

Examining the Issues and Challenges of Special Education Teachers in Gilgit-Baltistan: A Contextual Analysis

Muhammad Hadi Haidari¹, Momal zahra², Asifa³

¹ Ph.D. Scholar in Special Education, Lecturer, Department of Educational Development, Karakoram International University, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. Email: Mhadi578@yahoo.com

² B.Ed. (Hons) Special Education, Department of Educational Development, Karakoram International University, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. Email: zahraamomal19@gmail.com

³ B.Ed. (Hons) Special Education, Department of Educational Development, Karakoram International University, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. Email: zehraasifa4@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: Muhammad Hadi Haidari Email: Mhadi578@yahoo.com

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Abstract

This study examines the issues and challenges faced by special education teachers in Gilgit-Baltistan, focusing on the academic, structural, and socio-cultural factors influencing the quality of special education in the region. Drawing on data from 56 teachers across multiple districts, the research evaluates teachers' perceptions regarding instructional challenges, availability of teaching resources, parental involvement, and cultural attitudes toward disability. A quantitative, descriptive research design was used, employing a structured five-point Likert-scale questionnaire comprising items across four thematic areas: academic barriers, resource availability, home school collaboration, and socio-cultural influences. Descriptive statistics revealed persistent constraints, including limited professional training, inadequate teaching materials (Mean = 2.21), challenges in assessing learners (Mean = 2.39), and insufficient classroom facilities (Mean = 2.86). Parental engagement was reported to be weak, with low levels of participation in educational activities (Mean = 2.41). Cultural beliefs and social stigma also emerged as major barriers, reflected in negative community perceptions toward disability (Mean = 2.32). Independent samples t-test results demonstrated no statistically significant gender differences ($p > .05$) across all variables, indicating that these challenges are systemic rather than gender-specific. Overall, the findings highlight widespread resource shortages, limited institutional support, and cultural constraints that hinder effective special education, underscoring the need for targeted professional development, improved teaching resources, and culturally informed awareness initiatives to strengthen inclusive practices in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Keywords: Special Education, Inclusive Education, Teacher Challenges, Gilgit-Baltistan, Parental Involvement, Teaching Resources, Cultural Attitudes

Introduction

Education is a fundamental right and a cornerstone for social progress, yet for children with diverse learning needs, access to quality education remains uneven. Special education plays a crucial role in supporting children with physical, mental, or emotional disabilities by ensuring that individual

differences are recognized and accommodated. Special education teachers (SPED) are vital to this process as they employ specialized methods, individualized instruction, and adaptive learning materials to help every child reach their potential.

Globally, numerous studies have explored the challenges and support systems influencing special educators. For instance, research in the Philippines by Ma. Barros and Sol Dalonos (2025) revealed that administrative, peer, and parental support systems moderately influenced teacher retention and job satisfaction. However, stakeholder support was found weakest, highlighting the limited post-school opportunities for learners with disabilities. Similarly, Fley and Matronillo (2021) identified a lack of training, inadequate teaching resources, and poor infrastructure as major barriers for SPED teachers in Ilagan City. Their study emphasized that placing children with disabilities in regular classrooms without proper support or resources fails to promote inclusion effectively.

Parallel findings have been reported in Pakistan. Fouzia and Uzma (2024) found that teachers working with visually impaired students in both public and private schools faced acute shortages of assistive materials, lacked formal training, and received little parental involvement. Dr. Fizzah and Fawad (2024) further noted that inadequate teaching materials, weak communication with parents, and insufficient access to technology significantly hampered teachers' ability to adapt lessons for visually impaired learners. Despite these challenges, teachers showed resilience and motivation to improve through improvisation and self-learning.

Within Gilgit-Baltistan, Syed, Almas, and Qurat-ul (2024) conducted a small-scale study involving six teachers at a special education complex. Thematic analysis of interviews revealed the need for enhanced teacher training and better teaching aids such as Braille books and multisensory learning tools. Teachers also stressed the importance of tactile, auditory, and kinetic learning activities for inclusive education success.

