

Understanding Student Perceptions and Preferences for Teachers' Feedback in Inclusive Classrooms

B. UMESHKUMAR SHARMA* AND M. UGIN ROSITTA**

Abstract

The aim of this research is to explore students' perceptions and preferences for teacher feedback practices in inclusive classrooms. Participants of this study are students of Grades VI–VIII from Kendriya Vidyalaya schools in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. To address the research questions and hypotheses in this survey study, three different sets of data analysis were carried out using SPSS 21. Results of this study generally showed that perception and preference of female students and non-CwSN students had positively significant relationships. Also found that teachers praised female students more than male students, and the majority of students, including CwSN, prefer to receive feedback by emphasising mistakes and providing detailed, step-by-step instructions for correcting them. The study's findings have major implications for teachers working in inclusive classrooms, including the necessity to provide a detailed process, considering the time for feedback, balance among students, and mode of feedback.

INTRODUCTION

Feedback influences students' emotions and self-esteem. To improve, students must understand teachers' feedback. Whether they accept feedback is determined by

students' perception and attitude (Putri et al., 2021). In this study, the researcher examined student perceptions of teachers' feedback in inclusive classrooms.

*Assistance Professor in Special Education, Department of Education, North East Regional Institute of Education, National Council of Educational Research and Training, Umiam, Meghalaya.

**Assistance Professor and (I/C) Head, Department of Education, University of Madras.

TEACHERS' FEEDBACK

The formative evaluation process is not complete without feedback, which is used to modify and enhance future activities based on the results of current actions (Brookhart, 2017; Dahal, 2016).

Teachers' feedback is the information delivered by the teacher on how well students grasp and learn in order to bridge the gap between their current performance and their learning goals (Guo, 2020; Hattie and Timperley, 2007). It is an important part of promoting learning (Wahyuni, 2017) and it can be any information, comment or remarks provided to students regarding their performance, such as assignments, homework, project work, practical, answering a question, engaging in an activity, unit tests, examinations, etc.

Student perception

Perception is the process of selecting, organising, and interpreting information based on our past experiences (Widianingsih, 2019). According to Cherry (2022), the sensory experience of the world is perception, which requires both perceiving contextual stimuli and responding to those stimuli. Ballinger (2019) explained perception as the mental impression of how we understand and/or interpret other people, events, and the environment around us based on our past experiences, our personalities, and values. Springer (2021) suggested that understanding students' perceptions of teacher

feedback is a core part of ensuring student success. Although students' perceptions of teacher feedback are still not fully understood, they tend to interpret feedback differently from teachers (Springer, 2021; Lowe and Shaw, 2019).

Student preference

Preference is the act of selecting one option above another; in other words, it is the sensation of choosing the most preferable one, such as favouring personal interaction over written comments. The teacher provides a list of instructions for the students to follow as feedback, but sadly, this practice typically places more emphasis on telling pupils what to do rather than on helping them learn (Treglia, 2008). Feedback should provide students with an opportunity to take steps that will improve their skills (Ma, 2018). Additionally, Song et al. (2017) emphasised the importance of future studies to gain a better understanding of students' feedback preferences.

Inclusive classroom

Inclusive education is defined as "a system of education wherein students with and without disabilities learn together, and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities" (Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, p. 3). In the present study, the same approach is adopted and an inclusive classroom is defined

as one in which students with and without disabilities learn together, and in which the teaching and learning process is suitably adapted to meet the learning requirements of different categories of students with disabilities.

Children with Special Needs (CwSN)

‘Special needs’ is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of conditions and diagnoses, from mild to severe, temporary to permanent. They may have developmental delays, medical issues, psychiatric issues, and/or congenital issues (Terri, 2020). According to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, students with SEN are identified by the 21 benchmark disabilities. In this study, the term ‘students with special needs’ refers to students who fall under any of the 21 benchmark disabilities identified under the RPWD Act, 2016, irrespective of their severity and other conditions.

Overview of Related Researches

Teacher feedback helps students prevent themselves from repeating earlier mistakes. Avoiding past errors and enhancing learning abilities are crucial to academic success for both teachers and students (Chokwe, 2015). Feedback can assist students in recognising and evaluating information regarding their abilities, potentially increasing their performance in upcoming tasks. This indicates that feedback

is necessary to ensure students’ continued progress in their learning (Black and Wiliam, 2018; Putri et al., 2021).

