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**RESEARCH PAPER**

## Teaching of Social Justice and Sustainable Development for inclusion: Improving Identity, Positionality and Reflexivity of Students with Hearing Impairment

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**ABSTRACT**

The objectives of this quantitative research was to investigate how the identity of students with hearing impairment is influenced by social justice and sustainable development education, to analyze the positionality of hearing-impaired students in the context of inclusive education, to explore the role of reflexivity in the learning experiences of hearing-impaired students, to assess the impact of social justice and sustainable development education on the empowerment and agency of hearing-impaired students. The data was taken from (183) Teachers working in Government Special Education Schools and Centers in Punjab, and (164) Parents of students with hearing impairment. In order to get the responses from the participants, two self-developed and validated Questionnaire on five point Likert type scale (IPR for teachers  $r=.809$ ) was used to collect data from teachers selected through stratified sampling technique. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. This research was very helpful in bringing new inclinations in Inclusion. The results indicate that the curricula with social justice perspectives enhance identity building, self-advocacy, and participation of students in inclusive education. The research has some suggestions on how teacher training, assistive technologies, and culturally responsive instruction can be used to comprehensively address the holistic growth of hearing-impaired students. Some of the recommendations are to incorporate Deaf culture in the curriculum, create leadership opportunities, and introduction of universal design of learning (UDL). This study recommends inclusive education policies and practices that empower students with hearing impairments and ensure their lifelong learning by aligning inclusive education with sustainable development goals (SDGs).

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**KEYWORDS** Social Justice, Inclusion, Sustainable Development, Identity, Positionality, Reflexivity

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**Introduction**

Education is an effective instrument towards influencing learners to form their knowledge about themselves and the world. Currently, social justice and sustainable development have become the key aspects of inclusive education that are being given more and more importance in the field of education. Students with hearing impairment are especially interested in such ideas, as they tend to be subjected to systemic discrimination that restricts their access to mainstream educational experiences (Alasim, 2022). With the integration of social justice education, learners are able to critically pursue issues of inequality, discrimination, inclusion, and education to sustainable development provides them with skills required to tackle global challenges (UNESCO, 2023).

It is well known that education is a strong tool of social transformation, social equity and sustainable development. Nonetheless, in the case of learners with disabilities especially learners with hearing impairment education has been predominantly influenced by perspectives of deficit which draw focus on the limitations instead of potential. Such methods not only limit academic development, but also affect the way learners feel about themselves, their role in society, and their ability to make a valuable contribution to society (Aslam& Muzaffar, 2025; Slee, 2018).

Inclusive education has become one of the key areas of focus in the world educational discourse, especially under the rubric of social justice and sustainable development. Education systems are becoming more and more obligated to cater to diversity, equity, and inclusion and make sure that no learner is discriminated against because of disability, language, and social placement (UNESCO, 2020). Inclusion is an issue that is complicated to students with hearing impairment not just in the physical sense whereby they have to be physically placed in general classrooms, but also in the identity recognition, involvement and empowerment.

Barriers to communication, inadequate adapted curricula, and inadequate teacher training can limit access to such knowledge by deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) students. It has been found out that the lack of access to educational content can have a harmful impact both on academic success and identity growth (Knoors and Marschark, 2022). The DHH learners identity development is intertwined with the language access and social interaction. By offering inclusive and linguistically accessible environments to students, they have higher chances of positive sense of self and belonging (Humphries et al., 2023).

The challenges that the hearing impaired students often face are often not limited to communication difficulties. They are social exclusion, low expectations, underrepresentation in the curriculum, and instructional practices that do not recognize their linguistic and cultural identities, particularly, Deaf culture and sign languages (Marschark & Spencer, 2016). Consequently, numerous students are unable to form their identity, have been marginalized in learning environments and have fewer opportunities to reflectively make sense of their lived experiences. Traditionally, hearing impaired students were placed in the negative perspective of deficit orientation, focusing on the negative aspects instead of the positive ones and thus, they have limited opportunities to learn and they have lowered self-esteem (Slee, 2018). These practices have a pernicious impact on identity formation, uphold peripheral status, and constrain the possibilities of reflective learning processes. Modern inclusive education demands pedagogies that acknowledge diversity, challenge the systemic inequities, and advance learner agency (Ainscow, 2020).

