



## Challenges Faced by Students with Physical Impairments in Gilgit-Baltistan: A Parental Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the challenges faced by students with physical impairments in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan, from the parental perspective. Despite national and international policies advocating for inclusive education, the implementation in remote regions remains insufficient. Through a quantitative research design involving 65 parents, the study identifies academic, social, infrastructural, and attitudinal barriers that hinder the educational participation of children with physical impairments. Key findings highlight the lack of trained teachers, inadequate school infrastructure, and limited access to assistive technologies as major academic challenges. Socially, children face exclusion, bullying, and low self-esteem, exacerbated by negative societal attitudes and misconceptions about disability. Additionally, physical barriers such as inaccessible classrooms, lack of ramps, and poor transportation further limit educational access. The study emphasizes the need for improved teacher training, infrastructure upgrades, and stronger policy enforcement to ensure inclusive and equitable education for children with physical impairments in Gilgit-Baltistan. The findings underscore the importance of a multifaceted approach to overcoming barriers and promoting inclusion in the region's educational system.*

## Introduction

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) is the mountainous area in northern Pakistan and consists of about 80,000 people with disabilities, which is approximately 4 percent of the total population (Israr, 2024). The unique topography of the region, the poor climatic conditions, and the lack of infrastructure

contribute to a further complication among the physically impaired students who want to gain access to an educational institution. The presence of these geographical and environmental limitations renders the accessibility of school buildings to be built and maintained as highly challenging, which means the restricted mobility and school attendance (Abbas et al., 2024). Although the introduction of policies on inclusive education, such as the Gilgit-Baltistan Education Strategy (20152030) and the GB Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2019) took place, the policy-implementation gap is still large (Khalid and Yaseen, 2023). Even though global efforts, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2011), support the idea that the provisions of equal access to education should be implemented, real practice in remote areas such as GB is still wanting.

The barriers in the educational settings of GB are very social and infrastructural factors that have great impact on the inclusion of children with disabilities. Rural schools do not have the necessary facilities, including ramps, convenient washrooms, and assistive technologies that are essential to students with mobility impairments (Baig, Ajmal, and Khan, 2025). On the other hand, urban cities are comparatively better equipped in terms of access to educational resources and opportunities of professional development of teachers (Hussain, 2012). This disparity of resources continues to create disparity in education. The number of assistive devices, wheelchairs, and special learning materials is also inadequate, which restricts the academic opportunities and autonomy of learners with physical disabilities even further (Safdar, 2019). This has led to the fact that most families find it difficult to ensure their children continue receiving formal education and the rate of school dropouts is high among physically challenged learners.

The other significant thing is the inadequacy of professionally trained teachers who are capable of handling inclusive classrooms. The programs that cover teacher education in the area do not tend to include a compulsory unit about the disability-inclusive pedagogy, which results in the lack of being prepared (Abbas et al., 2024). Research carried out in GB has shown that general education teachers have little knowledge about adaptive teaching strategies and the inclusion of classrooms (Haideri and Parveen, 2025). Even early childhood teachers complain of weak institutional support, insufficient professional training, and lack of resources to meet the various needs of the learners (Bano, Qutoshi, and Jalani, 2024). As a result, students with disabilities are often excluded in the classroom, where the instructional process is mostly lecture-based and visual-centered (Hussain, Hameed, and Ashraf, 2022).

Although Pakistan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and has already passed several laws concerning disability-related aspects, their application is not uniform throughout the country (Gul, 2020). The GB Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2019) is intended to provide equality and non-discrimination, but because of the lack of an effective provincial disability council and unfinished Rules of Business, it is still not implemented (Nowpdp, 2024). In the same way, even though the Supreme Court has ordered the enhancement of infrastructure accessibility and gathering of updated statistics on disability, the outcomes have been very slow (Khan, 2014). These inefficiencies within the institutes are detrimental to the inclusive reforms and the many children with disabilities remain reliant on the community-based or non-governmental assistance.

