



PERSPECTIVES OF TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSION OF CHALLENGED CHILDREN IN NORMAL SCHOOLS

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Abstract: Education shapes, modifies and builds an individual. In the system of education, the teachers play crucial roles in the growth and development of a child. Therefore, the perspectives of teachers are very important for the social, emotional, intellectual and overall development of a child. There are many children who are challenged and differently abled, and need special care and education. It has been seen that inclusive education helps them to adapt and reconcile in society. Inclusive education class is one in which the students, regardless of their disabilities, study in the same classroom with normal students. This study is designed to glimpse the perspectives of the teachers towards challenged children. A self-constructed questionnaire was administered for studying the perspective of the teachers. The result shows that though the teachers are aware of the concept of inclusive education they are not knowledgeable enough to handle the challenged children in an inclusive school. Therefore, professional training programme are essential for the teachers for the success of inclusive system of education.

Index Terms – Education, perspectives, inclusive, disabilities, challenged children, professional training.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the foundations of life in today's world. A country's economic, social, and personal development depend on education. Having an education is vital for leading a happy and prosperous life. (Sharma,2016). The most crucial instrument for transforming society via enlightenment and empowerment is education (Naidu,2018). All children are guaranteed a fundamental right to education in spite of their age, race, caste, creed, or any other consideration. Article 21-A, states that all children between the ages of six and fourteen must receive free and compulsory education as a Fundamental Right. It may be implemented by the State in accordance with existing laws and was added to the Indian Constitution by the Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002. According to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE Act, 2009), which is the equivalent of the consequential legislation envisioned under Article 21-A, every child is entitled to a full-time elementary education in a formal school that meets certain fundamental norms and standards of a satisfactory and equitable quality. (Ministry of Education,2024).

Many children have disabilities from birth. These children are known as exceptional or challenged children. These children with special needs also have the right to get opportunity to learn like normal children. A good number of children are also deprived of education due to poverty. However, an increasing number of schools and institutions are now allowing these children to enrol in their institutions and learn alongside ordinary learners. This kind of education is inclusive and progressive at the same time. No country will be able to achieve gender equality or reverse the cycle of poverty which displaces millions of children, youth, and adults if they do not provide inclusive and equitable education for all. (UNESCO,2021)

Teachers have a significant impact on students' lives, not solely in regard to their academic progress but also in terms of their personal development and character formation. (Raj. P, 2023)

Teachers' views towards their students have a lasting impact on the personalities of their students. While a negative mindset of the teachers results in low self-esteem, low grades, and a lack of motivation on the part of the students, a positive attitude from the teacher increases students' confidence and self-worth and supports their future development as more self-reliant and disciplined individuals. Instructor efficacy in the classroom and, ultimately, the effect they have on students' academic performance are largely determined by the behaviour that they see, both positively and negatively (Maazouzi, 2019). Thus, a child's life is impacted by the attitude of their teachers.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study is stated as 'Perspectives of Teachers Towards Inclusion of Challenged Children in Normal Schools'.

III. RATIONALE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

It is found that one of the important factors for the overall development of the challenged children is the attitude of the teachers towards them. A positive attitude is expected to bear positive result for the growth of the students. It is also found that training of the teachers is also an important component for effective inclusive education. A study by Desombre, Lamotte and Jury (2018) on French teachers' attitude towards inclusive students found that efficacy of the has an indirect effect on their attitude. The teachers confident about their abilities have a more positive attitude towards inclusive education. Bulk et al. (2017) shed light on the issue of disability-related stigma in educational settings and raised questions about the impact of stigma and discrimination on the attitudes of educators towards challenged children. Madriaga and Goodley (2010) emphasized on socially just pedagogies and Asperger's syndrome in the higher education of UK. Their study pointed out the need for teachers to move beyond minimum requirements and adopt inclusive pedagogical approaches that are responsive to the specific needs of the challenged students. This suggested the need for professional development and future research to promote inclusive teaching practices. A study by Sukbunpant, Arthur Kelly and Dempsey (2013) focused on the views of preschool teachers in Thailand on inclusive education which found that in spite of the positive attitude of the teachers the ability to meet the diverse needs of the students is of major concern. Therefore, for the effective implementation of inclusive education the teachers must be provided with necessary training. Peterson (2015) conducted a study on school counselors and gifted children which emphasized the importance of respecting both cognitive and affective aspects of giftedness. The study raised questions on whether the teachers are equipped to address the diverse needs of gifted students in the classroom. Garcia Carrion, Roldan and Campos (2018) highlighted that technology enhanced learning has the potential benefits for the challenged children in their study on interactive learning environments in the special schools for the children with disabilities.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study intends to find out the perspectives of teachers towards:

