

EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' ATTITUDES AND EFFICACY FOR INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM PRACTICES

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes toward inclusive education in Ondo State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, and data were collected from 500 primary and secondary school teachers using two standardized instruments: the Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised (SACIE-R) Scale and the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) Scale. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, Multiple Linear Regression, and one-way ANOVA. The findings revealed a moderate positive relationship between teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and their self-efficacy in behavior management and collaboration, while a weaker positive relationship was found with inclusive instruction. The results also indicated no significant difference in teacher efficacy based on gender. However, significant differences were observed based on educational qualification and age range. Furthermore, teacher self-efficacy significantly predicted teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education, with collaboration emerging as the strongest predictor. The study additionally found no significant difference between primary and secondary school teachers regarding attitudes toward inclusive classroom practices. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening teachers' collaboration skills and professional competence through teacher education and training programs to enhance successful implementation of inclusive education practices in Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Inclusive education has become an increasingly important educational policy and practice across the world. Many developed countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, have implemented legislation and educational reforms aimed at ensuring equal educational opportunities for learners with diverse needs. Likewise, several developing countries have also adopted policies that support the inclusion of students with disabilities and other special educational needs within mainstream educational systems (Kuyini & Desai, 2007; Wu-Tien, Ashman, & Yong-Wook, 2008). These global efforts reflect a growing recognition that education should be accessible to all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or cultural differences. As educational systems continue to evolve, teacher preparation programs and classroom practices are also expected to adapt to meet the diverse needs of students in inclusive learning environments (Nougaret, Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 2005). Consequently, teachers' roles, expectations, and attitudes toward inclusive education have become increasingly significant in determining the effectiveness of inclusive practices.

Inclusive education is founded on the principle that every child has the right to participate fully in education regardless of disability or other differences. According to Kinsella and Senior (2008) and Oliver (1990), inclusive education recognizes that children learn differently and

that schools should adjust their structures, teaching methods, and learning environments to accommodate all learners. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities further identifies inclusive education as a fundamental human right and a crucial component of achieving education for all (Gülşah & Sarah, 2020). From this perspective, learning barriers are not viewed as inherent within the child but rather as limitations created by educational systems and practices that fail to respond to learners' needs. Therefore, successful inclusive education requires schools and teachers to create supportive, flexible, and participatory classroom environments that promote equal opportunities for all students. Inclusive education is not merely the physical placement of students with disabilities into regular classrooms; it also involves ensuring that appropriate instructional support, teaching strategies, and social acceptance are provided to enable all learners to succeed academically and socially (Winter, 2006; DfES, 2004).

The concept of inclusive education emphasizes equity, participation, and respect for diversity within the educational process. It seeks to ensure that all learners, regardless of ability or background, receive quality education that addresses their individual strengths and needs. In Nigeria, inclusive education generally refers to the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms alongside their non-disabled peers. This includes students with physical, intellectual, sensory, and learning disabilities, as well as learners with behavioral difficulties and other special educational needs. Additionally, inclusive education extends to marginalized groups such as children from rural communities, low-income households, and minority ethnic backgrounds. The increasing emphasis on inclusive education in Nigeria is partly due to the large number of children with disabilities who remain excluded from formal schooling opportunities. Consequently, integrating learners with disabilities into regular educational settings has become an important strategy for promoting educational access, equality, and social inclusion within the Nigerian educational system.

Despite the growing recognition of inclusive education in Nigeria, its implementation continues to face several significant challenges. Traditionally, special education in Nigeria has largely been based on segregated systems in which students with disabilities are educated separately from their peers without disabilities. Inclusive education, however, requires a transition from this segregated approach toward a more integrated educational system where students with disabilities are educated within mainstream classrooms while receiving the support and accommodation necessary to meet their individual learning needs. This transition requires adequate teacher preparation, accessible learning facilities, instructional materials, supportive school leadership, and sufficient educational funding. Unfortunately, many Nigerian schools continue to experience shortages in infrastructure, teaching resources, and professional training related to inclusive education. Furthermore, negative societal perceptions and discriminatory attitudes toward individuals with disabilities remain major barriers to successful inclusion. These challenges often limit teachers' confidence and willingness to effectively implement inclusive classroom practices.

