care.

Moreover, the study is a specific contribution to the literature of inclusive education in Pakistan as few studies are available on the early years of education in private preschools in Karachi. The results therefore offer relevant insights into teachers' experiences and can assist the educational institutions and policy makers to enhance inclusive educational practices in early childhood settings.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, few recommendations are suggested to improve inclusive education practices in private early years classrooms.

Professional Development and Teacher Training

Regular workshops or trainings on inclusive education practices should be offered in schools.

Teachers need to have hands-on experience with differentiated instruction, behavioral management, emotional support, and adaptive teaching. Make it practical by providing opportunities for teachers to observe and reflect, and to include classroom examples and case studies. The continuous professional development process can enhance teachers' confidence and effectiveness in relation to inclusive settings. Schools must also work with special education teachers, therapists, and inclusion teachers to offer direction and mentoring to teachers.

Improvement of Classroom Resources

Schools to increase provision of teaching materials, visual aids, sensory resources, and resources for activities-based learning. It was mentioned repeatedly by the participants that hands-on learning materials and visual support is important for children with different learning needs. Flexible classroom areas should also be created to provide children with more space to move around, more comfort and an increased opportunity to participate. Calming corners and areas could support children with emotional and sensory needs.

Reduction of Class Size

Large class size was often raised as a challenge. Schools should therefore try to keep the sizes of inclusive classrooms as small as possible in order to give teachers the ability to give more individual attention and support to the students. Smaller classes would enable teachers to track children's progress more effectively and to practice differentiated teaching more effectively.

Institutional and Administrative Support

School leadership to ensure inclusive practices are actively promoted through planning lessons, collaboration and emotional support for teachers. It is important for teachers to share challenges, discuss strategies and ask for professional support as necessary. Administrators should also make sure that inclusion policies are put into practice, rather than just being a theoretical concept.

Parent and Community Collaboration

Communication & collaboration with parents should be increased. Participants explained that parents' participation fosters understanding of the needs of the children and reinforces the consistency of learning at home and in the school. Awareness

programs and workshops might also be useful in educating parents about the value of being part of the education system and emotional support.

Emotional Support Systems for Teachers

Schools are required to understand the emotional needs of inclusive teaching. Teachers can use counseling services, mentorship programs, and peer support groups to help them deal with stress and emotional challenges more effectively. Promoting the emotional health of teachers can enhance teaching and student-teacher relationships.

Policy Improvement and Monitoring

Government and educational authorities should increase support for implementation of inclusive education policies with adequate funding, resources, and professional support for schools. Policies should be aimed at classroom quality, accessibility, teacher preparation, and not just numbers of enrollee.

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

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Recommendations for Future Research

Inclusive Education practices in Public Schools, Rural schools, or different levels of Education within Pakistan are areas for further research. Comparative analysis of public and private schools could help to gain further insight into the differences between institutions, and difficulties in the classroom. Ideally, future research would also incorporate the voices of parents, school leaders, therapists, and students to better understand inclusion, as it relates to them. Investigators can also conduct studies on teacher training programs and emotional support interventions for the effectiveness of increasing inclusive classroom practices. Long-term research on the effects of inclusive practice on children's social, emotional and learning development, over time, may be of benefit. Future studies on early childhood inclusion in the context of Pakistan can play a key role in determining policy-making and educational reform.

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