Comparable issues are echoed across international contexts. In Malaysia, Azhar and Norshidah (2017) used Maslow's hierarchy of needs to examine SPED teacher challenges and found deficits in teaching aids, low motivation, and limited administrative communication. Meanwhile, Nasreen and Muzafar (2025) in South Punjab reported overcrowded classrooms, limited facilities, and weak parental collaboration as key barriers, though they emphasized that supportive administration and regular training improved teacher morale. Similarly, Muhammad (2023) in Sargodha identified resource gaps, large student-teacher ratios, and negative community attitudes as persistent systemic barriers to effective special education.

Statement of the Problem

In Gilgit-Baltistan, special education teachers confront several challenges that hinder their professional efficiency and the learning outcomes of students with disabilities. These include a lack of formal training, inadequate teaching resources, and minimal parental and administrative support. Many schools lack Braille materials, assistive technologies, and adapted classrooms, while communication gaps between teachers and families further restrict students' progress. Even though teachers demonstrate motivation and commitment, they are constrained by limited institutional backing, leading to burnout and high turnover. Such difficulties mirror global patterns where financial constraints, emotional stress, and inadequate professional development impede effective teaching. Hence, there is an urgent need to investigate these contextual challenges to design targeted interventions for teachers in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Objectives of the Study

- 1- Identify the academic challenges faced by special education teachers in Gilgit-Baltistan.
- 2- Assess the availability of teaching resources and instructional materials.
- 3- Examine the extent of parental involvement in special education.
- 4- Understand how cultural and social attitudes influence special education in the region.

Literature Review

Inclusive education requires that every child, regardless of ability or disability, receives equitable learning opportunities within supportive environments. In Gilgit-Baltistan and similar developing regions, special education teachers face multiple barriers ranging from limited training and scarce resources to weak parental participation and cultural stigmas toward disability. A study in Gilgit District by Muhammad et al. (2025) revealed that general education teachers had low to moderate awareness of disabilities, inclusive practices, and policy frameworks. Urban teachers showed greater understanding than rural counterparts, while academic qualifications made little difference. The authors recommended professional development programs and inclusion-focused workshops to strengthen teachers' preparedness. This section reviews related research thematically based on four objectives: academic challenges, resource availability, parental involvement, and cultural attitudes affecting special education.

1. Academic Challenges Faced by Special Education Teachers

Teaching children with diverse learning needs requires specialized pedagogical skills. Kristel, Ma. Leticia, and Basilan (2024) explored the difficulties elementary teachers faced with students experiencing reading problems. Their qualitative analysis showed that teachers struggled with student engagement, lack of resources, and inadequate professional training. They emphasized individualized approaches, peer support, and positive reinforcement as effective strategies to build reading proficiency. Similarly, Mumpuniarti (2017) examined support for slow learners through classroom observation and focus-group discussions. Despite teachers' efforts to use multiple techniques in language and mathematics, traditional methods proved insufficient. The study highlighted the urgency of developing new instructional models tailored to slow learners' cognitive profiles. In Malaysia, Sithra and Mohd (2025) identified major obstacles to teaching mathematics in remedial programs such as varied student ability, low motivation, and limited resources. Teachers who applied contextual learning and interactive activities achieved better outcomes but still required continuous professional training. A related study by Siti Intan and Hasrul (2023) focused on children with Down syndrome and their numeracy challenges linked to short-term memory deficits. The authors advocated real-life examples and repetitive, practical teaching to enhance understanding. Finally, Sarah, Muhammad, and Faisal (2025) confirmed that literacy instruction for students with disabilities is hindered by overcrowded classes, poor parental support, and inadequate teacher preparation. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that insufficient training, heavy workloads, and lack of targeted methods remain persistent academic barriers for special educators.