- a. Inclusion of challenged children in normal schools.
- b. Awareness and support about inclusion of challenged children in normal schools.
- c. Willingness to teach challenged children.
- d. Duration of class hours for challenged children in inclusive education.
- e. Individual attention to the challenged children in inclusive class.
- f. Negative effect of inclusion on the performance of normal students and better performance of challenged children in inclusive education.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study is both quantitative, qualitative and exploratory in nature. A semi-structured questionnaire and interview was administered in order to collect the data. The sampling technique used in this study is quota sampling. Bar graphs and pie charts were used to analyse the collected data. Sample for the study consists of fifty-five male and fifty-five female teachers of different primary schools of Kolkata city.

VI. DELIMITATION

The study is limited to fifty-five male and fifty-five female teachers of different English medium ICSE and CBSE schools located in Kolkata. It deals with the affective domain of the teachers only.

VII. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data on the affective domain of attitude had been collected with the help of a close ended questionnaire. The data has been represented graphically followed by qualitative analysis.

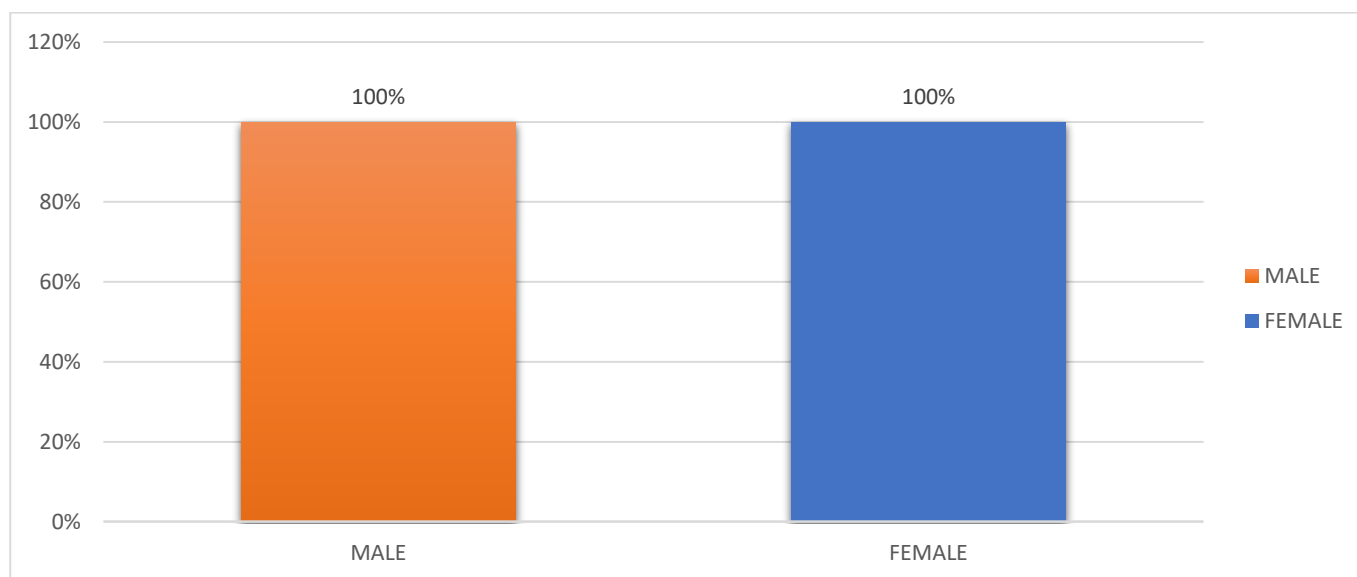


Figure 1. Awareness regarding inclusive education

The above diagram shows that both male and female teachers are aware of the concept of inclusive education. All the male and female teachers in the present study gave positive response about the knowledge of Inclusive education.