Besides the obstacles that are involving the physical and policy related factors, the societal attitudes also impact the educational enrollment of students with disabilities. Parents are likely to retain their children at home instead of taking them to school because of cultural stigma, misconceptions, and social exclusion (Israr, 2024). Parents often complain of ineffective support services, lack of accessibility and the lack of inclusive environments to encourage the abilities of

their children. Moreover, in spite of the active promotion of disability rights by other advocacy organizations like the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and the local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the outreach to remote districts is still inadequate.

This paper, thus, attempts to examine these multidimensional issues in the light of a parental view. It intends to record the infrastructural deficiencies, lapses in teacher education and systemic malfunctions in enforcing the policies that cumulatively hinder educational inclusion of the physically impaired students. These factors are critical because they not only require us to enhance legislation on disability in GB but also create evidence-based interventions that can enhance equity and access to education. This study can also contribute to the academic discussion and practice-based policymaking that would support the inclusion of families who are affected and need to achieve a high standard of education in the most remote and underserved areas of Pakistan.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Gilgit-Baltistan has a number of students with physical impairments who are denied the right to quality education because of several barriers. Despite the inclusion policies in the government, most schools are not equipped with the needed structures and facilities to handle such students. Many children with mobility problems find it hard or even impossible to attend school because there are no ramps, accessible washrooms, transportation services and assistive devices. The teachers are not always trained on inclusive methods of teaching and they do not have the resources or the knowledge to effectively undertake physically impaired learners. Consequently, such students feel like outsiders in the classroom and they cannot be involved in learning activities.

In addition to infrastructural difficulties, the problem is also enhanced by social and economic aspects. Disability stigma and negative attitudes towards disability demoralizes families to enroll their children in school and poverty prevents parents to afford mobility devices or special education services. All these factors lead to a lack of education opportunities, increased school dropout rates, and worse academic performance by students with physical disabilities. It is important to combat these problems to achieve an equal access to education and to remove the exclusion of all learners in the educational system of Gilgit-Baltistan.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To identify the academic challenges faced by students with physical impairments.
2. To identify the social challenges faced by students with physical impairments
3. To explore accessibility and infrastructure issues in mainstream and special schools.
4. To examine the attitudes of teachers and peers toward physically impaired students.

### **Literature Review**

Education is a human right which is basic but students with disabilities are still excluded in learning opportunities all over the world. The children with disabilities in South Asia are greatly hindered in terms of access, participation, and achievement, both physically, institutionally, and socially (UNICEF, 2025). The implementation of inclusive education is limited in Pakistan even though some of the national policies promulgate inclusive education. Many of these schools are also not equipped with the needed facilities like ramps, learning resources, accessible and trained teachers who can support the different needs (UNICEF, 2021). The mountainous terrain, dispersed

population and scarcity of resources in Gilgit-Baltistan aggravate these issues. Schools are usually poorly equipped in terms of their infrastructure, aids, and/or even people with disabilities, which puts students with physical disabilities at a disadvantage (Anwer et al., 2015). The result of social stigma, lack of teacher training and inaccessibility is the limitation of participation resulting in academic and social exclusion (Khalid and Othman, 2022).

Physically impaired students are faced by an accumulated challenge in their academic, social, environmental and attitudinal lives that limits their academic potential. The studies conducted in different settings provide evidence that disability interacts with practice of teaching, infrastructure, and social perceptions to establish participation and achievement (Mubashir Gull & Basha, 2025). To address these difficulties, it is necessary to have some of the viable solutions that include the use of ramps and assistive technologies, inclusive pedagogical activities, and policy application that suits the regional realities.

### **Academic Challenges**

Students with physical impairments find it hard to achieve academically because of the scarcity of resources, bad learning techniques and the institution not supporting them. The participation depends largely on the accessibility of assistive technologies and specialized learning materials. These resources are however few or unequal. Research points to the importance of the fact that although assistive technologies may help to improve the learning process, their effectiveness is determined by teacher training and maintenance (Manisha, 2023). Lots of devices that are supplied to schools are still not used because of insufficient technical knowledge. Assistive tools enhance motivation, independence and achievement when they are effectively incorporated into classroom teaching (Murchland and Parkyn, 2010). Inclusive schools tend to distribute their resources better and facilitate accessibility (Hemmingsson et al., 2009). In regions with limited resources such as Gilgit-Baltistan, this planning is on the bare minimum resulting in dependency and exclusion (Musengi, 2024).