2. Availability of Teaching Materials and Resources

Access to appropriate instructional materials plays a decisive role in inclusive classrooms. Mahika et al. investigated how teachers of visually impaired learners used tactile tools such as 3D models and textured graphics to foster tactile literacy and spatial awareness. Although teachers valued these materials, they found them difficult to design and adapt. The study recommended collaborative material creation between students and teachers to enhance independence and inclusion. Maria, Muhammad, and Tajammal (2024) studied differentiated instruction among 346 teachers in South Punjab and found strong support for adaptive methods like multisensory techniques and small-group teaching. However, barriers such as limited time, behavior management issues, and lack of administrative support reduced implementation success. Ismahan and Derya (2022) explored preservice teachers' creation of digital instructional materials for students with disabilities using Web 2.0 tools. The resulting activities significantly improved learning engagement despite infrastructural challenges. Similarly, Helen et al. (2016) described a partnership between a health-science library and a K-12 district, where training sessions

empowered teachers and parents to access reliable information through mobile devices. Nuril Nuzuila (2021) further demonstrated that well-designed learning modules incorporating higher-order thinking tasks can meaningfully improve students' critical-thinking abilities in inclusive classrooms. These studies collectively highlight the importance of innovative, technology-driven, and context-appropriate teaching resources for improving educational outcomes in special education settings.

3. Parental Involvement in Special Education

Parents are essential partners in the success of children with special needs. Irene (2019) found that parents in the Philippines actively supported homework and communication with teachers, though this engagement had limited impact on measurable academic performance, indicating that other factors also shape outcomes. M. V. G. (2022) noted that while parents enthusiastically assist with social and life-skills development, they face challenges in communication and balancing responsibilities, often resulting in emotional stress.

Yosi and Yaffe (2015) showed that authoritative and warm parenting styles, combined with participation in school activities, enhance student achievement in mainstream inclusive classrooms. Siti (2018) demonstrated a strong positive relationship between parental involvement, motivation, and academic success among Indonesian students with special needs. Similar findings were reported by April T. et al. (2022), who observed that high parental participation correlated with supportive parenting behaviors regardless of socioeconomic background.

Further, Wahyuni and Mangunsong (2022) found that parental education level strengthened the relationship between engagement and achievement, while Tehmina (2021) emphasized that in Pakistan, family support intertwined with societal acceptance determines post-school opportunities for youth with hearing impairments. Doriana (2016) and Harry & Rinashe (1997) reaffirmed that constructive collaboration between educators and families fosters better academic and social development, provided parents receive proper guidance and communication from schools.

4. Cultural and Societal Attitudes toward Special Education

Cultural perceptions significantly shape inclusion practices. Ghaleb and Susanne (2021) demonstrated that in Saudi Arabia, teachers' positive attitudes toward inclusion especially when they had relatives with disabilities enhanced their confidence and self-efficacy. Monica and June (2019) highlighted that lack of cultural relevance in teaching often leads to misidentification and exclusion of minority students. Ellen and Samuel (1985) argued that understanding family culture strengthens collaboration and minimizes miscommunication between educators and parents.

In Pakistan, Hamayoun et al. (2024) identified stigma, limited awareness, and low community engagement as major barriers to inclusion, calling for culturally sensitive training and policy reform. Elizabeth (2018) introduced the concept of *cultural reciprocity*, advocating mutual respect and shared understanding between families and educators to improve cross-cultural collaboration. Finally, Preetpal (2016) stressed that addressing cultural bias in testing and instruction is essential to achieving fairness and equity for all learners. Together, these studies reveal that fostering culturally responsive education through empathy, communication, and inclusive community values is vital for transforming perceptions of disability and supporting inclusive education in diverse contexts such as Gilgit-Baltistan.