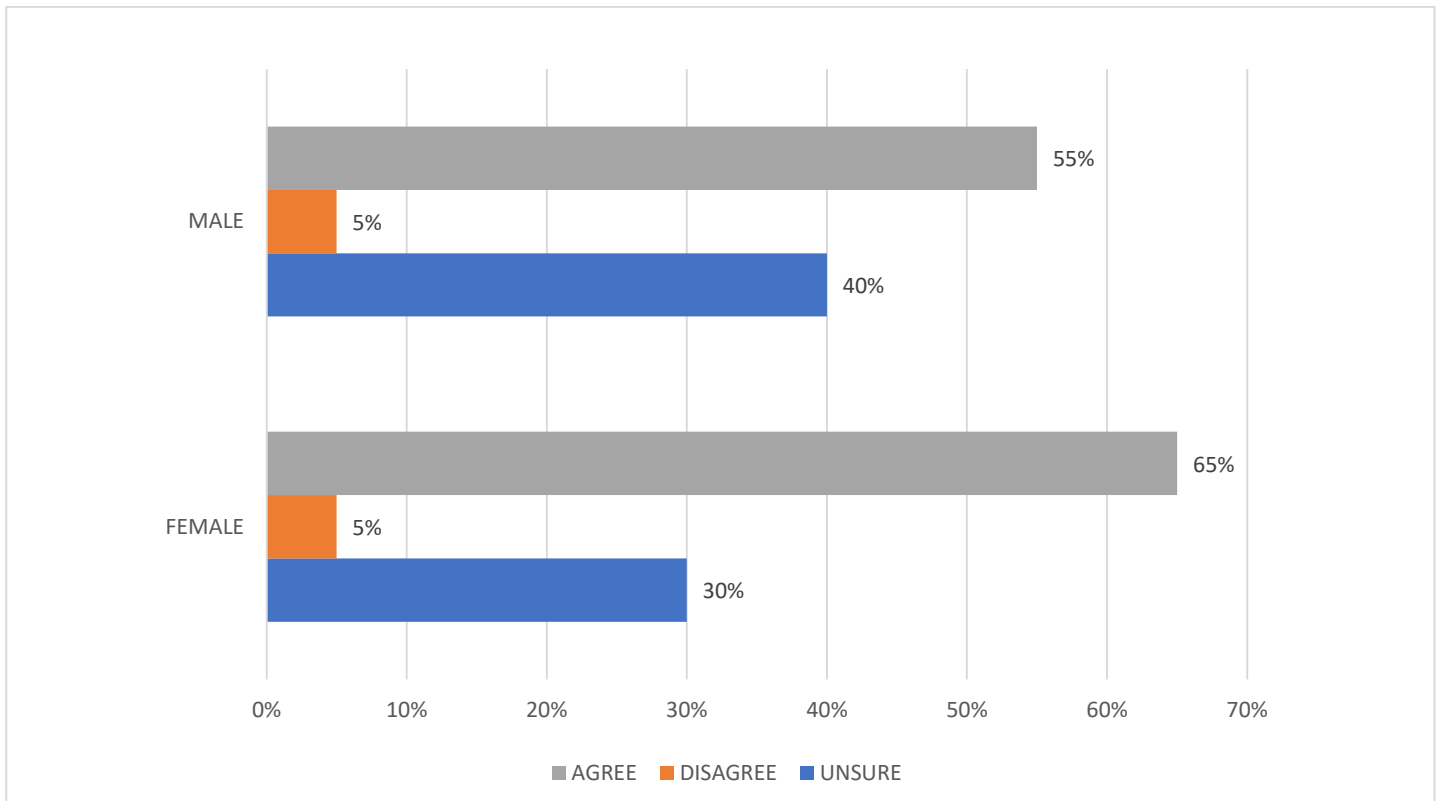


Figure 2: Support of teachers towards inclusive education

It is found that fifty five percent male teachers and sixty percent female teachers support the system of Inclusive Education for the challenged children. Only five percent male and five percent female teachers opined against inclusion of challenged children in a normal school. Thirty percent male teachers and forty five percent female teachers strongly feel that Inclusive Education is the best option for the education of challenged children. Out of the total population