On the pedagogical side, the teachers in developing countries are not trained in inclusive education. The majority of them use conventional forms of lectures that do not consider the needs of students (Sharma and Armstrong, 2019). Inclusive pedagogy, proposed by the Universal Design of Learning, promotes flexibility and adaptation of teaching but is not much implemented. Educators are usually ready to accommodate students with disabilities but they are not sure and knowledgeable on how to make changes in lessons (Florian and Hawkins, 2011). Unless physical impairments are trained and supported, the mainstream classes continue to marginalize the students affected (Ismail & Hussain, 2023). This is because of the structural neglect and poor instructional practices rather than intellectual limitation which reduces their lower academic performance (Khan et al., 2022).

### **Social Challenges**

Another significant obstacle is social exclusion. Physically impaired students experience the isolation, a lack of peer contact, and bullying (Wang et al., 2022). In most instances, they are physically in the classrooms but not socially integrated. This exclusion is supported by inaccessible environments, negative attitudes, and insufficient support (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2023). Peer and teacher stigmatization are also the causes of emotional distress and low self-esteem (Edwards et al., 2019). Stereotypes of disability cause friendship and collaboration hindrances where students remain feeling different or unwelcome. Social isolation is further

enhanced by poverty and ignorance whereby families might lack means and trust to speak out against inclusion.

### **Availability and Accessibility Problems**

Accessibility is one of the most important barriers to inclusion in Gilgit-Baltistan. Most schools do not have ramps, elevators, and accessible toilets, which makes students with mobility problems find it challenging to attend school (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2023). It is compounded by the uneven topography and inadequate transport systems, particularly in the countryside. Students with mobility aids or those who are in wheelchairs find it difficult to move around in the school or to attend extra-curriculums. The maintenance of the assistive technologies is additionally hindered, which further reduces access (National Disability Authority, 2021). Whereas policies are in place to enhance inclusive infrastructure, they are poorly implemented because of limited funding and the administrative barriers (TCU College of Education, 2024).

### **Teacher Attitudes and Peer Attitudes**

The attitudes of teachers and peers have a great impact on inclusion. Teachers may hold negative attitudes and have low expectations, thereby restricting the opportunities and discouraging participation (Robertson and Jaswal, 2024). The peers with no disability might be reluctant to cooperate, which may support isolation (Dağlı et al., 2024). Nevertheless, inclusion training to teachers and awareness programs to peers have a significant effect on acceptance (Ballard Brief, 2023). The positive attitudes create confidence and a sense of belonging, which results in improved academic and social performance in students with physical impairments (Mendelevitch, 2023).

### **Methodology**

This study employed a quantitative research design using a structured, Likert-scale-based questionnaire to identify the challenges faced by students with physical impairments in Gilgit-Baltistan. The research focused on four main areas: academic challenges, social difficulties, accessibility and infrastructure issues, and the attitudes of teachers and peers toward physically impaired students. The quantitative approach was selected to obtain measurable data that could be analyzed statistically to identify common patterns and trends. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants, ensuring the inclusion of students with physical impairments studying in both government and private schools across different districts of Gilgit-Baltistan. The total sample consisted of 65 students (31 males and 34 females) representing various age groups, class levels, and school types. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire designed after reviewing relevant literature and validated by experts in the field of special and inclusive education. The instrument contained 28 closed-ended statements grouped under four categories: academic, social, infrastructural, and attitudinal challenges. Data were collected through personal visits to schools and homes, where the researcher administered the questionnaires directly to the parents of children with physical impairments. In cases where clarification was needed, the researcher provided assistance to ensure accurate responses. Ethical principles were followed throughout the process; participants were informed about the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality, and participation was voluntary. The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores were used to summarize the findings.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of children with physical impairments (N = 65)**