This is further elaborated with the ideas of positionality and reflexivity. Positionality is the ability to understand one own social and cultural status in the society whereas reflexivity denotes the ability to have a critical analysis of oneself in terms of beliefs and experiences. The skills are critical in enabling the learners to be active members of the society. Nevertheless, these are usually not considered in the traditional curricula especially among students with disabilities. Thus, it is necessary to understand how implementing social justice and sustainable development in the teaching practices can benefit these aspects among DHH learners.

The idea of teaching towards social justice and sustainable development is a way to go in solving these issues. Social justice education is focused on equity, involvement,

acknowledgment, and breaking down systemic obstacles whereas education towards sustainable development is aimed at training the learners to be critical, responsible, and contributing to inclusive and sustainable societies (UNESCO, 2020). These frameworks, strategically incorporated into the teaching practice with hearing-impaired students, can have a beneficial effect on identity development, enhance the social positioning awareness, and promote reflexivity between students and teachers.

This paper finds out empirically through quantitative research the role of social justice and sustainable development-based teaching on identity, positionality and reflexivity of hearing impaired students so as to inform the inclusive and sustainable learning practices.

- Conceptual Foundations
- Identity and Hearing-Impaired Students

Identity is the way that individuals perceive and delineate themselves regarding personal experiences, social groups, language, culture and power structures. In the case of hearing-impaired students, the development of their identity is mostly influenced by a complicated relationship between disability, language use, family, schooling, and societal perceptions (Leigh, 2017).

Other students relate well to Deaf culture and do not consider hearing impairment to be disability but rather, a linguistic and cultural difference. Others can also have confusion of identity especially in learning settings where normalization and the assimilation in the hearing norms are stressed (Humphries et al., 2019). Inclusive education which recognizes various types of identity enables the students to perceive themselves as competent learners and appreciated members of society (studies demonstrate that social justice-oriented curricula which recognize Deaf culture and sign languages have a beneficial impact on self-concept and belonging of students) (Humphries et al., 2019; Sharjah University Disability Resource Centre Study, 2024).

Social justice in teaching is an important part of this process as it disputes the idea of deficit and affirms the various identities. The lessons which emphasise the role of the people with disabilities, insist on language rights, and discriminatory issues, assist hearing-impaired students to build a positive self-image based on dignity and agency.

### **Positionality in Educational Contexts**

Positionality is the social location of an individual in power systems in relation to factors of ability, language, gender, class and culture. Hearing impaired students in schools are usually placed as passive consumers of support as opposed to active knowledge creators (Banks, 2016).

Knowledge of positionality helps the students to know the effects of structural inequalities on their educational experiences. This awareness can be empowering to hearing-impaired learners when it is developed by using an inclusive dialogue and critical pedagogy. Social justice education helps learners to think about who possesses power, whose voice is taken into account and how one can speak together and fight against injustices (Freire, 1970). Through critical and social justice pedagogies, learners have the ability to become aware of as well as challenge inequitable power dynamics, which encourages agency and participation (Freire, 1970; Costantini et al., 2024).

The positionality of teachers is also crucial. The interaction in the classroom is largely influenced by teachers' beliefs of disability, inclusion and the potential of the learner. Reflexive practice on positionality enables teachers to shift away the charity-based practices towards rights-based and justice-focused practices.

### **Reflexivity as a Transformative Practice**

Reflexivity is a critical reflection on the assumptions, experiences and actions that one takes in relation to social contexts. In hearing-impaired students, reflexivity helps them to self-advocate, think critically, and be resilient. To teachers, reflexivity facilitates ethical education, cultural sensitivity, and sensitivity to the needs of learners (Brookfield, 2017).

In instructional methods that embrace reflection, including dialogic learning, narrative practices, and engagements, students can be able to relate the personal experiences with the social realities. In education to sustainable development, reflexivity plays a crucial role in building responsible citizens and sustainable social change in the long-term (Sterling, 2014). The studies point out that reflective and participatory pedagogies that are in line with sustainable development lead to increased empowerment and civic participation among marginalized learners (UNESCO, 2020).

### **Literature Review**

The deaf education literature has consistently placed a strong focus on the need to have accessible and inclusive teaching practices. Based on critical pedagogy, social justice education aims to enable learners to challenge and question social inequalities by empowering them. In the case of DHH students, this will necessitate visual communication tools, sign language, and interactive instructions that will enable them to comprehend and engage (Swanwick & Marschark, 2024). Research has indicated that inclusive methods of teaching social justice concepts to students have been associated with a higher level of engagement and critical thinking skills (Antia & Rivera, 2023).