of male and female teacher’s forty percent male and thirty percent female teachers remained unsure about the option of Inclusive Education for challenged child.

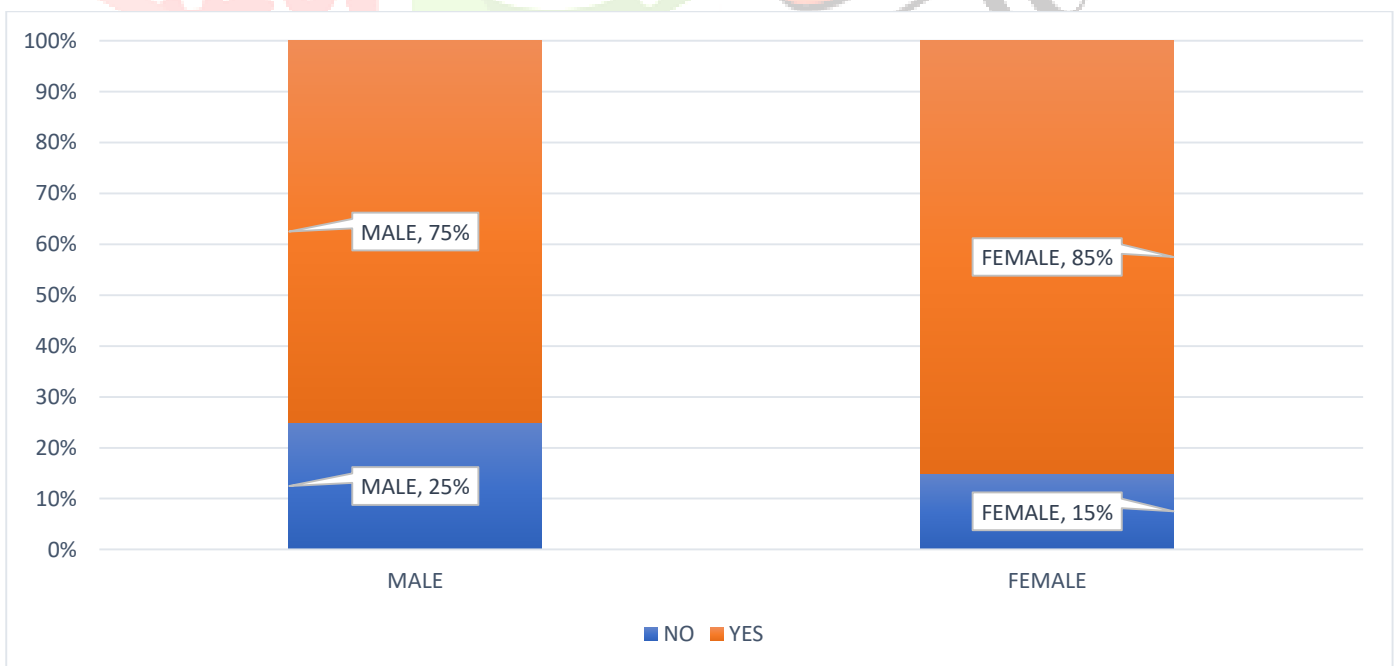


Figure 3: Willingness of teachers to teach challenged children

It is noticed that the majority of teachers i.e. seventy five percent female teachers and eighty five percent male teachers are willing to teach challenged children, whereas twenty five percent male and fifteen percent female teachers expressed their unwillingness to teach challenged children in class.