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
<b>Gender of children</b>	Male	31	47.7
	Female	34	52.3
<b>Age of children</b>	Below 10 years	18	27.7
	11–13 years	25	38.5
	14–16 years	14	21.5
	17 and above	8	12.3
<b>Class level of children</b>	Primary	22	33.8
	Middle	29	44.6
	Secondary	7	10.8
	Higher Secondary	7	10.8
<b>Type of school</b>	Government	24	36.9
	Private	17	26.2
	Special Education	11	16.9
	Inclusive/Mainstream	13	20.0
<b>Location of school</b>	Urban	32	49.2
	Rural	25	38.5
	Remote	8	12.3

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the children with physical impairments (N = 65). The findings indicate that the children with physical impairments were a little bit more girls (52.3%) than boys (47.7%). The majority of the children with physical impairments were 11-13 years (38.5%), then there were 27.7% who were below 10 years. Regarding the level of classes, most children with physical impairments were attending middle classes (44.6%), a small proportion were in primary (33.8%), secondary (10.8%), and higher secondary classes (10.8%). In terms of the school category, the majority of the students were enrolled in government schools (36.9%), followed by those in the private schools (26.2%), special education (16.9%), and inclusive/mainstream schools (20.0%). The urban areas had almost half of the schools (49.2%), 38.5% were in the rural and 12.3% in the remote areas. All in all, the table gives a demographic picture of the study participants on the most important background variables.

**Table 2: Frequencies and Percentages of Responses to Academic Challenges Faced by Children with Physical Impairments (N = 65)**

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Teachers lack training to teach students with physical impairments effectively.	16 (24.6%)	15 (23.1%)	12 (18.5%)	18 (27.7%)	4 (6.2%)
My child faces difficulty in reaching classrooms due to physical barriers.	10 (15.4%)	35 (53.8%)	10 (15.4%)	8 (12.3%)	2 (3.1%)

<b>Statements</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
Frequent medical appointments affect my child's regular attendance.	16 (24.6%)	23 (35.4%)	12 (18.5%)	12 (18.5%)	2 (3.1%)
Limited access to assistive learning technology in school.	16 (24.6%)	22 (33.8%)	13 (20.0%)	4 (6.2%)	10 (15.4%)
My child struggles to keep up with the pace of lessons.	14 (21.5%)	24 (36.9%)	12 (18.5%)	11 (16.9%)	4 (6.2%)
Exams are not adjusted according to my child's needs.	10 (15.4%)	16 (24.6%)	19 (29.2%)	13 (20.0%)	7 (10.8%)
Limited individual academic support is available to my child.	14 (21.5%)	17 (26.2%)	13 (20.0%)	14 (21.5%)	7 (10.8%)

Table 2 provides a summary of the answers of parents about academic difficulties encountered by children with physical impairments. A fairly large percentage of the respondents confirmed or strongly confirmed the lack of adequate training in teachers to assist such students (47.7%), and 33.9% denied this. Most (69.2) of them complained that the school buildings are physically barred, hence limiting access to their children in the classroom. The high medical attendance was also noted to be the influence of attendance by half of the parents. In a comparable manner, lack of access to assistive learning technologies (58.4%), and inability to follow the lessons (58.4) were considered to be serious problems. More than 40 percent of parents have thought that the exams were not modulated to suit the needs of their children, and 47.7 percent of them thought that they had no suitable individual academic support. In general, the results shed light on the problem of major scholarly and infrastructural obstacles that are the impediments to the education of children with physical disabilities.