Education Sustainable Development (ESD) is also an important aspect of creating awareness among the learners on the issues in the world. UNESCO (2023) emphasizes that ESD ought to be accommodative and adaptable to the different learners, including those with disabilities. In the case of DHH students, a visual and experiential approach to learning sustainability issues could contribute to an increased understanding of the problem and a desire to take responsibility to their environment and society.

Another important area which has been addressed in the literature is identity development. Studies have shown that bilingual education methods which involve use of sign language with written or spoken language are beneficial to DHH students. These methods are effective in enhancing academic performance, as well as helping to boost cultural identity and self-confidence (Kushalnagar et al., 2024). On the other hand, the inability to access the language may result in identity issues and lack of confidence (Hall et al., 2022).

Positionality and reflexivity are concepts that are involved in the development of critical awareness. These constructs help the learners to see their position in the social structures and also to contemplate their experiences. In the case of DHH students, the process of cultivating these skills needs to be provided through inclusive classroom settings that will facilitate dialogue, participation, and critical thinking. The teachers are

the key agents to such environments as they can engage in culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogical practices (Antia & Rivera, 2023).

Although these improvements have been made, there are still issues in the implementation of the curriculum. Most of the education systems still use aural methods of teaching that are not available to DHH learners. Also, teacher training, resources, and technology support to lead to successful inclusion are often lacking (Alasim, 2022). According to the latest research, the combination of technology and visual aids in learning can be highly effective in enhancing the accessibility and learning outcomes (Easterbrooks and Beal-Alvarez, 2023).

### **Sustainable Development Education**

Sustainable Development Education (ESD) aims at providing learners with knowledge and skills to overcome environmental, social and economic challenges. UNESCO (2023) points out that ESD must be both inclusive and open to all learners including those with disabilities. Introducing the issues of sustainability into the curriculum may assist DHH students in gaining a sense of a global responsibility and critical thinking.

### **Identity and Deaf Education**

The access to language and environment in which DHH students' study and their social interactions impact the identity development. It has been found that the use of bilingual strategies (encompassing both sign language and written/spoken language) helps to enhance the sense of identity and academic performance (Kushalnagar et al., 2024). A language barrier may cause confusion with identity and low self-esteem (Hall et al., 2022).

### **Inclusive Education and Hearing Impairment**

Studies have repeatedly emphasized that the best way of inclusive education of hearing-impaired students is to go further than physical location to actual interaction and inclusion (Ainscow, 2020). Research focuses on the significance of communication that is open, curriculum that is culturally responsive, and a culture of collaboration in schools (Marschark et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, in numerous educational systems there is still a tendency to emphasize standardized curricula that do not provide a sufficient reflection of the lived experiences of the hearing-impaired students. This loss of connection may help to weaken the processes of identity formation and cement the process of marginalization (Slee, 2018). Researchers demand the use of inclusive pedagogies that cannot ignore the use of sign language as one of the acceptable means of instruction and should appreciate the Deaf culture in general education (Humphries et al., 2019).

### **Social Justice Education and Disability**

The social justice education aims to resolve the inequities by looking into the aspects of power, privilege and oppression in the learning environments. The practitioners of disability studies propose the necessity of inclusion in the curricula that allows addressing ableism and ensuring equity (Goodley, 2017).

The research demonstrates that with the exposure to materials with social justice orientation, students gain more empathy, critical consciousness, and civic action (Banks, 2016). Among hearing-impaired students, these strategies can help neutralize the internalized stigma and promote rights-based collective identity and social participation.

### **Education for Sustainable Development and Inclusion**

Sustainable development education focuses on the inclusion, equity, and lifelong learning as the keys to sustainable societies (UNESCO, 2020). Researchers point out the conformity between ESD and inclusive education especially in fostering inclusion of marginalized groups (Tilbury, 2011).

To students with hearing impairments, ESD is a place where they can learn through real world issues of social equity, environmental justice and community development. ESD-related participatory and experiential methods of learning promote reflexivity and make learners change agents.

### **Positionality and Reflexivity**

Critical pedagogy comprises of positionality and reflexivity. These ideas help the learners to think about their places in society and their prejudices. In the case of DHH students, these skills must be developed in the inclusive classroom environments which encourage dialogue and participation. Culturally responsive teaching practices by teachers are crucial in promoting such environments (Antia & Rivera, 2023).