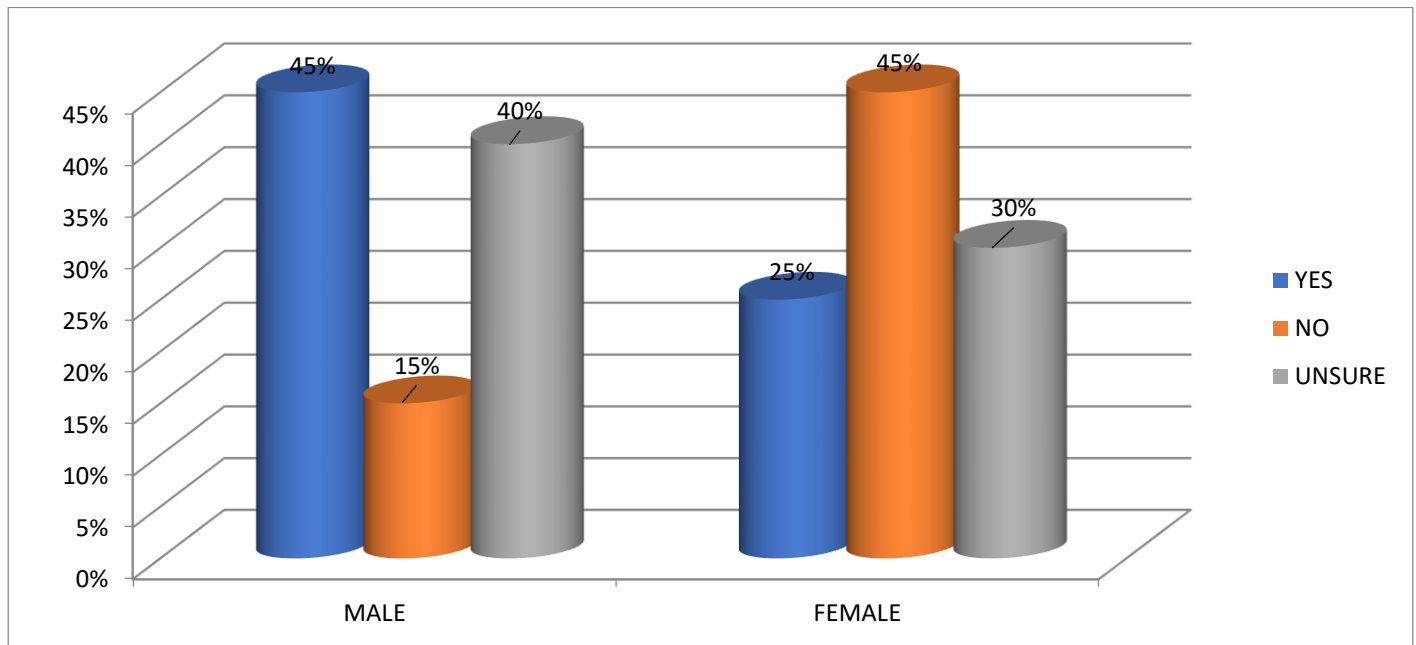


Figure 4: Duration of class hours for challenged children in inclusive education

It is seen in the above diagram that the opinion of male and female teachers differs regarding the time to be spent by the challenged children in an inclusive school. Forty five percent male and twenty five percent female teachers feel that the challenged children should stay for the entire day in school with other children whereas fifteen percent male and forty five percent female teachers feel that they should not stay for the entire day in school. On the other hand, forty percent male and thirty percent female teachers remain unsure about this issue.