**Table 3: Frequency Distribution and Mean Scores for Social Challenges Faced by Children with Physical Impairments (N = 65)**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
My child often feels isolated or excluded from classmates	26 (40.0%)	21 (32.3%)	3 (4.6%)	13 (20.0%)	2 (3.1%)
Other students tease or bully my child because of the disability	17 (26.2%)	20 (30.8%)	13 (20.0%)	8 (12.3%)	7 (10.8%)
My child is rarely included in group or extracurricular activities	14 (21.5%)	21 (32.3%)	13 (20.0%)	11 (16.9%)	6 (9.2%)
Social isolation affects my child's confidence and self-esteem	18 (27.7%)	28 (43.1%)	8 (12.3%)	5 (7.7%)	6 (9.2%)
My child has limited opportunities to make friends	18 (27.7%)	17 (26.2%)	20 (30.8%)	6 (9.2%)	4 (6.2%)
Communication barriers make it difficult for my child to interact socially	11 (16.9%)	28 (43.1%)	12 (18.5%)	12 (18.5%)	2 (3.1%)
Overprotective attitudes (including mine) sometimes limit my child's independence	2 (3.1%)	32 (49.2%)	11 (16.9%)	11 (16.9%)	9 (13.8%)
Other students lack awareness about how to include	13	28	9	11	4

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
children with disabilities	(20.0%)	(43.1%)	(13.8%)	(16.9%)	(6.2%)

Table 3 outlines the perception of parents regarding the social issues of their physically challenged children. The results indicate that 72.3% of parents concurred or strongly concurred that their child usually feels lonely or not a part of classmates, and 57% experienced incidences of teasing or bullying. More than half of the respondents (53.88) said that their child is seldom involved in group and extracurricular activities. Most of them (70.8%), thought that social isolation has a negative impact on their child, in terms of confidence and self-esteem. Other challenges that were frequently mentioned were limited chances of making friends (53.9) and barriers to communication (60). Almost half (52.3) of them admitted that overprotective beliefs, also those of parental ones, can limit the independence of children. Also, 63.1 percent believed that other students were not aware about how to incorporate children with disabilities. On balance, these answers indicate a serious social stigma influencing inclusion, peer communication, and emotional health of children with physical disabilities.

**Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Responses on Accessibility of Infrastructure for Children with Physical Impairments (N = 65)**

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
Toilets are not designed for children with physical impairments.	23 35.4%	25 38.5%	12 18.5%	5 7.7%	0 0.0%
The playground is unsafe or inaccessible for my child.	29 44.6%	11 16.9%	7 10.8%	15 23.1%	3 4.6%
There is no transportation facility suitable for physically impaired students.	14 21.5%	28 43.1%	15 23.1%	7 10.8%	1 1.5%
The school lacks proper furniture or classroom arrangements for my child.	12 18.5%	17 26.2%	18 27.7%	8 12.3%	10 15.4%
There are no accessible emergency exits for children with disabilities.	14 21.5%	26 40.0%	9 13.8%	10 15.4%	6 9.2%
There is inadequate government or school funding for accessibility improvements.	19 29.2%	22 33.8%	8 12.3%	8 12.3%	8 12.3%

Table 4 demonstrates the perceptions of parents in terms of the access to school infrastructure by children with physical impairments. Most of the respondents (73.9%) indicated that toilets are not designed to suit children with disabilities which shows a significant issue of accessibility. Almost half (61.5%) said that playgrounds are unsafe or inaccessible by their children. Equally, 64.6% noted the lack of appropriate transportation facilities to physically challenged students. Approximately 44.7-percent of parents said they agreed or strongly agreed that schools do not have the right furniture and classroom set-ups and 61.5-percent wrote that there were no emergency exits in the schools. In addition, 63 percent of them thought that insufficient funding to the government or schools restricts the needed improvements of accessibility. All in all, the findings

highlight the significant infrastructural and policy-level gaps the presence of which inhibits the inclusion and comfort of children with physical disabilities in learning settings.

**Table 5: Frequencies and Percentages of Responses to Teacher Attitudes and Inclusive Education Statements (N = 65)**

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
Some teachers have low expectations of my child.	15 23.1%	21 32.3%	9 13.8%	11 16.9%	9 13.8%
Teachers and peers show supportive behavior toward my child.	7 10.8%	26 40.0%	14 21.5%	12 18.5%	6 9.2%
Teachers lack awareness about inclusive education and disability sensitivity.	11 16.9%	19 29.2%	25 38.5%	4 6.2%	6 9.2%
Positive teacher attitudes improve my child's motivation and learning.	16 24.6%	26 40.0%	9 13.8%	7 10.8%	7 10.8%
Some peers underestimate my child's abilities.	13 20.0%	19 29.2%	12 18.5%	13 20.0%	8 12.3%
Inclusive classrooms help create positive attitudes among students.	12 18.5%	26 40.0%	7 10.8%	14 21.5%	6 9.2%
Teacher training programs rarely include disability awareness.	8 12.3%	23 35.4%	8 12.3%	10 15.4%	16 24.6%