Research Methodology

To examine the issues and challenges faced by special education teachers in Gilgit-Baltistan, a quantitative research approach was employed. The study method involved a structured questionnaire designed to assess teachers' experiences related to teaching challenges, availability of resources, administrative support, and social barriers in special education settings. A descriptive

survey design was adopted, and data were collected through a standardized five-point Likert-scale questionnaire to obtain measurable insights into teachers' perceptions. The study utilized purposive and convenience sampling techniques, selecting 56 special education teachers from both public and private institutions across various districts of Gilgit-Baltistan. Participants included both male and female teachers who had at least one year of teaching experience and voluntarily participated in the research. This methodology provided a reliable and valid means to identify the key factors influencing the effectiveness of special education in the region.

Analysis and Results

Table 1. Demographic Information of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender of Respondent	Male	24	42.9%
	Female	32	57.1%
	Total	56	100.0%
Age of Respondent	20-30	7	12.5%
	31-40	30	53.6%
	41-50	11	19.6%
	51+ above	8	14.3%
	Total	56	100.0%
District of Respondent	Gilgit	19	33.9%
	Skardu	17	30.4%
	Ghizer	10	17.9%
	Dimer	10	17.9%
	Total	56	100.0%
Teaching Experience	Less than 1 year	4	7.1%
	2-5 years	16	28.6%
	6-10 years	21	37.5%
	More than 10 years	15	26.8%
	Total	56	100.0%
Qualification of Respondent	B.Ed Special Education	25	44.6%
	M.Ed	4	7.1%
	Diploma in Special Ed.	3	5.4%
	Other	24	42.9%
	Total	56	100.0%
Professional Qualification	B.Ed	22	39.3%
	M.Ed	20	35.7%
	Other	14	25.0%
	Total	56	100.0%

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 56 respondents. The majority were female teachers (57.1%), while 42.9% were male. Most participants were between 31–40 years of age (53.6%), indicating a relatively young and active workforce. In terms of district representation, Gilgit had the highest participation (33.9%), followed by Skardu (30.4%). The majority of teachers had 6–10 years of teaching experience (37.5%), reflecting a moderately experienced group. Regarding qualifications, 44.6% held a B.Ed. in Special Education, and 39.3% possessed a professional B.Ed. degree, showing that most respondents were formally trained in the field.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Perceptions on Challenges in Special Education

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
I find it difficult to design lessons suitable for students with varying intellectual abilities	7 (12.5%)	24 (42.9%)	14 (25.0%)	2 (3.6%)	9 (16.1%)	2.68	1.237
There is a lack of appropriate teaching and learning materials for special education.	14 (25.0%)	25 (44.6%)	10 (17.9%)	5 (8.9%)	2 (3.6%)	2.21	1.039
I face challenges in assessing the academic progress of students with special needs.	11 (19.6%)	23 (41.1%)	13 (23.2%)	7 (12.5%)	2 (3.6%)	2.39	1.056
Large class sizes make it difficult to give individual attention to students.	8 (14.3%)	22 (39.3%)	8 (14.3%)	11 (19.6%)	7 (12.5%)	2.77	1.279
Lack of professional training limits my ability to teach effectively.	12 (21.4%)	23 (41.1%)	9 (16.1%)	9 (16.1%)	3 (5.4%)	2.43	1.158
The curriculum does not meet the needs of students with intellectual disabilities.	16 (28.6%)	20 (35.7%)	13 (23.2%)	3 (5.4%)	4 (7.1%)	2.27	1.152
Inadequate classroom facilities affect the quality of teaching.	7 (12.5%)	21 (37.5%)	10 (17.9%)	9 (16.1%)	9 (16.1%)	2.86	1.299
Administrative workloads limit my time for lesson planning and student support.	7 (12.5%)	20 (35.7%)	14 (25.0%)	8 (14.3%)	7 (12.5%)	2.79	1.217
Collaboration among teachers is limited in my school.	11 (19.6%)	19 (33.9%)	7 (12.5%)	10 (17.9%)	9 (16.1%)	2.77	1.388
Lack of parental involvement affects students' academic progress.	16 (28.6%)	22 (39.3%)	8 (14.3%)	3 (5.4%)	7 (12.5%)	2.34	1.297