### **Identity, Positionality, and Reflexivity in Practice**

The literature on critical pedagogy highlights the interrelatedness of identity, positionality, and reflexivity in transformative learning (Freire, 1970; Brookfield, 2017). Research indicates that reflective teaching can help students feel a sense of belonging, as well as agency, especially among learners with marginalized backgrounds.

Reflective dialogue and inclusive storytelling, in the context of hearing impairment, have been demonstrated to enhance the self-concept and social interaction (Leigh, 2017). The outcomes of these findings indicate the need to incorporate the concepts of social justice and sustainability in the daily teaching activities.

### **Material and Methods**

#### **Research Design**

The study adopted a quantitative research design to examine relationships between social justice and sustainable development-oriented teaching and identity, positionality, and reflexivity of students with hearing impairment. The design allows for objective measurement of teachers' perceptions regarding inclusive education practices.

#### **Population and Sample**

The population of the study comprised on all teachers (N = 1300 plus) working with hearing-impaired students in special education institutions (schools and centers). These teachers represent diverse educational settings, qualifications, and levels of teaching experience, providing a comprehensive base for examining inclusive teaching practices related to social justice and sustainable development. A representative sample

of 183 teachers was chosen among this population based on stratified sampling method to have a proportional representation of various types of schools, as well as, contexts of teaching.

### **Instrumentation**

The main data collection tool in this study was a self-created Likert-type scale. The tool was comprised of 25 close-ended statements that are used to gauge the perceptions of teachers on how they teach social justice and sustainable development and how it affects identity, positionality and reflexivity among students with hearing impairment.

The scale was designed in a 5-point Likert format, whereby Strongly Agree (5) was used as the scale base, with the other response categories being Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1), allowing respondents to indicate the level of their agreement with each statement.

In order to achieve content validity, the instrument was checked and tested by three professionals in the sphere of special education and educational research. Their recommendations were included to enhance the clarity, relevance and suitability of the items.

Moreover, the instrument reliability was determined statistically. The scale showed a Cronbachs alpha reliability coefficient of  $r = .809$  implying a high degree of internal consistency and proving that the instrument was also reliable in data collection.

The questionnaire developed was effective in capturing important dimensions of the study, such as identity development, positionality, reflexivity, and inclusive teaching practices.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The statistical tools that were used to analyze the collected data included descriptive and inferential statistics. The overall trends in the responses of teachers concerning identity, positionality, reflexivity and inclusive teaching practices were summarized and described using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation.

This was a descriptive study, and a self-developed and validated questionnaire was the major data collection instrument. Inferential statistical analyses were carried out to test the differences in the perceptions of the teachers. Independent samples t-test was used to compare the response in terms of gender, whereas one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized to determine the significant difference among variables of teaching experience, academic qualification, designation and type of institution.

These statistical techniques enabled the researcher to analyze variations in teachers' opinions regarding the role of teaching social justice and sustainable development in enhancing identity, positionality, and reflexivity among students with hearing impairment, as well as to explore possible solutions for improving inclusive educational practices.

**Table 1**  
**Independent Sample t-test for comparison of respondents' responses based on Gender Independent T-Test**

	Gender	N	M	S.D	t	Df	Sig.
IPRTotal01	Male	43	84.33	16.512	-.241	181	.810
	Female	140	85.13	19.806			

The analysis in table 1 indicated no statistically significant difference between male (M = 84.33, SD = 16.51) and female (M = 85.13, SD = 19.81) participants on IPRTotal01 scores,  $t(181) = -.241$ ,  $p = .810$ . This suggests that gender did not significantly influence IPR Total outcomes in this sample.

**Table 2**  
**Independent Sample t-test for comparison of respondents' responses based on Designation**

	Designation	N	M	S.D	t	df	Sig.
IPRTotal01	JSET (HI)	89	82.08	17.686	-1.994	181	.048
	SSET (HI)	94	87.65	19.961			

The analysis in Table 2 indicated a statistically significant difference between JSET (HI) (M = 82.08, SD = 17.69) and SSET (HI) (M = 87.65, SD = 19.96) participants on IPR Total scores,  $t(181) = -1.994$ ,  $p = .048$ . This suggests that the group designation had a significant influence on IPRTotal01 outcomes, with SSET (HI) students scoring higher than JSET (HI) students.