Teachers play a central role in determining the success of inclusive education because they are directly responsible for creating classroom environments that support the learning and participation of all students. Research has consistently shown that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and their sense of teaching efficacy significantly influence the effectiveness of inclusive classroom practices (Yuen & Westwood, 2001; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Ramberg, 2018). Teachers who possess positive attitudes toward inclusive education are more likely to implement inclusive teaching strategies and promote positive academic and social outcomes for students with disabilities. Similarly, teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy are more

likely to feel confident in their ability to manage diverse classrooms and address the needs of learners with varying abilities. Skrtic (1995) found that teachers with higher efficacy in teaching students with disabilities were more successful in creating inclusive learning environments and supporting students' academic achievement. Conversely, negative teacher attitudes and low levels of teaching efficacy may hinder the successful implementation of inclusion and reduce the quality of educational experiences for students with special needs.

Several studies have highlighted concerns regarding teachers' preparedness for inclusive education. For example, Mastropieri and Scruggs (2000) reported that fewer than one-quarter of teachers believed they were adequately prepared to implement inclusive teaching successfully. Similarly, McConkey and Bhlirgri (2003) found that although many educators were willing to include children with autism in regular classrooms, they often lacked the necessary skills and confidence to meet those students' needs effectively. Researchers such as Carpenter et al. (2005), Martinez (2003), and Sharma et al. (2006) further emphasized that teachers' attitudes and concerns are among the most influential factors affecting the success of inclusive education. Negative attitudes toward inclusion, uncertainty about instructional competence, and limited professional support can significantly hinder teachers' willingness to adopt inclusive practices (Gal, Schreur, & Engel-Yeger, 2010; Cassady, Taylor, & Ringlaben, 2011).

Teacher self-efficacy has also been identified as a major predictor of attitudes toward inclusive education. Weisel and Dror (2006), using the Teacher Efficacy Scale, found that teachers' perceptions of their own instructional competence strongly influenced their attitudes toward inclusion. Teachers who perceive themselves as capable of handling diverse classroom situations are generally more open to inclusive teaching practices and more committed to supporting students with special educational needs. In addition, positive school climates characterized by collaborative leadership, professional autonomy, and cooperative planning have been shown to encourage favorable teacher attitudes toward inclusion. Studies conducted by Sharma, Forlin, and Loreman (2008), Forlin et al. (2006), and Sharma, Moore, and Sonawane (2009) also revealed that factors such as previous interaction with students with disabilities, knowledge of inclusive education policies, and teacher self-esteem contribute significantly to positive perceptions of inclusive practices.

The present study is anchored on Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory, which proposes that individuals' beliefs in their capabilities influence their motivation, behavior, and performance. In the context of inclusive education, teacher self-efficacy refers to teachers' confidence in their ability to effectively teach and support students with diverse learning needs in inclusive classrooms. Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to adopt inclusive teaching practices, persist when facing classroom challenges, and maintain positive attitudes toward inclusion. Therefore, self-efficacy theory provides an appropriate theoretical framework for understanding how teachers' beliefs about their instructional abilities may influence their attitudes toward inclusive education. The theory also highlights the importance of teacher training and professional development in strengthening teachers' competence and confidence for inclusive teaching practices (Winter, 2006).

Given the increasing emphasis on inclusive education in Nigeria and the important role of teachers in ensuring its success, it is necessary to investigate the relationship between teacher efficacy and attitudes toward inclusive education. Understanding these factors may provide valuable insights for policymakers, teacher educators, and school administrators in designing interventions that improve teachers' preparedness and promote successful inclusive classroom practices. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the relationship between teachers' effi-

cacy and attitudes toward inclusive education, determine whether differences exist based on demographic characteristics such as gender, teaching experience, and educational qualification, and assess the extent to which teacher efficacy predicts attitudes toward inclusive classroom practices.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes toward inclusive education in Ondo State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researchers to collect data from a large population and examine existing conditions, perceptions, and relationships among variables without manipulating them. The target population for the study consisted of all in-service teachers working in primary and secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. Participants were required to provide demographic information and complete two standardized questionnaires related to inclusive education.