Table 2 highlights teachers' perceptions of key challenges faced in special education settings. The results show that most teachers agreed they struggle to design lessons for students with diverse intellectual abilities (Mean = 2.68) and face difficulties due to inadequate teaching materials (Mean = 2.21). Assessing students' academic progress (Mean = 2.39) and managing large class sizes (Mean = 2.77) were also reported as major issues. Additionally, limited professional training

(Mean = 2.43) and unsuitable curricula (Mean = 2.27) were noted concerns. Teachers further identified inadequate classroom facilities (Mean = 2.86), heavy administrative workloads (Mean = 2.79), weak teacher collaboration (Mean = 2.77), and low parental involvement (Mean = 2.34) as significant barriers to effective teaching. Overall, the findings indicate that structural, instructional, and resource-related challenges persist in special education across Gilgit-Baltistan.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Perceptions on Cultural and Social Influences on Special Education

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Cultural beliefs in the community affect parent's decisions about educating children with disabilities.	15 (26.8%)	18 (32.1%)	13 (23.2%)	4 (7.1%)	6 (10.7%)	2.43	1.263
Society often views children with disabilities as unable to learn.	12 (21.4%)	19 (33.9%)	14 (25.0%)	8 (14.3%)	3 (5.4%)	2.48	1.144
Negative social attitudes create barriers for children with special needs in accessing education.	14 (25.0%)	20 (35.7%)	15 (26.8%)	4 (7.1%)	3 (5.4%)	2.32	1.097
Some families hide their children with disabilities due to fear of social stigma.	17 (30.4%)	18 (32.1%)	9 (16.1%)	8 (14.3%)	4 (7.1%)	2.36	1.257
Community members often show sympathy instead of acceptance toward children with disabilities.	22 (39.3%)	17 (30.4%)	7 (12.5%)	6 (10.7%)	4 (7.1%)	2.16	1.262
Religious misconceptions sometimes discourage education for children with disabilities.	11 (19.6%)	24 (42.9%)	11 (19.6%)	8 (14.3%)	2 (3.6%)	2.39	1.073
Teacher's attitudes are influenced by the cultural beliefs of the community.	9 (16.1%)	23 (41.1%)	17 (30.4%)	4 (7.1%)	3 (5.4%)	2.45	1.025
Social support from the community helps improve educational access for special children.	13 (23.2%)	16 (28.6%)	16 (28.6%)	7 (12.5%)	4 (7.1%)	2.52	1.191
Discrimination and labeling affect the confidence of children with disabilities.	17 (30.4%)	16 (28.6%)	8 (14.3%)	9 (16.1%)	6 (10.7%)	2.48	1.362
Changing cultural and social attitudes can promote inclusive education in the region.	10 (17.9%)	21 (37.5%)	7 (12.5%)	10 (17.9%)	8 (14.3%)	2.73	1.342

Table 3 illustrates teachers' views on how cultural and social factors influence special education in Gilgit-Baltistan. The findings reveal that many teachers believe community beliefs and negative attitudes affect parents' decisions about educating children with disabilities (Mean = 2.43) and limit inclusive participation (Mean = 2.32). Social stigma and labeling were also seen as barriers (Mean = 2.36 and 2.48). Most respondents agreed that sympathy often replaces true acceptance (Mean = 2.16), and religious misconceptions sometimes discourage education (Mean = 2.39).