Studies, including those by Walls and Eby (2020) and subsequent research, identify gender-related differences in how students perceive feedback. This emphasises the importance of adapting feedback to account for individual characteristics. The inclusion of studies ranging from Lois R. Harris Brown, Harris and Harnett’s (2014) exploration of New Zealand students’ feedback reception to Marberry’s (2019) investigation of middle school students’ preferences emphasises the need for a nuanced and context-specific approach of feedback delivery in inclusive classrooms.

Researchers Selvaraj, Azman, and Wahi (2021) noted that if students can’t hear and interpret feedback, they won’t be able to plan their next course of action, as they won’t understand the feedback’s gist. Thus, they’ll ignore the advice and reject the feedback, thinking it’s not relevant to their present situation. Furthermore, they also reported that a number of studies have shown that inappropriately offered constructive feedback can have negative effects on the students.

The feedback perceptions of students are difficult to comprehend. Despite the fact that student feedback opinions are influenced by their academic performance and other factors, female students perceived

feedback as more effective than male students did. Therefore, researchers Walls and Eby (2020), as mentioned by Springer (2021), Taggart and Laughlin (2017), and Carvalho et al. (2014), noted that there is still more to examine regarding the perceptions of students, and how individual and situational variables of learners may relate to or influence their feedback perceptions, as well as how these perceptions relate to learning. This is what led to the formulation of the problem in this study.

Need and Significance of the Study

Although the majority of students desire sincere, direct, and constructive feedback from teachers, individual perspectives vary, some students desire positive reinforcement from feedback (Harris, Brown and Harnett, 2014). Researchers (Carvalho, Santos, Conboy, and Martins, 2014) noted that only a few recent empirical studies have examined how students perceive feedback. Inadequate research has been conducted on students' understanding of the feedback they receive and the emotions associated with it (Harris, Brown, and Harnett, 2014).

In India, there are very few research studies on students' perceptions of and preferences for teachers' feedback. For many parents and teachers' in India, educating children with special needs is a challenge. In India, there

are several laws that protect their rights. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act of 2009 guarantees all children the right to free and compulsory primary education, access to schools, and barrier-free learning. The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 recommends a series of policies and schemes to facilitate the integration of children with special needs into mainstream education. A significant portion of its objectives align with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act of 2016. The Teacher Self-Assessment Rubric and Performance Indicators for Elementary School Teachers (PINDICS) 2013, facilitates teachers' inclusive practices by allowing them to provide feedback to students in order to improve learning (Grimes, et al., 2021). Kendriya Vidyalaya schools in India are a model of social inclusion (Kulkarni, 2012). However, there is very limited evidence on influence or effectiveness of teachers' feedback practice in inclusive classrooms including Kendriya Vidyalaya schools. This study aimed to address these identified gaps by examining the current teachers' feedback practices, student perceptions and preferences in inclusive classrooms.

Research question

1. To what extent do students in inclusive classrooms perceives teacher feedback?

2. In an inclusive classroom, how do students like to receive teacher feedback?
3. What is the relationship between student perception and preference for teachers' feedback in an inclusive classroom?

HYPOTHESES

H₁: There will not be any significant differences between how students perceive teachers' feedback in inclusive classrooms?

H₂: There will be no significant difference between students' preferences for teachers' feedback in inclusive classrooms?

METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed a survey method to address the research questions. For data collection, a self-response questionnaire was developed for students with the aim of gathering information on their perceptions and preferences of teachers' feedback in inclusive classrooms.

Participants

The present research investigated student perceptions and preferences regarding teachers' feedback in inclusive classrooms. A total of 576 students (294 males, 282 females; 549 non-CwSN, 27 CwSN) in Grades VI–VIII from Kendriya Vidyalaya schools in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, were selected using a random sampling method for this study.