A total of 500 teachers participated in the study, including 272 teachers (54.4%) from primary schools and 228 teachers (45.6%) from secondary schools. Regarding age distribution, 257 participants (51.4%) were below 30 years of age, 112 participants (22.4%) were between 30 and 35 years old, 100 participants (20%) were within another middle-age category, while 31 participants (6.2%) were older teachers. In terms of educational qualification, 174 participants (34.8%) possessed the National Certificate in Education (NCE), which represents the minimum qualification required for teaching basic education in Nigeria. Additionally, 289 participants (57.8%) held a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree, while 37 participants (7.4%) possessed a master's degree. These demographic characteristics provided important background information for analyzing differences in teacher efficacy and attitudes toward inclusive education.

2.2. Data Collection Methods

Data for this study were collected using two standardized instruments designed to measure teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and their self-efficacy for inclusive teaching practices. The instruments included the Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised (SACIE-R) Scale and the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) Scale.

2.2.1. The Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised (SACIE-R) Scale

The Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised (SACIE-R) Scale developed by Forlin, Earle, Loreman, and Sharma (2011) was used to assess teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. The instrument consisted of 15 items measured on a four-point Likert scale, with total scores ranging from 15 to 60. Higher scores on the scale indicated stronger positive sentiments, attitudes, and concerns regarding inclusive education. The scale comprised three sub-dimensions, namely sentiments, attitudes, and concerns. Each sub-dimension contained five items, with participants obtaining minimum and maximum scores ranging from five to twenty. Previous studies reported Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of 0.88 for the overall scale and 0.86, 0.88, and 0.85 for the three sub-dimensions respectively, indicating that the instrument possesses satisfactory reliability and validity for research purposes.

2.2.2. The Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) Scale

The Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) Scale was used to measure teachers' confidence in their ability to implement inclusive classroom practices effectively. The TEIP consisted of 18 items rated on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). The instrument assessed teachers' beliefs about their capacity to engage all learners, including students with disabilities, in everyday classroom activities. An example item on the scale was: "I know I can construct learning objectives for children with disabilities." Sharma et al. (2012) conducted factor analysis on the TEIP scale using samples from Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, and Singapore and identified three major dimensions: efficacy in inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behavior management. The internal reliability coefficients of the instrument ranged from 0.86 to 0.91 across countries, while the factor internal consistency values ranged between 0.64 and 0.97, demonstrating acceptable psychometric properties.

2.3. Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected in this study were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was employed to examine the significance of the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes toward inclusive education. Multiple Linear Regression analysis was conducted to determine whether teacher self-efficacy significantly predicted teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. In addition, three one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests were performed to investigate differences in teacher efficacy for inclusive practices based on demographic variables, including gender, educational qualification, and age range. These statistical procedures enabled the researchers to test the study hypotheses and determine the relationships and differences among the variables under investigation.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Relationship Between Teachers' Attitudes and Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices

Table 1 presents the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation matrix showing the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and the three subscales of the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) scale: managing behavior, inclusion instruction, and collaboration. The analysis revealed positive relationships among all variables, indicating that teachers with more positive attitudes toward inclusive education also tended to report higher levels of efficacy in implementing inclusive classroom practices.

Specifically, the findings showed a moderate positive correlation between teachers' attitudes and managing behavior ($r = .463$). This suggests that teachers who possess more favorable attitudes toward inclusive education are more confident in their ability to manage classroom behavior effectively in inclusive learning environments. Classroom behavior management is a critical aspect of inclusive education because teachers are expected to address the diverse behavioral and emotional needs of students with different abilities within the same classroom setting. The result therefore implies that positive teacher attitudes may contribute to greater confidence in handling behavioral challenges associated with inclusive classrooms.