**Table 3**  
**Independent Sample t-test for comparison of respondents' responses on the basis of Institute**

	School or Centre	N	M	S.D	t	df	Sig.
IPRTotal01	Centre	137	83.76	18.057	-.848	-518	181
	School	46	85.39	19.458			

The analysis in Table 3 indicated no statistically significant difference between Centre (M = 83.76, SD = 18.06) and School (M = 85.39, SD = 19.46) participants on IPRTotal01 scores,  $t(181) = -.848$ ,  $p = .518$ . This suggests that the type of institution (Centre vs. School) did not significantly influence IPRTotal01 outcomes in this sample.

**Table 4**  
**One way ANOVA for comparison of responses on the basis of Age**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10616.382	5	2123.276	6.786	.000
Within Groups	55383.956	177	312.904		
Total	66000.339	182			

The analysis in Table 4 presents a one-way ANOVA examining differences in IPRTotal01 scores across six groups. The results indicated a statistically significant difference between groups,  $F(5, 177) = 6.786$ ,  $p < .001$ . This suggests that group membership had a significant effect on IPRTotal01 scores.

**Table 4 (I)**  
**Post-Hoc on the basis of Age**

(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
36-40	25-30	-16.752*	3.593	.000
	31-35	-14.419*	3.934	.000

41-45	-16.455*	4.219	.000	
46-50	-28.872*	10.598	.007	
51-55	-38.205*	10.598	.000	
31-35	25-30	16.752*	3.593	.000
	36-40	2.333	3.513	.508
	41-45	.297	3.830	.938
	46-50	-12.120	10.449	.248
36-40	51-55	-21.453*	10.449	.042
	25-30	14.419*	3.934	.000
	31-35	-2.333	3.513	.508
	41-45	-2.036	4.151	.624
41-45	46-50	-14.452	10.571	.173
	51-55	-23.786*	10.571	.026
	25-30	16.455*	4.219	.000
	31-35	-.297	3.830	.938
46-50	36-40	2.036	4.151	.624
	46-50	-12.417	10.681	.247
	51-55	-21.750*	10.681	.043
	25-30	28.872*	10.598	.007
51-55	31-35	12.120	10.449	.248
	36-40	14.452	10.571	.173
	41-45	12.417	10.681	.247
	51-55	-9.333	14.443	.519

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Post hoc comparisons using the LSD test revealed significant differences in IPRTotal01 scores based on the age of respondents. Respondents aged 25–30 years scored significantly lower than those aged 31–35 (M difference = -16.752,  $p < .001$ ), 36–40 (M difference = -14.419,  $p < .001$ ), 41–45 (M difference = -16.455,  $p < .001$ ), 46–50 (M difference = -28.872,  $p = .007$ ), and 51–55 (M difference = -38.205,  $p < .001$ ). Respondents aged 31–35 years scored significantly lower than those aged 51–55 (M difference = -21.453,  $p = .042$ ). Similarly, respondents aged 36–40 years scored significantly lower than those aged 51–55 (M difference = -23.786,  $p = .026$ ), and respondents aged 41–45 years scored significantly lower than those aged 51–55 (M difference = -21.750,  $p = .043$ ).

**Table 5**  
**One way ANOVA for comparison of responses on the basis of Qualification**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	20330.053	4	5082.513		
Within Groups	45670.286	178	256.575	19.809	.000
Total	66000.339	182			

The analysis in Table 5 presents a one-way ANOVA examining differences in IPRTotal01 scores across five groups. The results indicated a statistically significant difference between groups,  $F(4, 178) = 19.809$ ,  $p < .001$ . This suggests that group membership had a significant effect on IPRTotal01 scores.

**Table 5(I)**  
**Post-Hoc on the basis of Qualification**

(I) Qualification	(J) Qualification	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
	B.ED			
	MA			
	-			
				11.534 .883
				1.704
M.ED	-13.571	11.593	.243	

M.Phil		-24.922*	11.462	.031	
PhD		-47.500*	16.018	.003	
MA	B.ED	1.704	11.534	.883	
	M.ED	-11.868*	3.295	.000	
	M.Phil	-23.218*	2.800	.000	
	PhD	-45.796*	11.534	.000	
M.ED	B.ED	13.571	11.593	.243	
	MA	11.868*	3.295	.000	
	M.Phil	-11.350*	3.033	.000	
	PhD	-33.929*	11.593	.004	
M.Phil	B.ED	24.922*	11.462	.031	
	MA	23.218*	2.800	.000	
	M.ED	11.350*	3.033	.000	
	PhD	-22.578	11.462	.050	