Participants Characteristics

Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p < 0.05$) showed that the responses on all questions under the domain perception and preference were approximately not normally distributed with skewness of -0.678 ($SE = 0.102$, $z = -6.65$) and kurtosis of 1.811 ($SE = 0.203$, $z = 8.92$). Consequently, based on these findings, the researcher decided to employ a non-parametric statistical approach for further calculations to test the hypotheses.

Tool

Student perception and preference of teachers' feedback were measured using the questionnaire 'Student Perspectives on Teachers' Feedback' developed by the researcher. The questionnaire has seven subscales under two domains—perception (legibility, timing, valence and presentation) and preference (audience, mode, and amount). The questionnaire has 10 items, each of which is rated on a 4-point scale [(4 = Always and 1 = Never, for perception) and (4 = Very True and 1 = Not True, for Preference)]. Table 1 displays sample questionnaires as well as descriptive and internal consistencies for all scales.

Data Collection

All students voluntarily responded to the questionnaire. In this survey research, all participants were recruited randomly and given written information regarding the aim of

the study and the procedures to be followed before data collection began. They were given the opportunity to provide their informed consent after being informed that the collected data would only be used for research and that anonymity would be maintained. The researcher, along with a volunteer teacher assigned by the school authority, provided assistance to students who had any uncertainties or confusion about the statements or terms. However, they refrained from offering suggestions or hints that might have influenced the students' responses. The questionnaire typically

took each participant 8 to 10 minutes to complete, and the responses were collected immediately.

Data analysis

Three separate sets of data analysis using SPSS 21 were performed in order to address the research questions and hypotheses. First, descriptive analysis was used to provide a numerical summary of the responses regarding student perception and preference of teachers' feedback. Second, to examine differences in gender and student category, four different Mann-Whitney U tests were

Table 1
Internal consistency coefficients and descriptive statistics for the domains of students' perception and preference of teachers' feedback measured in this study

Scale	Sample Questionnaire	M	SD	Cronbach's α
Perception				
Legibility	It is difficult for me to understand my teacher's feedback.	1.87	0.79	0.728
Timing	When I need, my teacher does not provide feedback.	1.59	0.77	0.731
Valence	Teacher praises me by describing what I did well.	2.78	1	0.724
Presentation	My teacher shows my errors.	1.72	1	0.715
Preference				
Audience	I want to receive feedback from my teacher by talking in individually.	3.14	0.94	0.738
Mode	I want to receive written feedback from my teacher.	2.66	1.11	0.732
Amount	I want my teacher to show me how to correct my errors step by step in detail.	3.57	0.71	0.718

**The sample questionnaire*

employed. Third, Spearman Rank-Order Correlations were employed to examine the relationship across the gender, category and domains.

RESULTS

Differences in Student Perception of Teachers' Feedback

Summary from descriptive analysis of responses from students (male, female, non-CwSN and CwSN) on perception for teachers' feedback in inclusive classroom is shown in Figure 1. Legibility of teachers' feedback is observed mostly with Frequently (67.7 per cent) and

Always (17.3 per cent) which shares around 85 per cent for male students, Frequently (70.2 per cent) and Always (23.8 per cent) which shares around 94 per cent for female students. Similarly, for students with non-CwSN, it observed Frequently (69.6 per cent) and Always (20.2 per cent) which shares around 89.8 per cent, and Frequently (55.6 per cent) and Always (25.9 per cent) which shares around 81.5 per cent for CwSN students. In feedback presentation, it observed Sometimes (30.75 per cent) and Never (22.95 per cent) which shares 53.7 per cent for male students, Sometimes (26.95 per cent) and