Table 5 shows the perceptions of the parents on teacher attitudes and inclusion education towards children with physical impairments. Almost half of parents (55.4 percent) accepted that there are teachers who do not have great expectations of their children due to the attitude of bias and underrainment of potential of students. On the other hand, 50.8 percent of the respondents concurred that there was a tendency that teachers and peers demonstrate supportive behavior indicating at least some positive experiences regarding inclusion. Over 46% of parents believed that educators do not have sufficient knowledge about inclusive education and disability sensitivity, so specific professional development is necessary. A large majority (64.6) of the respondents said that positive teacher attitudes improve children motivation and learning. More than 49.2 percent of the parents indicated that some parents undervalue the potential of their child and display consistent social stereotyping. Additionally, 58.5 percent felt that inclusive classrooms contribute towards positive attitudes among the students. Lastly, 47.7% indicated that disability awareness is not taught in teacher training programs, which is a failure in the system of training. In general, these findings highlight both the achievements and ongoing difficulties in the attainment of inclusive learning settings.

## Summary

The article discusses the various issues of the physically challenged students in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan, through the lens of their parents. It emphasizes the fact that national and international policies advocate inclusive education, but the practice is still weak in remote mountainous areas. The study is founded on the quantitative data on 65 parents and shows that children face academic, social, infrastructural, and attitudinal obstacles that impact their educational engagement negatively. Most schools have not been trained to have teachers and assistive technologies and thus students can hardly follow the lessons. On a social level, children tend to feel isolated, bullied and

excluded in the activities of their peer groups, a factor that reduces their confidence and self-esteem. The infrastructural obstacle like lack of ramp, accessible toilets, and affordability of transportation further restrict their attendance to school. The research also revealed that exclusion is a result of negative teacher attitudes as well as little awareness of inclusive practice. In general, the results suggest that appropriate teacher training, enhanced school infrastructure, funding, and awareness of the community can be used to guarantee the level of equality in education of children with physical disabilities in Gilgit-Baltistan.

## **Discussion**

The discussion of the article highlights that the findings strongly align with existing national and international research on inclusive education, particularly concerning the persistent challenges faced by students with physical impairments in developing and geographically isolated regions. The current study conducted in Gilgit-Baltistan reveals that although some progress has been made in promoting inclusive education, significant gaps remain in teacher preparedness, school accessibility, and social attitudes.

The results of this study confirm earlier findings by Haideri and Parveen (2025), who reported that head teachers in Gilgit-Baltistan identified the lack of support facilities and trained teachers as major obstacles to inclusion. Similarly, Khalid and Yaseen (2023) found that while inclusive education is emphasized in policy documents, practical implementation remains limited due to weak monitoring and insufficient funding. The present research also supports Anwer et al. (2015), who observed that schools in GB often operate without ramps, assistive devices, or accessible toilets, creating daily struggles for students with physical impairments.

Compared with these previous studies, the current research extends the discussion by incorporating parents' perspectives, which provide a deeper understanding of the emotional and social dimensions of disability. Parents in this study highlighted that their children face not only infrastructural barriers but also social exclusion, teasing, and low teacher expectations—issues echoed by Edwards et al. (2019) and Wang et al. (2022), who found that negative peer attitudes significantly reduce students' confidence and participation in class.

Another notable point of comparison is with Sharma and Armstrong (2019) and Ismail and Hussain (2023), who emphasized that teachers' lack of training in inclusive pedagogy contributes to ineffective classroom practices. The current results reaffirm these findings, showing that most teachers in Gilgit-Baltistan rely on traditional teaching methods that exclude students requiring individualized attention or assistive technologies. This demonstrates a consistent pattern across both national and regional contexts where professional development for teachers remains inadequate.