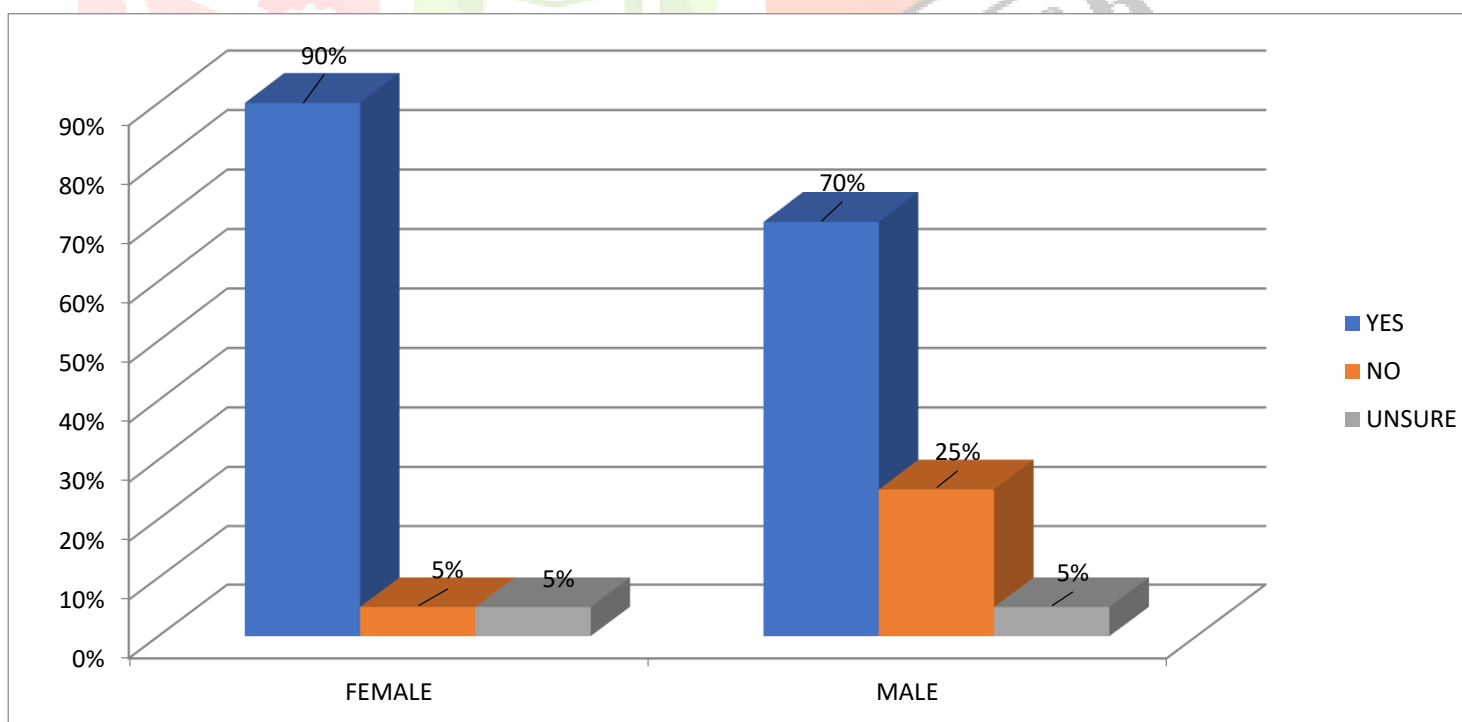


Figure 5: Necessity of individual attention to the challenged children in inclusive education.

The above diagram shows that ninety percent female teachers and seventy percent male teachers feel that individual attention is needed to support the challenged children in an Inclusive school, five percent female and

twenty five percent male teachers do not feel the necessity of individual attention towards challenged children and five percent each male and female teachers were unsure about providing individual support to challenged children.