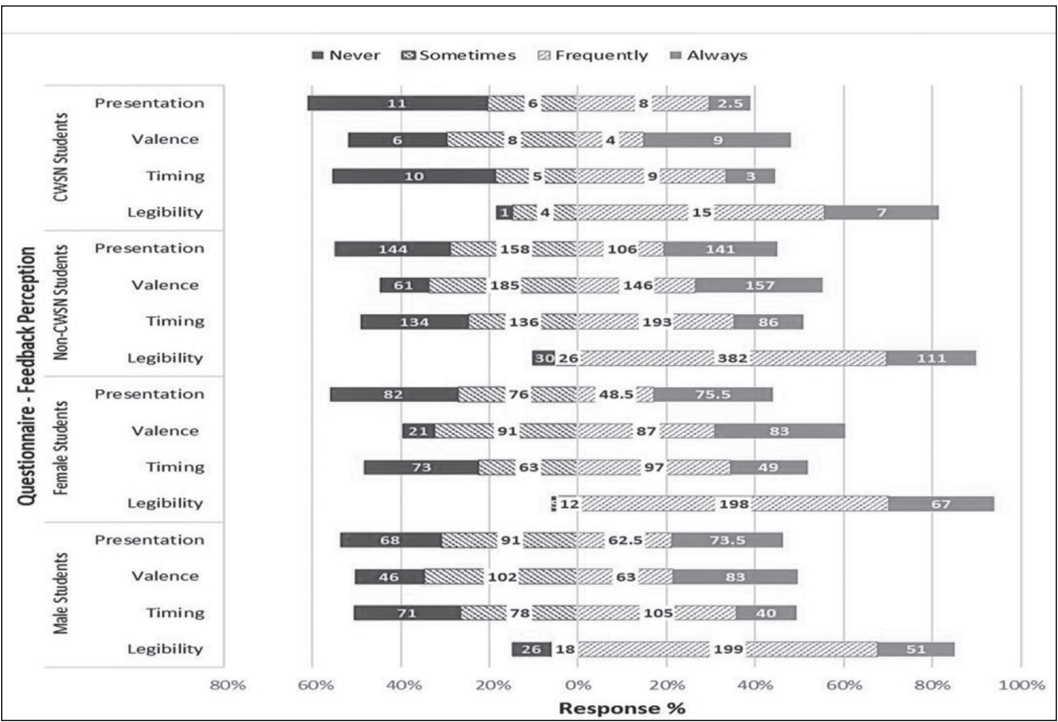


Figure 1: Students Response on Perception of Teachers' Feedback in Inclusive Classroom, by Gender and Category

Never (29.05 per cent) which shares 56 per cent for female students, Sometimes (28.75 per cent) and Never (26.25 per cent) which shares 55 per cent for non-CwSN students, and Never (40.7 per cent) and Sometimes (20.35 per cent) which shares 61.05 per cent for CwSN students.

In feedback timing, it is observed Sometimes (18.5 per cent) and Never (37 per cent) which shares 55.5 per cent for CwSN students, while other groups of male, female, and non-CwSN students are seen distributing half of their responses to each side (Always and Frequently, and Sometimes and Never). In feedback valence, it is observed Frequently (30.9 per cent) and Always (29.4 per cent) which shares 60.3 per cent for female students, while other groups of male, non-CwSN, and CwSN students are seen distributing half of their responses to each side (Always and Frequently, and Sometimes and Never).

In order to determine whether there are any differences in how male and female students, non-CwSN students, and CwSN students perceive teacher feedback in inclusive classrooms, the Mann-Whitney U test was used. The results indicate insignificant difference between male ($N = 294$, $Mdn = 2.40$) and female ($N = 282$, $Mdn = 2.40$) students, ($U = 39788.50$, $p = 0.40$, $z = -0.84$, $r = 0.035$), and between Non-CwSN ($N = 549$, $Mdn = 2.40$) and CwSN ($N = 27$, $Mdn = 2.60$) students, ($U = 6533.00$,

$p = 0.29$, $z = -1.05$, $r = 0.044$). The result support the null hypothesis (H_1). In conclusion, there is strong evidence that perception of teacher feedback in inclusive classrooms is not differed between male and female students, and non-CwSN and CwSN students.

Differences in Student Preference for Teachers' Feedback

Figure 2, show a summary of descriptive analysis of responses from students (male, female, non-CwSN, and CwSN) on preference of teacher feedback in inclusive classrooms. Amount of teachers' feedback is observed Very True (45 per cent) and True (26.3 per cent) which shares around 71.3 per cent for male students, Very True (42.3 per cent) and True (33.1 per cent) which shares around 75.4 per cent for female students, Very True (43.83 per cent) and True (29.3 per cent) which shares around 73.13 per cent for non-CwSN students, Very True (40.73 per cent) and True (20.97 per cent) which shares around 61.7 per cent for CwSN students. In feedback mode, it is observed Not True (27.2 per cent) and Somewhat True (27.9 per cent) which shares around 55.1 per cent for male students, Not True (30.5 per cent) and Somewhat True (29.1 per cent) which shares around 59.6 per cent for female students, Not True (29.1 per cent) and Somewhat True (28.8 per cent) which shares around 57.9 per cent for non-CwSN students, Very True (40.7 per cent) and True (14.8 per cent) which shares