However, the present study also introduces a slightly more optimistic finding—some parents acknowledged instances of supportive teachers and peers, reflecting a slow but positive shift in attitudes. This partially aligns with Ballard Brief (2023) and Mendelevitch (2023), who argued that awareness programs and inclusive classroom environments can gradually change perceptions toward students with disabilities. The current study reinforces much of the earlier research while adding new insights from the parental viewpoint. It confirms that structural, social, and attitudinal barriers remain intertwined in shaping the educational experiences of physically impaired students in Gilgit-Baltistan. The findings call for a more coordinated and sustained effort focusing on teacher training, policy implementation, infrastructure development, and community sensitization to move from policy rhetoric to practical inclusion in education.

## **Finding**

The findings of the article reveal that students with physical impairments in Gilgit-Baltistan face numerous barriers that affect their access to and participation in education. The results, based on parents' responses, indicate that academic, social, infrastructural, and attitudinal challenges collectively limit the learning experiences of these children.

- 1- Academically, most parents reported that teachers lack the necessary training and skills to effectively teach students with physical impairments. Many children face difficulties in reaching classrooms due to physical barriers within schools, while frequent medical appointments and limited access to assistive learning technologies disrupt their learning process. Exams are often not adjusted to meet their needs, and individualized academic support is rare.
- 2- Socially, the study found that children frequently experience isolation, teasing, and exclusion from classroom and extracurricular activities. This exclusion lowers their self-confidence and emotional well-being. Parents also mentioned that overprotective attitudes, both at home and school, restrict their children's independence and social interaction.
- 3- Infrastructural challenges were another major concern. Most schools lack ramps, accessible washrooms, safe playgrounds, and transportation facilities for students with mobility issues. The absence of disability-friendly furniture and emergency exits further highlights the poor physical environment. Parents also emphasized that insufficient government funding and lack of policy implementation make it difficult to improve accessibility in schools.
- 4- In terms of attitudes, many parents felt that teachers and peers often underestimate the abilities of children with physical impairments. Some teachers have low expectations, while others show supportive and caring behavior. However, limited awareness about inclusive education and disability sensitivity among teachers remains a serious issue.

The findings indicate that children with physical impairments in Gilgit-Baltistan continue to face multiple overlapping challenges that hinder their right to inclusive and quality education. Addressing these issues requires better infrastructure, trained teachers, increased community awareness, and stronger policy enforcement to create truly inclusive learning environments.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the study's findings, several key recommendations were made to improve the educational experiences of students with physical impairments in Gilgit-Baltistan.

- 1- **Teacher training and professional development** should be prioritized. Teachers must receive regular training on inclusive education, disability awareness, and the use of assistive technologies. Special modules on inclusive pedagogy should be integrated into teacher education programs to build the capacity of educators to handle diverse classroom needs effectively.
- 2- **School infrastructure must be improved** to ensure accessibility for all students. Schools should be equipped with ramps, accessible washrooms, suitable furniture, and safe playgrounds. Government and educational authorities need to allocate specific funds to upgrade school facilities and ensure that new buildings follow disability-friendly designs. Transportation services should also be introduced to support students living in remote or hilly areas.

- 3- **Policy implementation and monitoring** should be strengthened. While inclusive education policies exist, their execution remains weak. The government should establish a provincial disability council to monitor compliance with disability laws and ensure accountability. Adequate funding, clear operational guidelines, and coordination between departments are necessary to translate policies into action.
- 4- **Awareness and attitude change programs** should be promoted within schools and communities. Awareness campaigns can help reduce stigma and misconceptions about disability, encouraging empathy and acceptance among peers, teachers, and parents. Inclusive values should be fostered through classroom discussions, school events, and community outreach activities.
- 5- **Parental and community involvement** should be increased. Parents should be encouraged to participate in school decision-making and advocacy for inclusive practices. Collaboration between schools, NGOs, and local organizations can further enhance support systems for children with disabilities.

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