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Post hoc comparisons using the LSD test revealed significant differences in IPRTotal01 scores based on the qualification of respondents. Respondents with a B.Ed scored significantly lower than those with M.Phil (M difference = -24.922,  $p = .031$ ) and PhD (M difference = -47.500,  $p = .003$ ) qualifications. Similarly, respondents with an MA scored significantly lower than those with M.ED (M difference = -11.868,  $p < .001$ ), M.Phil (M difference = -23.218,  $p < .001$ ), and PhD (M difference = -45.796,  $p < .001$ ). Respondents with an M.ED scored significantly lower than those with MA (M difference = 11.868,  $p < .001$ ), M.Phil (M difference = -11.350,  $p < .001$ ), and PhD (M difference = -33.929,  $p = .004$ ). Finally, respondents with M.Phil scored significantly lower than those with MA (M difference = 23.218,  $p < .001$ ) and B.Ed (M difference = 24.922,  $p = .031$ ), while the difference with PhD was marginally significant (M difference = -22.578,  $p = .050$ ).

**Table 6**  
**One way ANOVA on the basis of Experience**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	23802.688	5	4760.538		
Within Groups	42197.651	177	238.405	19.968	.000
Total	66000.339	182			

The analysis in Table 6 presents a one-way ANOVA examining differences in IPRTotal01 scores based on the experience of respondents. The results indicated a statistically significant difference between groups,  $F(5, 177) = 19.968$ ,  $p < .001$ , suggesting that respondents' experience significantly influenced IPRTotal01 scores.

**Table 6(I)**  
**Post-Hoc on the basis of Experience**

(I) Experience of the respondent	(J) Experience of the respondent	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.					
6-10 years	1-5 years	-17.587	.113		less than a year	1-5 years	-1-5	11.163	.932
	11-15 years	-27.667*	.015						
	16-20 years	-36.687*	.002						
	21-25 years	-53.000*	.001						
1-5 years	less than a year	.955	11.163	.932					
	6-10 years	-16.632*	2.830	.000					
	11-15 years	-26.712*	3.775	.000					
	16-20 years	-35.733*	4.508	.000					

	21-25 years	-52.045*	11.163	.000
	less than a year	17.587	11.036	.113
6-10 years	1-5 years	16.632*	2.830	.000
	11-15 years	-10.080*	3.380	.003
	16-20 years	-19.101*	4.182	.000
	21-25 years	-35.413*	11.036	.002
	less than a year	27.667*	11.315	.015
11-15 years	1-5 years	26.712*	3.775	.000
	6-10 years	10.080*	3.380	.003
	16-20 years	-9.021	4.871	.066
	21-25 years	-25.333*	11.315	.026
	less than a year	36.688*	11.580	.002
16-20 years	1-5 years	35.733*	4.508	.000
	6-10 years	19.101*	4.182	.000
	11-15 years	9.021	4.871	.066
	21-25 years	-16.312	11.580	.161

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Post hoc comparisons using the LSD test revealed that respondents with **less** than a year of experience scored significantly lower than those with 11–15 years (M difference = -27.667,  $p = .015$ ), 16–20 years (M difference = -36.687,  $p = .002$ ), and 21–25 years (M difference = -53.000,  $p = .001$ ) of experience. Similarly, respondents with 1–5 years of experience scored significantly lower than those with 6–10 years, 11–15 years, 16–20 years, and 21–25 years (all  $p < .001$ ).

## Discussion

The findings of the study were derived from statistical analyses conducted to examine differences in teachers' perceptions regarding the improvement of identity, positionality, and reflexivity among students with hearing impairment through the teaching of social justice and sustainable development.

The analysis based on gender (Table 1) revealed that there was **no statistically significant difference** between male and female teachers in their perceptions of identity, positionality, and reflexivity (IPRTotal01). The mean scores of both groups were almost equal, which means that gender does not have a decisive influence when it comes to forming the opinion of teachers about inclusive teaching practice. This implies that there is professional awareness and attitudes between the genders which is a sign of awareness of the principles of inclusive education.

Conversely, the results pertaining to designation (Table 2) indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two classes of teachers: Junior Special Education Teachers (JSET) and Senior Special Education Teachers (SSET). The results showed that SSET teachers scored much higher in mean scores compared to JSET teachers, which means that teachers with higher designation are more advanced in their knowledge and better perception about identity, positionality and reflexivity. This could be explained by the higher level of professional experience, exposure and training that comes with higher positions.