Similarly, a moderate positive correlation was found between teachers' attitudes and collaboration ($r = .508$), which was the strongest relationship among the three TEIP subscales. This finding indicates that teachers with positive attitudes toward inclusion are more likely to feel confident in collaborating with colleagues, parents, school administrators, and other pro-

professionals to support students with special educational needs. Effective collaboration is widely recognized as an essential component of successful inclusive education because inclusive practices often require teamwork among multiple stakeholders to ensure that students receive appropriate academic, emotional, and social support. The relatively strong correlation between attitudes and collaboration suggests that cooperative professional relationships may play a particularly important role in shaping teachers' perceptions of inclusive education.

In contrast, the relationship between teachers' attitudes and inclusion instruction was positive but comparatively weaker ($r = .404$). Although this still represents a meaningful association, it suggests that teachers may feel somewhat less confident in their instructional ability to adapt teaching methods, curriculum materials, and classroom activities to meet the needs of diverse learners. Inclusive instruction requires teachers to apply differentiated teaching strategies, individualized support, and flexible assessment methods, which may be challenging without adequate training and professional support. Therefore, the lower correlation in this area may reflect the need for additional teacher preparation and instructional support related to inclusive teaching practices.

The intercorrelations among the TEIP subscales were also notably high. Managing behavior demonstrated a strong positive correlation with collaboration ($r = .862$) and inclusion instruction ($r = .759$), while inclusion instruction was also strongly correlated with collaboration ($r = .783$). These findings indicate that the different dimensions of teacher efficacy for inclusive practices are closely interconnected. Teachers who are confident in one aspect of inclusive practice are likely to feel confident in other aspects as well. For instance, teachers who can effectively manage classroom behavior may also be more capable of collaborating with others and adapting instruction to accommodate diverse learners.

Overall, the findings from Table 1 suggest that teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education are significantly associated with their perceived efficacy for implementing inclusive classroom practices. The positive relationships observed across all TEIP dimensions indicate that enhancing teachers' attitudes toward inclusion may simultaneously improve their confidence in behavior management, instructional adaptation, and collaborative practices. Consequently, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between teachers' efficacy and their attitudes toward inclusive education was rejected. These findings further emphasize the importance of teacher training programs, professional development, and supportive school environments in strengthening both teacher attitudes and efficacy for successful inclusive education implementation.

Table 1. Correlation Matrix Showing Intercorrelations Between Teachers' Attitudes and TEIP Subscales

Variables	Attitude	Managing Behaviour	Inclusion Instruction	Collaboration
Attitude	1.	.463	.404	.508
Managing Behaviour	.463	1.	.759	.862
Inclusion Instruction	.404	.759	1.	.783
Collaboration	.508	.862	.783	1.

Note: All correlations are positive, indicating positive relationships between teachers' attitudes and the TEIP subscales.

3.2. Differences in Teacher Efficacy Based on Demographic Variables

Table 2 presents the results of the one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests conducted to examine whether teacher efficacy for inclusive practices differed according to demographic variables, namely gender, educational qualification, and age range. The analysis was performed

to determine whether these demographic characteristics significantly influenced teachers' confidence in implementing inclusive classroom practices.

The findings revealed that gender did not significantly influence teacher efficacy for inclusive practices, $F(79, 420) = 1.230, p = .104$. Since the significance value exceeded the .05 level of significance, the result indicates that male and female teachers demonstrated relatively similar levels of efficacy toward inclusive education. This suggests that gender may not be a determining factor in shaping teachers' confidence in managing inclusive classrooms, collaborating with stakeholders, or adapting instructional practices to accommodate students with diverse learning needs. The finding implies that both male and female teachers may possess comparable professional capabilities and attitudes regarding inclusive educational practices.

In contrast, educational qualification was found to significantly influence teacher efficacy for inclusive practices, $F(79, 420) = 1.395, p = .021$. Because the p-value was less than the .05 significance level, the result indicates that teachers with different educational qualifications differed significantly in their perceived efficacy toward inclusive education. Teachers with higher educational qualifications may possess greater professional knowledge, stronger pedagogical skills, and broader exposure to inclusive teaching strategies, thereby enhancing their confidence in implementing inclusive classroom practices. This finding highlights the importance of advanced teacher education and professional preparation in improving teachers' competence and efficacy for inclusion.

