

Examining Student Feedback Preferences in Inclusive Classroom Environments

A Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This research delves into the feedback preferences of students in inclusive classroom settings, focusing on Grades VI to VIII students in Kendriya Vidyalaya Schools in Chennai. Researchers collected data from 576 participants using a self-response questionnaire. The results showed a variety of preferences among students. Further analysis reveals that both male and female students share similar feedback preferences across all dimensions (audience, mode and amount). No statistically significant differences emerge, suggesting that gender minimally influences feedback preferences in inclusive classrooms. Likewise, comparisons between non-CWSN and CWSN students demonstrated remarkably similar feedback preferences, indicating that the presence of special needs does not significantly affect their preferences. Considering the student category as the baseline, no significant disparities were identified between the non-CWSN and CWSN students in their feedback preferences. This study imparts valuable insights, emphasising the need for educators to adopt a balanced approach to feedback delivery, incorporating both oral and written feedback, alongside detailed error correction guidance.

Keywords: Teacher Feedback, Student Preferences, Inclusive Classroom, Children with Special Needs

Introduction

Feedback is a vital component of the learning experience, impacting both cognitive processes and emotional well-being (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). It is a powerful tool for improving

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performance and a key factor influencing student achievement (Hattie, 2009). Responsibly utilising teacher feedback is crucial for academic growth (Yang and Yang, 2018), and formative assessment is incomplete without it, providing crucial insights into student progress (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Clear and actionable feedback is essential, enabling students to effectively apply it in their learning journey (Selvaraj et al., 2021) and to strengthen teacher-student relationships (Putri et al., 2021). Additionally, feedback can stimulate students' metacognition, leading to improved self-awareness and learning strategies (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Timely feedback can enhance learning by allowing students to address misconceptions and consolidate their understanding (Shute, 2008).

Children with Special Needs: Navigating Unique Educational Challenges

Children with special needs encompass individuals facing physical, cognitive, emotional, sensory or developmental disparities, requiring additional support for full participation in education and daily routines (Hallahan, Kauffman and Pullen, 2015). This definition acknowledges an array of potential challenges in this context. Turnbull et al. (2003) extended this definition, emphasising that special needs in children span physical, emotional, intellectual, sensory and communication hurdles warranting personalised instruction and supportive services for enhanced learning, growth and engagement in various facets of life. Students with specific learning disabilities or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder may require different feedback strategies to effectively process information (Deshler, Schumaker and Lenz, 2012).

Student Preferences in Teacher Feedback: Navigating the Maze of Individual Inclinations

Marberry (2018) asserted that preferences in education revolve around the modes, formats and content of feedback that students gravitate towards. These inclinations are molded by factors, such as learning style, grade level and personal motivation and have significant implications for educators aiming to provide effective feedback, as expounded by Hattie (2012). Furthermore, research by Burnett and Mandel (2010) and Karoly (2015) underscores the intricate nature of teacher feedback preferences, encompassing

specific methods, formats and content that students find most beneficial in their learning journeys. These encompass factors, such as communication mode, feedback timing and focus on particular aspects of performance. Tailoring feedback strategies to align with individual preferences based on learning style, grade level, cultural background and personal motivation is a crucial endeavour to optimise student engagement and enhance learning outcomes.

Students with special needs may have unique feedback preferences that may be influenced by their cognitive, emotional and sensory profiles (Hattie, 2012). It is important to consider the specific needs and preferences of each student when providing feedback, especially for students with special needs (Turnbull et al., 2003). Cultural differences can impact how students perceive and respond to feedback, necessitating culturally sensitive feedback practices (Kirschner, Sweller and Clark, 2006).

Overview of the Previous Studies

Previous research has highlighted that students value feedback that empowers them with suggestions, while preserving their autonomy and cultivating independent skills applicable in diverse contexts (Treglia, 2008; Evans, 2013). Understanding specific elements of teacher feedback is crucial for student engagement (Walls and Eby, 2020) and acknowledging the emotional impact of feedback is important, cautioning against potential personal interpretations (Taggart and Laughlin, 2017). This complexity is amplified when students receive low grades, as it can lead them to believe that their hard work doesn't yield the desired results (Chokwe, 2015) or potentially discourage them from thoroughly reviewing the feedback (Jackson and Marks, 2016).

Hattie's (2012) research indicates a preference for forward-looking, timely and personalised feedback focused on academic performance. Burnett and Mandel's (2010) findings show grade-level variations in feedback preferences, highlighting the importance of praise and formative feedback. Karoly (2015) revealed a preference for detailed, private feedback that addresses broader concepts and transferable skills. Some students prefer oral feedback for its valuable dialogue opportunity, while others favour written feedback for its clarity and individualised comprehension.