The comparative analysis in terms of the type of institution (Table 3) showed no significant difference between teachers in the centers and the schools. This implies that institutional setting has no significant impact on the perception of teachers towards

inclusive practices. It means that there is a relatively low level of differences in the awareness of social justice and sustainable development in various institutional contexts.

The one-way ANOVA outcome according to age (Table 4) showed statistically significant difference of the various age groups. Post hoc analysis revealed that younger teachers (especially aged 25-30 years) scored so much lower than older age groups. This pattern indicates that perceptions of identity, positionality and reflexivity are better as one gets older, which is, probably, because of professional maturity, exposure and reflective experience. It seems that older teachers have a better insight into inclusive practices and critical pedagogical ideas.

Equally, the comparison in the area of academic qualification (Table 5) showed that there was a very significant difference between groups. Educators who are more qualified, especially M.Phil. and PhD degrees, had a significantly higher score than those with lower qualifications like B.Ed. and MA. This observation shows that higher-level academic training is essential in improving teachers' comprehension on the principles of inclusive education, critical reflective, and social justice. It emphasizes the significance of higher education in the formation of professional competence and awareness.

Moreover, the results of the teaching experience (Table 6) also indicated statistically significant difference on the levels of experience. Educators who had more years of experience (those with 11 years and above) scored much higher as compared to teachers with lower years of experience. It means that experience plays an important role in shaping reflective teaching practice and a better understanding of the identity of students and positionality. Teachers with less experience scored relatively less, which indicates the necessity of professional development programs.

In general, the study results reveal that gender and institutional demographic factors do not play a significant role in the perception of teachers, whereas the professional factors of designation, age, qualification and experience play a strong and significant role. These findings underscore the fact that professional development, academic improvement, and practice are critical factors that lead to increased ability of teachers to facilitate identity, positionality and reflexivity among students with hearing impairment.

## **Conclusion**

This research offers a holistic analysis of the importance of teaching social justice and sustainable development for inclusive education for hearing-impaired students. The study clearly shows that professional characteristics of teachers, such as experience, qualification and age, influence their ability to practice inclusive pedagogy and facilitate learning for the holistic development of hearing-impaired students.

The statistical findings indicate that while gender and school type did not have a significant impact on teachers' views, there were clear and strong statistically significant effects of professional factors, such as designation, qualification and experience. Educators with higher qualifications, more experience, and advanced professional positions had a better understanding of the principles of inclusive education and were more able to create effective learning environments. This indicates that inclusive education is not only about placement but is related to the professional capacity and reflective abilities of teachers.

The research also reveals that the incorporation of social justice and sustainable development principles into teaching practices can enhance learning opportunities for students with hearing impairments. This leads to increased participation, engagement and access to education. But the study also reveals that current education practices do not necessarily have integrated approaches to these principles in terms of curriculum, teacher training, and teaching strategies.

The study also concludes that to be inclusive, education must move beyond conventional, deficit-based practices to transformative, learner-centered pedagogies. Students with hearing impairment require learning environments that acknowledge their linguistic and cultural diversity, offer accessible learning opportunities, and enable them to be active learners. In the absence of this transformation, inclusion is shallow and does not meet the learning needs of these students.

Further, the study highlights the need for ongoing professional learning, curriculum enhancement and policy support to support inclusive practices. The link between teacher experience and their capacity to support inclusive outcomes indicates the need for capacity-building programs, especially for inexperienced and less-qualified teachers.

Finally, the study confirms that teaching social justice and sustainable development can be a valuable approach to promote inclusive education if accompanied by the right curriculum, professional development and institutional support. To ensure inclusive learning for hearing-impaired students, it is necessary to combine pedagogical, professional, and systemic support to ensure all students have the opportunity to learn, participate and contribute to society.

### **Recommendations**

The results of this research indicate that the experience, qualifications, and age of educators contribute greatly to their capacity to promote identity, positionality and reflexivity in hearing impaired students. To pursue the objective of enhancing these aspects to inclusive education, some evidence-based solutions can be suggested.

**Professional Development for Social Justice and Inclusive Pedagogy:** Specific training on social justice education and inclusive pedagogy should be given to teachers, particularly less experienced or lower-qualified teachers. This training may provide teachers with tactics on how to identify and address systemic inequity, authenticate student experiences, and build a classroom that affirms the identity of learners with hearing impairments. Literature stresses that socially conscious teaching leads to an increase in self-awareness and sense of belonging as the essential elements of identity development in students (Banks, 2015; Fraser, 2008).