Similarly, the analysis showed that age range significantly influenced teacher efficacy for inclusive practices, $F(79, 420) = 2.487, p = .001$. The statistically significant result suggests that teachers from different age groups reported varying levels of confidence in implementing inclusive classroom practices. Older or more experienced teachers may have developed greater classroom management skills, instructional adaptability, and collaborative abilities through years of teaching experience, which could contribute to stronger efficacy beliefs. On the other hand, younger teachers may still be developing professional confidence and practical experience in handling diverse classroom situations. This finding suggests that age and teaching experience may contribute meaningfully to teachers' perceptions of their readiness for inclusive education.

Table 2. ANOVA Results Showing Differences in Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices Based on Demographic Variables

Variable	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gender	Between Groups	12.236	79	.155	1.230	.104
	Within Groups	52.906	420	.126		
	Total	65.142	499			
Educational Qualification	Between Groups	36.055	79	.456	1.395	.021*
	Within Groups	137.407	420	.327		
	Total	173.462	499			
Age Range	Between Groups	147.558	79	1.868	2.487	.001*
	Within Groups	315.392	420	.751		
	Total	462.950	499			

Note: Significant at $p < .05$.

Overall, the findings from Table 2 indicate that while gender does not significantly affect teacher efficacy for inclusive practices, educational qualification and age range play important roles in shaping teachers' confidence toward inclusive education. These results emphasize the need for continuous professional development, specialized training, and supportive education-

al policies aimed at strengthening teachers' efficacy for inclusive classroom practices, particularly among less experienced teachers and those with lower educational qualifications. Consequently, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in teacher efficacy for inclusive practices based on demographic variables was partially rejected because significant differences were found for educational qualification and age range but not for gender.

3.3. Predictors of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education

Table 3 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis conducted to determine whether the three subscales of the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP) scale—managing behaviour, inclusion instruction, and collaboration—significantly predict teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. Multiple regression analysis was employed to assess the extent to which each predictor variable contributes to explaining variations in teachers' attitudes toward inclusive classroom practices.

The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 496) = 58.262, p < .001$, indicating that the combined TEIP subscales significantly predicted teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. The model explained approximately 26.1% of the variance in teachers' attitudes ($R^2 = .261$), suggesting that the predictor variables collectively made a meaningful contribution to understanding teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. Although the model does not explain all variations in teacher attitudes, the proportion of explained variance demonstrates that teacher efficacy factors play an important role in shaping attitudes toward inclusive classroom practices.

Among the predictor variables, collaboration emerged as the strongest and only statistically significant predictor of teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education ($\beta = .425, t = 8.853, p < .001$). This finding indicates that teachers who demonstrate higher levels of confidence in collaborating with colleagues, parents, administrators, and other educational professionals are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward inclusive education. Collaboration is widely regarded as a critical component of successful inclusion because inclusive education requires coordinated efforts among multiple stakeholders to support learners with diverse needs effectively. Teachers who are comfortable working collaboratively may feel better supported in managing inclusive classrooms, which in turn strengthens their attitudes toward inclusion. The strong predictive influence of collaboration therefore highlights the importance of teamwork, professional partnerships, and shared responsibility within inclusive educational settings.

Managing behaviour demonstrated a positive but non-significant contribution to teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education ($\beta = .100, t = 1.245, p = .213$). Although teachers who reported stronger behaviour management tended to have more positive attitudes toward inclusion, the relationship was not statistically significant in the regression model. This result suggests that while classroom behaviour management remains an important aspect of inclusive teaching, it may not independently predict teachers' attitudes once other efficacy dimensions, particularly collaboration, are considered. Nonetheless, effective behaviour management remains essential in inclusive classrooms where teachers are expected to address diverse behavioural and emotional needs among learners.