Teachers noted that cultural beliefs shape their own attitudes (Mean = 2.45) and that limited social support reduces educational access (Mean = 2.52). However, many acknowledged that changing cultural attitudes could promote inclusion (Mean = 2.73). Overall, the results emphasize that deep-rooted social and cultural perceptions remain a major obstacle to inclusive education in the region.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Perceptions on the Availability of Teaching Resources for Special Education

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Adequate teaching materials are available for students with special needs.	15 (26.8%)	19 (33.9%)	8 (14.3%)	4 (7.1%)	10 (17.9%)	2.55	1.426
My school provides enough teaching aids to meet the needs of special students.	5 (8.9%)	25 (44.6%)	13 (23.2%)	8 (14.3%)	5 (8.9%)	2.70	1.111
The availability of learning materials is consistent throughout the academic year.	12 (21.4%)	23 (41.1%)	11 (19.6%)	6 (10.7%)	4 (7.1%)	2.41	1.156
I have access to a well-equipped resource room for special education students.	9 (16.1%)	24 (42.9%)	13 (23.2%)	7 (12.5%)	3 (5.4%)	2.48	1.079
Lack of teaching resources affects my ability to deliver lessons effectively.	11 (19.6%)	14 (25.0%)	18 (32.1%)	7 (12.5%)	6 (10.7%)	2.70	1.235
The school library has relevant materials for special education teaching.	12 (21.4%)	16 (28.6%)	7 (12.5%)	11 (19.6%)	10 (17.9%)	2.84	1.437
I can easily access digital or online resources for special education teaching.	13 (23.2%)	19 (33.9%)	15 (26.8%)	5 (8.9%)	4 (7.1%)	2.43	1.158
Teachers receive timely support to prepare teaching materials.	11 (19.6%)	17 (30.4%)	11 (19.6%)	5 (8.9%)	12 (21.4%)	2.82	1.428
There is a shortage of specialized textbooks for students with intellectual disabilities.	10 (17.9%)	17 (30.4%)	10 (17.9%)	6 (10.7%)	13 (23.2%)	2.91	1.443

Table 4 summarizes teachers' perceptions regarding the availability of teaching resources for special education. The results indicate that most teachers disagreed that adequate materials and aids are available for students with special needs (Mean = 2.55 and 2.70). Many reported inconsistent access to learning materials throughout the year (Mean = 2.41) and limited availability of resource rooms (Mean = 2.48). Respondents also highlighted a shortage of specialized textbooks (Mean = 2.91) and insufficient digital or online resources (Mean = 2.43). While some teachers acknowledged moderate library support (Mean = 2.84) and occasional assistance in preparing materials (Mean = 2.82), the overall findings suggest that resource scarcity remains a major challenge in delivering effective special education across Gilgit-Baltistan.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Perceptions on Parental Involvement in Special Education

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Parents actively participate in their child's educational activities.	13 (23.2%)	21 (37.5%)	12 (21.4%)	6 (10.7%)	4 (7.1%)	2.41	1.172
Parents regularly meet teachers to discuss their child's progress.	16 (28.6%)	15 (26.8%)	16 (28.6%)	5 (8.9%)	3 (5.4%)	2.41	1.247
Parents show interest in school events related to special education.	9 (16.1%)	17 (30.4%)	17 (30.4%)	10 (17.9%)	3 (5.4%)	2.66	1.116
Many parents are unaware of how to support their child's learning at home.	5 (8.9%)	32 (57.1%)	8 (14.3%)	7 (12.5%)	4 (7.1%)	2.52	1.062
Teachers receive regular support from parents to handle their child's needs.	8 (14.3%)	14 (25.0%)	22 (39.3%)	5 (8.9%)	7 (12.5%)	2.80	1.182
Parents attend parent-teacher meetings organized by the school.	12 (21.4%)	12 (21.4%)	17 (30.4%)	9 (16.1%)	6 (10.7%)	2.73	1.272
Lack of parental involvement affects the learning performance of students with special needs.	15 (26.8%)	15 (26.8%)	17 (30.4%)	5 (8.9%)	4 (7.1%)	2.43	1.189
Parents encourage their children to attend school regularly.	19 (33.9%)	20 (35.7%)	11 (19.6%)	5 (8.9%)	1 (1.8%)	2.09	1.032
School needs to build stronger partnerships with parents for better outcomes.	14 (25.0%)	20 (35.7%)	13 (23.2%)	4 (7.1%)	5 (8.9%)	2.39	1.201