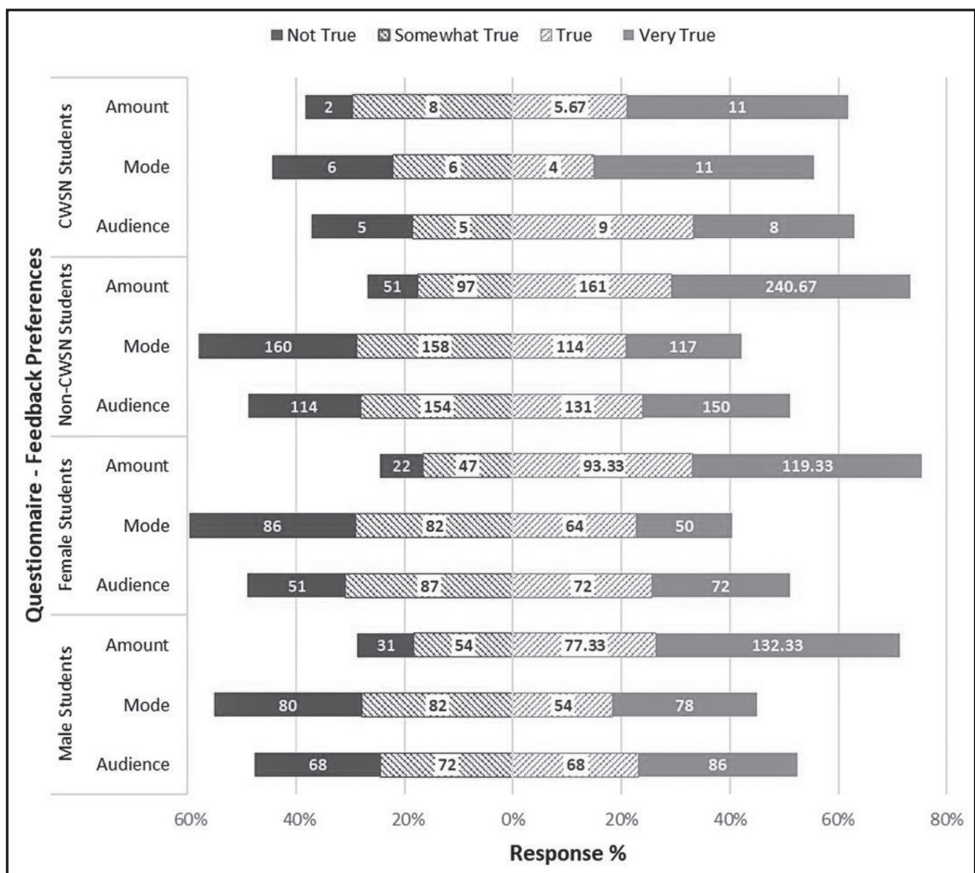


Figure 2: Student's Response on Perception of Teachers' Feedback in Inclusive Classroom, by Gender and Category

around 55.5 per cent for CwSN students. For feedback audience, Very True (29.6 per cent) and True (33.3 per cent) which shares around 62.9 per cent for CwSN students, while other groups of males, female and non-CwSN students are seen distributing half of their responses to each side (Very True and True, and Somewhat True and Not True).

Male and female students, non-CwSN students and CwSN students were compared using the

Mann-Whitney U test to see if their preferences for teachers' feedback in inclusive classrooms differed. The results indicate insignificant difference between male ($N = 294$, $Mdn = 2.80$) and female ($N = 282$, $Mdn = 2.80$) students, ($U = 41081.50$, $p = 0.85$, $z = -0.19$, $r = 0.008$), and between Non-CwSN ($N = 549$, $Mdn = 2.80$) and CwSN ($N = 27$, $Mdn = 2.80$) students, ($U = 6681.00$, $p = 0.38$, $z = -0.87$, $r = 0.036$). The result support the null hypothesis (H2). In

conclusion, there is strong evidence that preference for teacher feedback in inclusive classrooms is not differed between male and female students, and non-CwSN and CwSN students.