Similarly, inclusion instruction showed a negative but statistically non-significant contribution to teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education ($\beta = -.004, t = -1.205, p = .229$). The result indicates that teachers' confidence in adapting instructional strategies for inclusive teaching did not significantly predict their attitudes toward inclusion within the present mod-

el. The negative coefficient was extremely small and statistically insignificant, suggesting that inclusion instruction had minimal independent influence on teachers' attitudes when examined alongside the other predictor variables. This finding may reflect the challenges teachers experience in adapting instructional methods for diverse learners, particularly in contexts where resources, training, and institutional support for inclusive education are limited.

Overall, the findings from Table 3 demonstrate that teacher efficacy significantly predicts teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education, with collaboration emerging as the most influential factor. The results emphasize the importance of fostering collaborative professional environments in schools to strengthen teachers' confidence and promote more positive attitudes toward inclusion. These findings further suggest that teacher training programs and professional development initiatives should place greater emphasis on collaborative skills, teamwork, and interprofessional cooperation in order to improve teachers' preparedness for inclusive classroom practices. Consequently, the null hypothesis stating that teachers' attitudes would not be significantly predicted by their efficacy for inclusive classroom practices was rejected.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis of TEIP Subscales as Predictors of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education

Regression Model Summary					
R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of Estimate	F-Value	Sig.	
.261	.256	4.086	58.262	< .001	
Regression Coefficients					
Predictors	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Constant	28.369	3.261	—	8.696	< .001
Managing Behavior	.376	.302	.100	1.245	.213
Inclusion Instruction	-1.117	.926	-.004	-1.205	.229
Collaboration	3.238	.366	.425	8.853	< .001*

Note: Collaboration was the only statistically significant predictor of teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education at $p < .05$.

3.4. Differences Between Primary and Secondary School Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Classroom Practices

Table 4 presents the results of the independent samples t-test conducted to compare the attitudes of primary and secondary school teachers toward implementing inclusive classroom practices. The analysis was performed to determine whether teachers at different educational levels differed significantly in their perceptions and attitudes toward inclusive education.

The findings revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of primary and secondary school teachers toward inclusive classroom practices, $t(498) = 1.209$, $p = .227$. Since the significance value exceeded the .05 level, the result indicates that the difference in mean attitude scores between the two groups was not statistically meaningful. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between primary and secondary school teachers' attitudes toward inclusive classroom practices was retained.

Although the difference was not statistically significant, primary school teachers reported a slightly higher mean attitude score ($M = 72.68$, $SD = 20.313$) compared to secondary school teachers ($M = 70.45$, $SD = 20.973$). This finding suggests that primary school teachers may demonstrate somewhat more positive attitudes toward inclusive education than secondary school teachers. However, because the observed mean difference of 2.232 was relatively small

and statistically insignificant, it cannot be concluded that educational level meaningfully influences teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices. The similarity in the attitudes of both groups may indicate that teachers across educational levels share comparable perceptions, experiences, and challenges regarding the implementation of inclusive education in Nigerian schools.

The result may also reflect the growing awareness and acceptance of inclusive education policies among teachers regardless of whether they teach at the primary or secondary level. Both groups of teachers are likely exposed to similar educational reforms, professional expectations, and classroom realities related to inclusion. Furthermore, the finding implies that challenges associated with inclusive education, such as limited resources, inadequate training, and insufficient institutional support, may be experienced similarly across both educational settings. Consequently, teachers at both primary and secondary school levels may develop relatively similar attitudes toward inclusive classroom practices.

These findings contribute to the literature on inclusive education by demonstrating that attitudes toward inclusion are not necessarily dependent on teaching level. Previous studies have often focused on primary school teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, while fewer studies have compared teachers across educational levels. Therefore, the present study provides additional evidence that inclusive education can be supported across different school levels when appropriate teacher preparation, professional development, and institutional support are provided. The findings also suggest that interventions aimed at improving teacher attitudes toward inclusion should target both primary and secondary school teachers equally rather than focusing exclusively on one educational level.