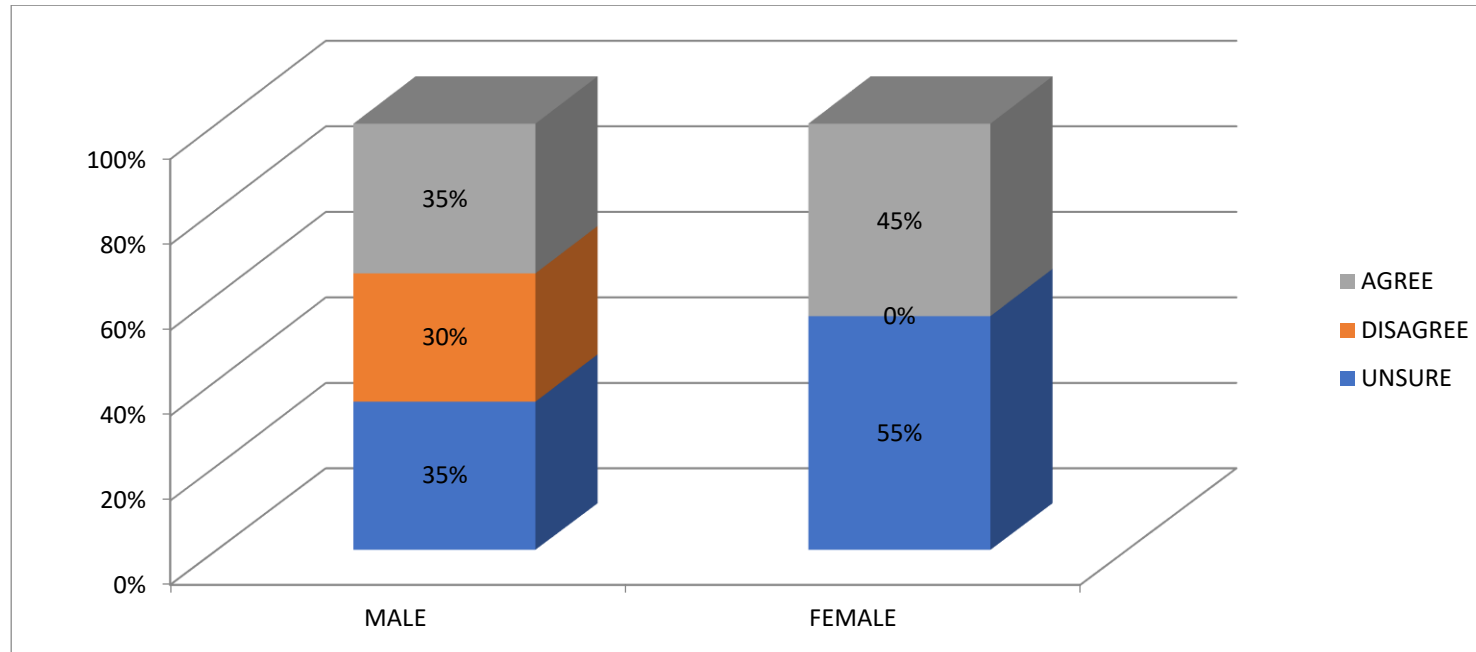


Figure 6: Better performance of challenged children in inclusive education

It is seen that thirty five percent male teachers and forty five percent female teachers think that the performance of the challenged children is expected to be better in an inclusive class where they will be with the normal children, thirty percent male teachers are negative about the better performance of challenged children in an inclusive class and thirty five percent male and fifty five percent female teachers remain unsure about the better performance of challenged children respectively.