Relationship Between Students' Perception and Preference for Teachers' Feedback in Inclusive Classroom

Spearman's rank-order correlations were run to examine the relationships between perception and preference of students (females, males, non-CwSN and CwSN). Result reveals that there were positive and significant correlations between perception and preference of female students, $\rho = 0.15$, $n = 282$, $p = 0.012$, whereas insignificant correlations between perception and preference of male students, $\rho = 0.101$, $n = 294$, $p = 0.085$, and, there were positive and significant correlations between perception and preference of non-CwSN students, $\rho = 0.126$, $n = 549$, $p = 0.003$ while there were insignificant correlations between perception and preference of CwSN students, $\rho = 0.129$, $n = 27$, $p = 0.521$.

DISCUSSION

Difference in Perception

The results suggest that most students are able to understand the feedback provided by their teachers. However, more CwSN students claimed that their teachers did not provide detailed information about their performance, including where they made mistakes and how to

improve. This claim was also made by other groups. Furthermore, this could be explained by the fact that CwSN students receive less feedback from their teachers compared to their non-CwSN counterparts. Feedback should always be given to students while they are still engaged with the subject, as this helps them use it effectively (Brookhart, 2008). In a slight deviation from this, the results show that feedback was provided on time to only about half of the students. This may lead to feelings of disappointment and being overlooked by the teacher (Brookhart, 2008). The results also suggest that teachers praised female students more than male students, which may be attributed to the fact that female students often study more diligently (Huang, 2013). Therefore, teachers may prefer to compliment them more for their work and performance rather than criticise them for their behaviour (Guo and Zhou, 2021). Moreover, CwSN students receive less positive feedback from their teachers compared to their non-CwSN counterparts.

Difference in Preference

Brookhart (2008) suggested that specific feedback is best delivered individually, and if it also benefits the group, it saves time. According to the results, more CwSN students prefer to receive feedback in an individual situation, while other groups show a slightly higher preference for individual feedback over group feedback. Pratiwi (2013) noted that

students appreciate feedback both verbally and in writing as it helps them understand their mistakes. In support of this, the present study's results demonstrate that students prefer both oral and written feedback from teachers. However, after receiving oral feedback on their mistakes from their teacher, some students felt embarrassed in front of their classmates (Pratiwi, 2013). This pattern was observed with CwSN students, who preferred written feedback, even in individual situations. Students should be given the opportunity to enhance their abilities as a result of their feedback (Ma, 2018).

According to the findings, the majority of students, including CwSN, prefer feedback that highlights errors and demonstrates how to correct them step by step in detail. They favor receiving comprehensive information about their performance rather than hints or judgments from teachers. Instead of simply offering directions (Treglia, 2008), the results suggest that teachers should provide specific procedures for correcting errors.

Implications on Feedback Practice for Inclusive Classroom

The findings of the study suggest important implications for teachers instructing in inclusive classrooms. Many students did not receive detailed feedback on their errors, resulting in uncertainty about how to correct them. Therefore, teachers should

provide a detailed, step-by-step process whenever possible. Students should always be given feedback while they are still processing the concept, as this helps them use it effectively. Female students were complimented more often than male students, assuming that they studied more, while CwSN students received less positive feedback from their teachers, which may have discouraged them and left them uncertain about their progress. Therefore, when delivering feedback to students in an inclusive classroom, there must be a balance that is both constructive and encouraging. It has been observed that after receiving oral feedback from their teacher on their errors, CwSN students felt uncomfortable in front of their peers and preferred written and positive feedback.

CONCLUSION

The researcher attempted to understand the perception and preferences of students regarding their teachers' feedback in an inclusive classroom. The findings of this study generally indicated that there were positive and significant correlations between the perception and preference of female students and non-CwSN students. Additionally, the study shows that there were no significant differences among students in their perception and preferences for teacher feedback in the inclusive classroom.

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