Table 4. Independent Samples t-Test Results for Attitudes of Primary and Secondary School Teachers Toward Implementing Inclusive Classroom Practices

Group Statistics				
School Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Primary	250	72.68	20.313	1.285
Secondary	250	70.45	20.973	1.326

Independent Samples Test				
t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
1.209	498	.227	2.232	1.847

Note: The difference between primary and secondary school teachers' attitudes toward inclusive classroom practices was not statistically significant at $p < .05$.

3.5. Discussion

The findings of this study revealed a significant positive relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes toward inclusive education. This result indicates that teachers who possess higher confidence in their ability to manage inclusive classrooms are more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes toward the implementation of inclusive educational practices. The findings are consistent with earlier studies conducted by Weisel and Dror (2006), Malinen et al. (2012), and Savolainen et al. (2012), which similarly reported positive associations between teacher self-efficacy and attitudes toward inclusive education. Likewise, Avramidis and Norwich (2002) found that positive teacher attitudes significantly contribute to the successful implementation of inclusive education. Similarly, Soodak, Podell, and Lehman (1998) reported that teachers with favorable attitudes toward inclusion generally demonstrate stronger efficacy in implementing inclusive classroom practices. The present findings therefore reinforce the argument that teachers' beliefs about their instructional competence and

their attitudes toward inclusion are closely interconnected and play a critical role in achieving successful inclusive education.

The study also found that gender did not significantly influence teacher efficacy for inclusive practices. This finding suggests that both male and female teachers possess relatively similar levels of confidence in implementing inclusive classroom practices. The result supports previous studies by Avramidis and Kalyva (2007) and Vaz et al. (2016), which similarly reported no significant gender differences in teachers' efficacy toward inclusion. However, the present finding contrasts with earlier studies by Loreman et al. (2005), Romi and Leyser (2006), and Woodcock (2008), which reported gender-related differences in attitudes and efficacy toward inclusive education. The inconsistency in findings across studies may be attributed to differences in educational contexts, teacher preparation systems, and cultural perceptions regarding inclusive education.

In contrast, educational qualification and age range were found to significantly influence teachers' efficacy for inclusive practices. Teachers with higher educational qualifications appeared to possess stronger confidence in implementing inclusive teaching strategies compared to those with lower qualifications. Similarly, older teachers demonstrated higher levels of efficacy for inclusive classroom practices than younger teachers. These findings are consistent with the work of Donika and Naser (2022), who found that teachers with advanced educational qualifications tend to exhibit greater efficacy for inclusive teaching. Likewise, Woodcock, Sharma, Subban, and Hitches (2022) reported that older teachers often display stronger confidence in implementing inclusive practices due to greater teaching experience and classroom exposure. These findings suggest that teacher education and professional experience contribute significantly to teachers' preparedness for inclusive education. Consequently, professional development programs and inclusive education training may be particularly important for younger teachers and those with lower educational qualifications.

Another important finding of this study was that collaboration emerged as the strongest predictor of teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education. This result highlights the importance of collaborative relationships among teachers, school administrators, parents, and other educational stakeholders in supporting successful inclusive practices. Teachers who feel confident in collaborating with others are more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes toward inclusion and to create supportive learning environments for students with diverse needs. The finding aligns with previous research by Ozokcu (2018), which reported a positive relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes toward inclusive education. Similarly, Wang, Zhang, and Zhang (2022) found that teacher engagement positively influences student well-being, while Ruijs and Peetsma (2009) emphasized the importance of effective teacher-student relationships in improving student outcomes. Therefore, fostering collaborative school cultures and strengthening teachers' interpersonal and professional collaboration skills may significantly enhance the successful implementation of inclusive education.

The findings further indicated that there was no significant difference between primary and secondary school teachers' attitudes toward inclusive classroom practices. Although primary school teachers reported slightly higher mean attitude scores than secondary school teachers, the difference was not statistically significant. This result suggests that teachers across different educational levels generally share similar perceptions and attitudes regarding inclusive education. Previous studies have largely focused on primary school teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, with studies by Chanda and Behera (2018), Bindhu and Niranjana (2014), and Bansal (2013) consistently reporting positive attitudes among primary school

teachers. The present study extends the literature by comparing teachers across educational levels and demonstrates that inclusive education is viewed similarly by both primary and secondary school teachers despite differences in instructional methods, curriculum demands, and school structures.