**Integration of Sustainable Development Principles in Teaching:** Activities that allow critical thinking, participation, and problem-solving should be part of the curriculum in accordance with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Collaborative projects, reflective activities, and socially relevant issues can assist hearing-impaired students to actively participate in meaningful learning, position themselves more effectively by placing themselves in the position of active agents in social situations, and improve their reflexivity through active analysis of their personal and social experience (UNESCO, 2020).

**Human-Centered and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy:** Differentiated, assistive technology-enabled, and culturally responsive teaching approaches guarantee that hearing-impaired students receive education fostering their identity and autonomy. Reflexivity can be encouraged through the encouragement of self-expression, peer discussion, and reflective journaling, whereas positionality can be reinforced by the participatory classroom practice, which provides students with a voice in the learning process (Loreman, 2017; Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011).

**Mentorship and Peer Learning for Educators:** The inclusion of novice teachers in the company of highly experienced teachers or qualified teachers opens prospects of modeling inclusive practices. The results of the study indicate that there is a positive relationship between experience and IPRTotal01 scores meaning that mentorship can increase the capacity of teachers to promote identity, positionality, and reflexivity development in hearing-impaired students.

**Policy and Structural Support:** Educational policies must provide resources, ongoing professional growth and monitoring frameworks to institutionalize social justice and sustainable development. Policies which encourage inclusive curriculum, equal resource distribution, and considerate teaching methods offer a systemic basis on how to cultivate identity, positionality and reflexivity which eventually lead to long term inclusion.

Through these solutions, teaching can be a powerful instrument that not only enhances academic achievements but also enables hearing-impaired students to learn about themselves, position their views critically and engage in communities of inclusion, and thus, this is exactly what the aims of social justice and sustainable development education.

According to the research results, various practical and policy-level recommendations are made to promote the education of social justice and sustainable development to improve identity, positionality, and reflexivity in the students with hearing impairment:

**Professional Development and Training:** Continuous professional development programs among teachers, especially those who are less experienced and have lower designations are highly needed. The training must be based on the concepts of inclusive pedagogy, critical reflection, social justice education, and sustainable development. The training of the proficiency of sign language and visual strategies of teaching should also be highlighted in the workshops.

**Curriculum Enrichment:** The curriculum needs to be updated and enriched to explicitly include themes of social justice, inclusion, diversity and sustainability. The content must be made visually accessible and culturally responsive so that the hearing-impaired students are able to actively engage with these concepts.

**Promotion of Reflective Teaching Practices:** It is desirable that teachers embrace reflective teaching methods that encourage students to think and reflect. Class discussions, storytelling, role-playing, and project-based learning are some of the strategies that can assist students in reflecting on their experiences, biases, and social positions.

**Strengthening Higher Education Opportunities:** As the qualification was an important factor in the way teachers were perceived, chances of higher learning M.Phil. and PhD need to be extended. This can be achieved by offering incentives and scholarships to teachers to undertake higher studies in special education and inclusive education.

**Experience-Based Mentorship Programs:** Mentorship schemes ought to be put in place whereby teachers who are more experienced mentor less experienced ones. This will assist in the transfer of practical knowledge, classroom strategies and reflective practices that are critical towards inclusive education.

**Integration of Technology:** Assistive and digital technologies use should be encouraged to enhance visual learning and accessibility. Interactive platforms, video clips with captions, and visual simulations are tools that can be used to improve the knowledge on complex concepts in the social realm.

**Policy and Institutional Support:** Clear policies in favor of inclusive education should be formulated and established by educational authorities. They should be equipped with adequate resources, teaching materials and support services to implement inclusive practices in all the institutions effectively.

**Awareness and Sensitization Programs:** Teachers, students and community should be sensitized on the importance of Deaf culture, identity, and inclusion through awareness programs. This will assist in making the learning environment more supportive and inclusive.

**Emphasis on Early Career Support:** Induction programs and early-career training should be implemented to develop the abilities of younger and less experienced teachers in inclusive and reflective teaching since they scored lower.

**Encouraging Student-Centered Learning:** Instead of focusing on teacher-centered approaches, which deprive hearing-impaired students of their identities and active participation, classrooms must be changed towards student-centered ones where hearing-impaired students can openly discuss social and environmental problems.

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