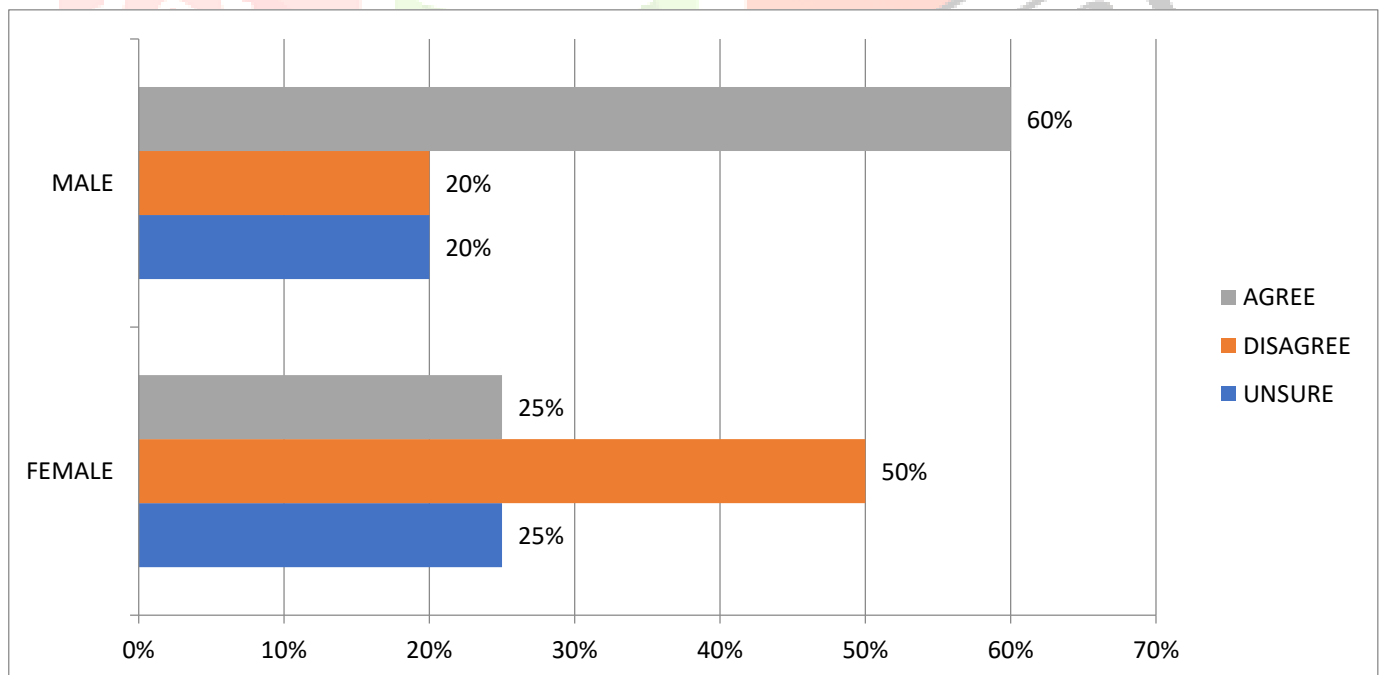


Figure 7. Negative effect of inclusion on the performance of normal students

There is marked difference in opinion between the female and male teachers regarding the performance of normal children in an inclusive classroom. It is seen that sixty percent male teachers and twenty five percent female teachers agreed to this statement, twenty percent male and fifty percent female teachers agreed and twenty percent male and twenty five percent female teachers remained unsure about the statement.

Regardless of gender, the teachers expressed their awareness about the concept of inclusive education where the challenged children study with the normal children. Majority of teachers, both male and female are in favor of inclusive education and are willing to teach these children along with other children. It is also found that most of the teachers feel the necessity of giving special attention to the challenged children in an inclusive class although majority of teachers are of the opinion that the duration of class hours for the challenged children should not be so long as the normal children. Regarding the statement on whether the performance of challenged children is expected to be better in an inclusive school no distinct pattern of response by the teachers in the form of agreement or disagreement is noticed. Rather, the narrative of male teachers is more or less uniformly divided between agree, disagree and unsure and in the case of female teachers it is divided between agree and disagree. It is also seen in this study that a considerable percentage of teachers are unsure about their opinions. This could be perhaps due to their lack of experience to handle challenged children as teachers they were hesitant and confused to respond.

VIII. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The educational implications of the present study are:

- The present study would bring awareness among the teachers about the needs of challenged children.
- The concerned authorities would be able to identify the necessity of specialized training for the teachers to assist them in handling the challenged children with more confidence.
- The schools would be more student friendly to cater to the needs of all children.
- It would give an impetus to follow a variety of teaching approaches by the teachers.
- The curriculum would be more diversified to accommodate children with special needs along with normal children.

IX. CONCLUSION

Though the present study exhibits 100% awareness of the teachers towards inclusive education but a considerable number of teachers are unsure about how to handle challenged children in a normal school along with other children. Therefore, the above emphasizes on the necessity for focused interventions and support programs. The result also reflects how crucial it is to focus on the professional development programme for the teachers so they can serve children with special needs in an efficient manner. Inclusive education needs teamwork where every student gets opportunity to grow intellectually, socially, and emotionally.

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