Overall, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of strengthening teachers' efficacy, collaboration skills, and professional competence to improve attitudes toward inclusive education and support the successful implementation of inclusive classroom practices in Nigeria. The results also highlight the need for teacher education institutions, policymakers, and school administrators to provide continuous professional development opportunities, supportive school environments, and adequate educational resources that promote inclusive teaching and learning practices.

3.6. Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study focused exclusively on teachers in Ondo State, Nigeria; therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to teachers in other regions of Nigeria or other countries with different educational systems and cultural contexts. Second, the study relied solely on self-report questionnaires to assess teachers' attitudes and efficacy toward inclusive classroom practices. As a result, responses may have been influenced by social desirability bias, where participants may have provided answers they perceived as socially acceptable rather than reflecting their true beliefs and experiences. Additionally, although the sample size was adequate for statistical analysis, future studies may benefit from larger and more diverse samples drawn from multiple states or regions in Nigeria.

Future research should consider using mixed method approaches that combine quantitative instruments with qualitative methods such as interviews, classroom observations, and focus group discussions to obtain deeper insights into teachers' experiences with inclusive education. Further studies could also investigate the influence of school leadership, cultural beliefs about disability, availability of educational resources, and institutional support on teachers' attitudes and efficacy toward inclusion. In addition, future research may explore students' perspectives and experiences within inclusive classrooms, particularly regarding participation, engagement, academic achievement, and social-emotional well-being. Longitudinal studies examining the long-term effects of inclusive education on students' academic and social outcomes would also provide valuable contributions to the field.

3.7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to improve teachers' attitudes and efficacy toward inclusive classroom practices in Nigeria. First, continuous professional development programs focusing on inclusive education should be organized regularly, especially for younger teachers and those with lower educational qualifications. Such training programs should emphasize behavior management, differentiated instruction, and collaborative teaching strategies. Second, schools should encourage collaboration among teachers, administrators, parents, and specialists to create supportive inclusive learning environments. Third, educational authorities should provide adequate teaching materials, accessible facilities, and flexible curricula that accommodate learners with diverse educational needs. Furthermore, teacher education institutions should integrate inclusive education as a core component of teacher preparation programs to ensure that future teachers acquire the knowledge and skills required for inclusive classroom practices. Finally, regular monitoring and evaluation of inclusive education practices should be conducted to ensure effective im-

plementation and continuous improvement. Through these efforts, schools in Nigeria can create more inclusive educational environments that support the participation, engagement, and success of all learners regardless of their abilities or backgrounds.

4. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes toward inclusive education among primary and secondary school teachers in Ondo State, Nigeria. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between teachers' efficacy and their attitudes toward inclusive classroom practices, indicating that teachers who possess stronger confidence in their instructional and collaborative abilities are more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes toward inclusive education. Collaboration was identified as the strongest predictor of teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, emphasizing the importance of teamwork and professional cooperation in achieving successful inclusive classroom practices.

The study further found that there was no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of primary and secondary school teachers toward inclusive classroom practices. This suggests that teachers across both educational levels generally share similar perspectives regarding inclusive education. Consequently, interventions aimed at improving teachers' attitudes and efficacy for inclusive practices can be implemented across both primary and secondary school settings.

In addition, the findings indicated that educational qualification and age significantly influenced teachers' efficacy for inclusive practices. Older teachers and teachers with higher educational qualifications demonstrated stronger self-efficacy toward inclusive education compared to younger and less qualified teachers. These findings suggest that professional experience and advanced educational preparation contribute positively to teachers' confidence in implementing inclusive classroom strategies. Therefore, targeted professional development programs and inclusive education training may be particularly beneficial for younger teachers and those with lower educational qualifications.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of strengthening teachers' attitudes, efficacy, and collaborative skills in promoting successful inclusive education in Nigeria. Continuous teacher training, supportive school environments, and effective educational policies are essential for developing inclusive learning environments where all learners, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, can participate and succeed academically and socially.

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