A growing body of research has examined student feedback preferences in various educational contexts. In India, studies on

general education settings have indicated that students generally prefer feedback that is specific, actionable and timely (Kumar and Sharma, 2015). This finding suggests that students in inclusive classrooms may value these feedback characteristics. The effectiveness of feedback in inclusive classrooms is closely related to teacher training. Research has shown that teachers who receive training on inclusive education and feedback strategies are more likely to provide effective feedback that meets the needs of diverse learners (Bhatt and Mishra, 2017).

Shute (2008) found that students value feedback that is specific, actionable and timely. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) demonstrated that both descriptive and prescriptive feedback are the most effective. On the teacher side, Sadler (2010) highlighted the need for teachers to provide feedback that is specific, timely and actionable. Hyland (2021) emphasised the importance of focusing on strengths and areas for improvement, rather than solely on errors and mistakes.

Studies highlight the distinct benefits of audio feedback compared to textual feedback (Marberry, 2018; Gould and Day, 2013). Chalmers et al. (2014) found that 81 per cent of students considered audio feedback more comprehensible than written feedback. Additionally, audio feedback tends to focus on rectifying mistakes, demonstrating correct practices and encouraging critical thinking (Merry and Orsmond, 2008).

Positive feedback can enhance students' motivation and engagement, whereas negative feedback can have a detrimental effect (Dweck, 2006). Feedback can be used to promote a growth mindset, encouraging students to view challenges as opportunities for learning and improvement (Dweck, 2006). Feedback can help students develop self-regulation skills, enabling them to monitor their learning and make adjustments as needed (Zimmerman, 2002).

Significance of the Study

While extensive research has delved into student feedback preferences, there remains a notable void in comprehending these preferences within the context of children with special needs. Existing literature predominantly concentrates on general student populations, inadvertently sidelining the unique needs and challenges confronted by this specific demographic. The nuanced

nature of feedback reception, particularly among children with special needs, remains largely uncharted territory. Factors such as cognitive, emotional and sensory disparities in these students may exert a significant influence on their feedback preferences, demanding personalised approaches to attain effective learning outcomes. Moreover, limited attention has been dedicated to exploring diverse feedback channels and their suitability for accommodating the diverse learning styles within this population. Consequently, further research becomes not only imperative but also a clarion call to foster a comprehensive understanding of feedback preferences for children with special needs, ultimately optimising their educational experiences.

Objective: To examine student feedback preferences in an inclusive classroom setting.

Hypothesis: Students in inclusive classrooms will exhibit similar preferences for teacher feedback, with no statistically significant differences observed among them.

Methodology

To address the research questions, a survey method was employed. A self-response questionnaire was thoughtfully designed for students, to elicit their insights into their preferences concerning teacher feedback within the inclusive classroom setting.

Participants

This research centres on the exploration of student preferences regarding teacher feedback within inclusive classrooms. Our study encompasses 576 participants, comprising 294 males and 282 females. Among these, 549 were categorised as non-CWSN (students without special needs), while 27 were classified as CWSN (students with special needs). These participants were thoughtfully selected from grades six to eight in Kendriya Vidyalaya schools in Chennai using a random sampling approach.

Participant Characteristics

The Shapiro-Wilk test ($p < 0.05$) revealed that responses to all questions within the preference domain displayed an approximately non-normal distribution with a skewness of -0.678 ($SE = 0.102$, $z = -6.65$) and a kurtosis of 1.811 ($SE = 0.203$, $z = 8.92$). Based on these findings, the researcher chose to employ a

non-parametric statistical approach for subsequent analyses to test the hypotheses.

Instrument

The questionnaire ‘Student Perspectives on Teacher’s Feedback’, developed by the researcher, was utilised to measure student preferences for teacher feedback. The questionnaire comprises three areas of preference (audience, mode and amount), each rated on a 4-point scale (4 = Very True and 1 = Not True). Table 1 presents sample questionnaire items, descriptive statistics, and internal consistencies for all scales.

Table 1: Summary of Statistics of Students’ Preference of Teacher Feedback

Scale	Sample Questionnaire	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach’s <i>α</i>
Audience	I want to receive feedback from my teacher by talking 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

Data Collection

Participation in the questionnaire was entirely voluntary for all students. Researchers randomly selected participants for this survey and gave them written information outlining the study’s objectives and procedures before collecting data. They were then allowed to offer their informed consent after being assured that the gathered data would exclusively be used for research purposes and that their anonymity would be safeguarded. The researcher, in collaboration with a volunteer teacher designated by the school authority, extended support to students who had any uncertainties or confusion regarding the statements or terms presented. However, they refrained from providing suggestions or hints that might have influenced the students’ responses. On average, each participant took approximately 8 to 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire, and responses were promptly collected. The data collection process adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring participant voluntariness and informed consent. Random sampling was employed to select a diverse group of students from Grades 6 to 7. The researcher collaborated with school authorities to facilitate data collection, ensuring objectivity and addressing queries of participants.