Table 5 presents teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in special education. The findings indicate that most teachers believed parents are not actively engaged in their children's educational activities (Mean = 2.41) and rarely meet teachers to discuss progress (Mean = 2.41). While some parents show moderate interest in school events (Mean = 2.66), many lack awareness of how to support learning at home (Mean = 2.52). Teachers also reported limited parental support in addressing students' needs (Mean = 2.80) and low attendance at parent-teacher meetings (Mean = 2.73). Moreover, lack of parental involvement was seen as negatively affecting students' performance (Mean = 2.43). Overall, the results highlight weak home-school collaboration, suggesting the need to strengthen partnerships between schools and parents to improve learning outcomes for children with special needs.

Table 6. Independent Samples t-Test Results for Gender Differences in Teachers' Perceptions on Key Educational Factors

Variable	Gender	Mean	t-value	df	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
Academic Challenges	Male	2.46	-1.31	54	0.196	-0.39, 0.08
	Female	2.62				
Availability of Teaching Resources	Male	2.62	-0.30	54	0.764	-0.38, 0.28
	Female	2.67				
Parental Involvement	Male	2.57	1.05	54	0.299	-0.12, 0.38
	Female	2.44				
Cultural and Societal Attitudes	Male	2.50	0.70	54	0.489	-0.24, 0.49
	Female	2.38				

Table 6 shows the results of the independent samples *t*-test comparing male and female teachers across four key variables: academic challenges, availability of teaching resources, parental involvement, and cultural or societal attitudes. The results indicate no statistically significant gender differences in any of the variables ($p > 0.05$). Both male and female teachers reported similar perceptions regarding the challenges and factors influencing special education in Gilgit-Baltistan. This suggests that gender does not play a significant role in shaping teachers' views on these educational issues.

Summary

The study "Examining the Issues and Challenges of Special Education Teachers in Gilgit-Baltistan: A Contextual Analysis" investigates the multifaceted barriers confronting special education teachers in the region. It highlights the lack of professional training, insufficient teaching materials, minimal parental involvement, and negative societal attitudes as primary obstacles affecting the quality of education for children with disabilities. Quantitative data collected from 56 teachers across multiple districts reveal that most educators struggle to design suitable lessons, assess diverse learners, and adapt curricula due to limited resources and institutional support. Additionally, the shortage of assistive technologies, digital tools, and specialized materials, coupled with high administrative workloads, further constrains teachers' effectiveness. These structural and instructional challenges align with findings from other developing contexts, demonstrating that systemic limitations hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education. The analysis also emphasizes that cultural beliefs and social stigma significantly influence educational participation and community acceptance of children with disabilities. Many teachers reported that negative attitudes, labeling, and religious misconceptions continue to impede inclusion, while parental engagement remains weak due to low awareness and limited collaboration with schools. However, respondents expressed optimism that changing cultural perceptions and improving teacher parent partnerships could strengthen inclusive practices. Statistical tests revealed no significant gender-based differences in teachers' perceptions, suggesting that both male and female educators experience similar challenges. Overall, the study underscores the urgent need for targeted professional development, enhanced resource provision, and culturally responsive awareness programs to empower special education teachers and promote equitable learning opportunities in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that special education teachers in Gilgit-Baltistan face considerable professional and structural challenges that mirror those reported globally in developing regions. The quantitative results demonstrate that teachers struggle with inadequate training, limited access to teaching materials, and minimal institutional support. The mean scores across key variables such as lesson design, assessment, and availability of resources indicate that teachers often rely on improvisation rather than structured pedagogical strategies. This aligns with prior studies by Fouzia and Uzma (2024) and Mumpuniarti (2017), which highlighted that insufficient training and resource shortages hinder teachers' ability to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. The lack of specialized facilities, resource rooms, and digital tools in Gilgit-Baltistan reflects the broader issue of inequitable distribution of educational infrastructure between urban and rural areas.