Data Analysis

To address the research question and hypothesis, three distinct sets of data analysis using SPSS 21 were conducted. Initially, a descriptive analysis was employed to provide a numerical summary of the responses concerning student preferences for teacher feedback. Subsequently, to explore potential differences related to gender and student category, two separate Mann-Whitney U tests were utilised.

Result

The descriptive analysis of students’ responses regarding their preferences for teacher feedback in inclusive classrooms is summarised in Figure 1. The findings unveil a wide spectrum of inclinations among students.

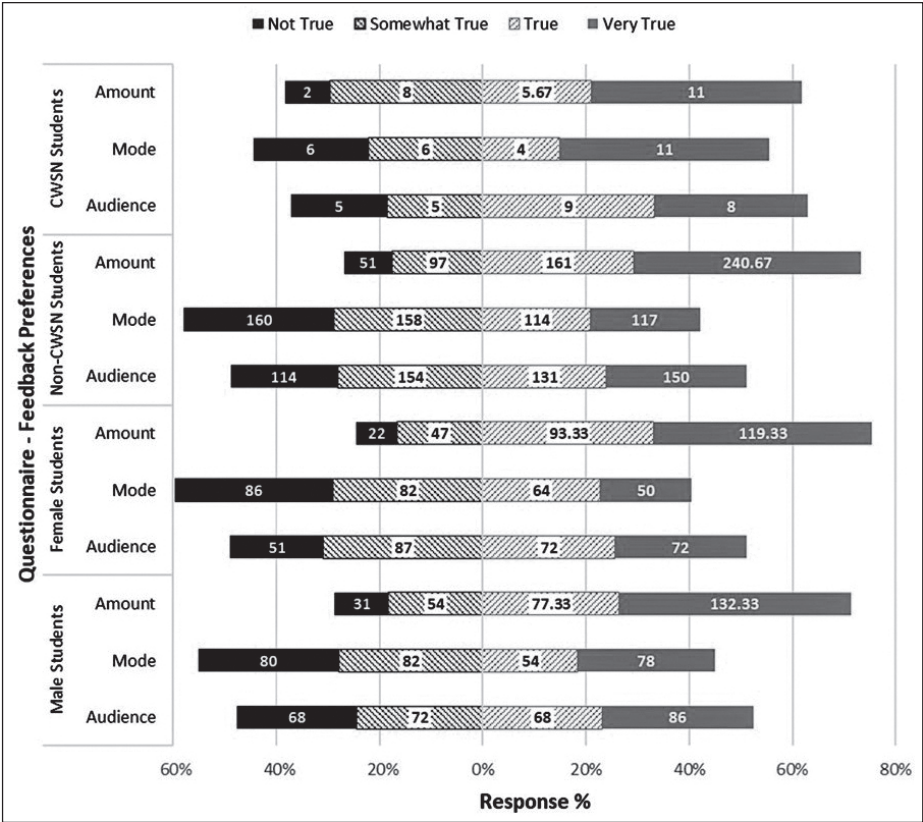


Figure 1: Student Response on Preferences of Teacher Feedback by Gender and Category

Student Preferences

Approximately 51.7 per cent of students expressed a preference for receiving oral feedback individually, while 48.3 per cent favoured it in a group setting. When it comes to written feedback, 42.9 per cent of students indicated a preference for this mode. Additionally, a significant majority (84.7%) of students emphasised their desire for detailed, step-by-step guidance in error correction from their teachers. Highlighting errors in performance were favoured by 59 per cent of students, and 76.2 per cent expressed a preference for receiving feedback with hints on error correction.

Preferences among Boys and Girls

Further analysis was conducted to discern potential variations in feedback preferences between boy and girl students. Interestingly, the results indicate that both groups exhibited similar preferences across all three dimensions (audience, mode and amount). No statistically significant differences were observed, underscoring that gender does not significantly influence students' feedback preferences in inclusive classrooms.

Preferences among Non-CWSN and CWSN Students

The preferences of non-CWSN (students without special needs) and CWSN (students with special needs) students were also compared. Strikingly, both groups demonstrated similar feedback preferences across all three dimensions (audience, mode and amount). This analysis revealed that the presence of special needs did not significantly impact students' preferences for teacher feedback in inclusive classrooms.