Parental involvement emerged as another major concern. The study found that parents rarely meet teachers, show limited participation in school activities, and often lack awareness of how to support their children at home. This limited engagement weakens the home-school partnership, which is vital for improving learning outcomes. These results are consistent with Siti (2018) and Tehmina (2021), who emphasized that active parental participation enhances motivation, communication, and academic success among children with special needs. In Gilgit-Baltistan's context, low parental awareness can be linked to cultural beliefs, economic pressures, and limited literacy levels, which restrict families from playing a proactive role in inclusive education. Strengthening family-school collaboration through regular workshops and community engagement programs could therefore bridge this gap.

Cultural and social attitudes were also found to have a profound influence on special education practices. Teachers reported that social stigma, labeling, and religious misconceptions discourage parents from enrolling their children with disabilities in schools. The perception of disability as a social burden rather than a difference in ability remains widespread. These findings support Hamayoun et al. (2024) and Ghaleb and Susanne (2021), who observed that societal acceptance and empathy are essential for fostering inclusion. The study's results further confirm that when teachers themselves are influenced by community beliefs, it can perpetuate discriminatory practices unintentionally. Thus, awareness campaigns and culturally responsive teacher training programs are essential to changing mindsets and promoting acceptance.

Interestingly, the independent samples t-test revealed no significant gender differences in teachers' perceptions across all key variables. Both male and female teachers reported facing similar academic, resource, and cultural challenges, suggesting that these issues are systemic rather than gender-specific. This outcome implies that interventions should focus on institutional reform, equitable resource allocation, and continuous professional development rather than gender-targeted measures.

The discussion highlights that the challenges in special education within Gilgit-Baltistan are interconnected limited training, inadequate resources, weak parental collaboration, and restrictive cultural norms collectively hinder inclusive practices. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-layered approach involving policymakers, school administrators, parents, and the broader community. Initiatives such as capacity-building workshops, the provision of assistive technologies, and the integration of inclusive values in teacher education curricula could significantly improve the quality and accessibility of special education. By fostering a culture of acceptance and providing teachers with the necessary tools and support, Gilgit-Baltistan can move closer to realizing equitable and inclusive education for all learners.

Recommendations

1- Expand Professional Training for Special Education Teachers

The study revealed that teachers struggle with lesson design, assessment, and adapting instruction due to limited training. Regular professional development programs, short courses, and disability specific pedagogical training should be prioritized to strengthen teachers' instructional competence.

2- Ensure Adequate Teaching and Learning Resources

Severe shortages of teaching materials, assistive devices, tactile aids, Braille books, and digital resources were reported. Schools must be equipped with resource rooms, multisensory tools, and specialized textbooks to support effective teaching for children with disabilities.

3- Strengthen Parental Engagement and Awareness

Findings showed weak parental involvement and limited understanding of how to support learning at home. Schools should organize parent-training sessions, awareness workshops, and regular communication forums to encourage active home-school collaboration.

4- Improve Classroom Infrastructure and Reduce Administrative Burden

Teachers highlighted inadequate facilities and heavy workloads. Upgrading classrooms, ensuring accessible learning spaces, and reducing administrative tasks will allow teachers more time for lesson planning and student support.

5- Launch Community Awareness and Anti-Stigma Campaigns

Cultural beliefs, social stigma, and negative attitudes toward disability emerged as major barriers. Community-based awareness programs involving parents, local leaders, and media can help change perceptions and promote inclusive values.

6- Develop Inclusive Curriculum and Flexible Assessment Practices

The existing curriculum does not fully cater to students with intellectual and physical disabilities. Introducing simplified, functional, and individualized curriculum models, along with flexible assessment techniques, will support meaningful learning for diverse learners.

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