Differences in Preference of Students for Teacher Feedback in Inclusive Classrooms

To test the hypothesis, two Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted on the obtained data. The first test compared the preferences of boy and girl students for receiving teacher feedback. The findings revealed no statistically significant difference between boy ($N = 294$, $Md = 2.80$) and girl ($N = 282$, $Md = 2.80$) students' preferences for teacher feedback in inclusive classrooms ($U = 41081.50$, $p > 0.05$, $r = 0.008$). Thus, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating no significant difference between boy and girl students' preferences for teacher feedback in inclusive classrooms.

The second test examined the preferences of non-CWSN ($N = 549$, $Md = 2.80$) and CWSN ($N = 27$, $Md = 2.80$) students for teacher feedback in inclusive classrooms. The results ($U = 6681.00$, $p > 0.05$, $r = 0.036$) indicate no significant difference in their preferences. Therefore, considering student category as the baseline, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating no significant differences between non-CWSN and CWSN students in their preferences for teacher feedback in inclusive classrooms.

Discussion

This study extends the groundwork established by previous research in the realm of feedback preferences in education. Marberry (2018) stressed the significance of tailoring feedback strategies to align with individual preferences based on factors, such as learning style and personal motivation. The present study complements this by quantifying these preferences, providing specific percentages that offer a quantitative dimension to the understanding of student feedback reception. For example, the finding that 51.7 per cent of students prefer individual oral feedback, while 48.3 per cent prefer group settings, offers concrete insights into the variations in feedback reception among students.

Furthermore, the study sheds light on the preference for written feedback, with 42.9 per cent of students indicating a preference for this mode. This finding aligns with the research of Gould and Day (2013) and Chalmers et al. (2014), which highlighted the distinct advantages of audio feedback compared to textual feedback. By exploring this preference, the present study contributes to the ongoing discourse regarding feedback delivery methods.

The study also underscores the importance of detailed, step-by-step guidance in error correction, as emphasised by 84.7 per cent of students. This aligns with the findings of Karoly (2015) and Hattie (2012), who advocated for forward-looking, timely and personalised feedback. The study's results empirically support the significance of this aspect of feedback in optimising learning outcomes.

Moreover, the comparative analysis between male and female students as well as between non-CWSN and CWSN students, presents a unique contribution to the existing body of knowledge. The study's conclusion that genders and the presence of special needs do not significantly influence students' feedback preferences

challenges potential assumptions and underscores the importance of individualised approaches for all students.

Conclusion

This study not only corroborates several findings from previous research, but also provides valuable quantitative insights into feedback preferences. It offers a nuanced understanding of how students in inclusive classrooms may differ in their preferences, providing educators with actionable information to enhance their feedback strategies. Additionally, the study's focus on children with special needs addresses a notable gap in the literature, emphasising the importance of personalised approaches for this specific demographic. This underscores the need for further research in this area to optimise educational experiences for all students.

Implications

The findings from the present study have several important implications for educational practice:

- Recognising that approximately half of students prefer individual oral feedback, while the other half prefer group settings, suggests that educators should aim to incorporate both modes of feedback delivery in their teaching practices. This allows for a balanced approach that caters to different learning styles and preferences.
- With nearly 43 per cent of students indicating a preference for written feedback, educators should ensure that they provide written comments alongside oral feedback. This supports a more comprehensive approach to feedback, accommodating the preferences of a substantial portion of the student population.
- The substantial majority (85%) of students expressing a desire for detailed, step-by-step guidance in error correction emphasises the importance of providing specific and constructive feedback. This implies that educators should invest time and effort into providing clear instructions for improvement, which can enhance the effectiveness of the feedback process.
- Recognising that a significant portion of students prefer having errors highlighted (59%) and receiving hints on error

correction (76.2%) indicates that educators should integrate these strategies into their feedback practices. This can help students pinpoint areas that need improvement and guide them toward finding solutions.

- The absence of statistically significant differences in feedback preferences between male and female students underscores that gender does not play a significant role in shaping students' preferences for feedback. This suggests that educators should approach feedback delivery without gender bias, recognising that both groups may have similar preferences.
- The similarity in feedback preferences between students with and without special needs highlights the importance of inclusivity in feedback practices. Educators should strive to provide feedback that accommodates the diverse needs of all students, regardless of whether they have special needs.
- The failure to reject the null hypothesis indicates that, when considering student category as the baseline, there are no significant differences in feedback preferences between students with and without special needs. This implies that educators should approach feedback delivery with a universal perspective, recognising that students with special needs may have similar preferences as their peers.

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