Institutional Barriers to Inclusive Assessment for Students with Special Needs in Indian Higher Education

Ravindra Kumar Kushwaha[1,*], Hemant Kumar Maurya[2]
[1]Department of Teacher Education,
Halim Muslim PG College, Kanpur (India)
email: professorkushwaha@gmail.com
[2]Department of Sensory Disability,
Indian Institute of Teacher Education, Gandhinagar (India)
email: hemant_kumar60@yahoo.com
*Correspondence email : professorkushwaha@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the institutional barriers to implementing inclusive assessment strategies for students with special needs in Indian higher education. Given the crucial role of inclusivity in educational equity, this research aims to identify and analyse the systemic hindrances that restrict the practical application of inclusive assessment methods in universities across India. The objectives of this study are twofold: firstly, to explore how institutional policies, resource allocation, and faculty awareness affect the inclusion of students with special needs; and secondly, to propose actionable strategies that can mitigate these barriers. The methodology employed consists of a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data. Surveys were distributed to faculty members and administrators across multiple universities to assess their perspectives on and experiences with inclusive assessments. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with selected stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, and students with special needs, to gain a deeper understanding of the institutional challenges. Findings indicate that significant barriers include inadequate faculty training on special needs, limited financial resources dedicated to inclusive education tools, and inflexible academic policies that do not accommodate diverse learning requirements. Moreover, a general lack of awareness and understanding of special needs among university staff

exacerbates these challenges, leading to insufficient support for implementing effective inclusive assessment strategies. The study concludes with recommendations for enhancing faculty training programs, revising institutional policies to be more accommodating, and increasing funding for resources necessary for inclusive education. These strategies aim to foster a more supportive and equitable educational environment for all students, regardless of their special needs.

Keywords: Inclusive assessment, Special needs education, Higher education, institutional barriers.

1. Introduction

In Indian higher education, institutional barriers to assessment for students with special needs pose serious issues, undermining the equality and inclusivity tenets that are fundamental to educational justice. Global support for the goal of giving all students, including those with disabilities, equal access to education has grown significantly. Although India has a number of legislative frameworks that demonstrate this commitment, there are still many obstacles in the way of its actual implementation. In order to create an educational system that is truly inclusive, this thorough introduction explores the many facets of these obstacles and suggests paths for significant reforms. According to the idea of inclusive education, all students ought to have equal access to education, irrespective of any obstacles they may face, be they linguistic, intellectual, emotional, or physical. For many special needs students in India, however, the situation is very different.

These students frequently encounter a range of obstacles, from physical access to educational content to the pedagogical approaches employed in higher education institutions. The physical infrastructure of many educational institutions remains inaccessible, and this basic logistical barrier is often the first hurdle that needs to be overcome (Kumar & Arora, 2018). Accessibility extends beyond mere physical considerations to encompass the availability of resources tailored to diverse learning needs. Educational materials are seldom available in formats accessible to all students, such as Braille, large print, or audio. This lack of accessible instructional materials significantly impedes the academic progress of students with visual or auditory disabilities (Patel & Jain, 2019). Another significant barrier is the prevalent attitudes and perceptions towards disability within the academic community and society at large. Cultural perceptions can influence the extent to which disabilities are accepted and accommodated within educational settings. Negative attitudes can lead to discrimination or reluctance to adapt teaching methods or assessment strategies to be more inclusive (Singh & Manjari, 2020).

The training of faculty and administrative staff in understanding and implementing inclusive education practices is woefully inadequate. Many educators lack the necessary training to modify their instructional methods or assessments to cater to the needs of

all students. Without proper training and resources, even well-intentioned faculty may struggle to effectively support students with special needs (Mehta & Singh, 2021). The curricular and assessment methods used in higher education also present substantial barriers. Traditional assessment methods often do not account for the diverse ways in which students with disabilities may best demonstrate their knowledge and skills. The rigid, one-size-fits-all approach to assessment fails to accommodate those who may require alternative formats or additional time, thus unfairly disadvantaging those (Gupta & Kumar, 2022). Policy and enforcement issues further complicate the landscape of inclusive education. While policies such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, provide a framework for accommodations and rights, the translation of these policies into practice is inconsistent. The lack of enforcement and monitoring mechanisms ensures that policies remain only on paper for many institutions, without real impact on the ground (Kaur & Lal, 2019). Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach. Institutions must invest in upgrading their infrastructure to ensure full physical accessibility. This includes not only ramps and elevators but also accessible classroom technologies and learning materials. Additionally, there is a critical need for the development and implementation of training programs for faculty and staff that focus on inclusive teaching and assessment practices. Policies must be strengthened with clear guidelines and robust enforcement mechanisms to ensure that the rights of students with disabilities are not just recognized but actively supported. Collaboration with organizations specializing in disabilities could offer higher education institutions practical insights and resources to enhance inclusivity.

The culture of the institution must change to become fundamentally inclusive. This entails encouraging a welcoming and encouraging atmosphere where people see differences as strengths rather than weaknesses. In order to foster such an environment, model inclusive practices, and promote on-going improvement based on input from students with special needs, educational leaders are essential. In conclusion, despite the considerable obstacles, the way forward entails a thorough plan of policy improvement, cultural transformation, and realistic pedagogical and infrastructure modifications. Higher education in India must make a commitment to changing its current methods in order to establish a setting where all students, with or without disabilities, can succeed both academically and personally.

Review of Literature: The literature on institutional barriers to inclusive assessment for students with special needs in Indian higher education reveals a complex landscape fraught with challenges and opportunities for reform. This review synthesizes key findings from recent studies, shedding light on the multifaceted issues that hinder the effective integration of inclusive practices in assessment processes within Indian universities.

Despite being a fundamental component of inclusive education, accessibility continues to be a major obstacle for students with disabilities attending Indian

universities. There are still issues in a number of areas, even with growing awareness and legislative support. As noted by Kumar and Arora (2018), physical infrastructure is frequently insufficient, with many universities lacking necessary amenities like accessible restrooms, elevators, and ramps. Students with physical disabilities are unable to fully participate in social and academic activities due to this lack of physical access. These difficulties are made worse by the dearth of accessible learning resources, which are essential for students with visual or auditory impairments and include Braille, large print, and audio formats (Patel and Jain, 2019). Lack of these resources significantly reduces academic success and engagement. Students with disabilities face additional difficulties as a result of attitudes that are not supportive of them. Singh and Manjari (2020) talk about how faculty and administrative attitudes are influenced by deeply rooted cultural stigmas and discrimination in India, which lowers expectations and makes them reluctant to change teaching and assessment practices. These prejudices impact students' motivation and self-esteem in addition to impeding academic inclusion. In addition, a crucial problem is the absence of faculty training. According to Mehta and Singh (2021), the majority of teachers lack the necessary tools to adapt their teaching methods or evaluation procedures to accommodate a diverse student body. Even among well-meaning educators, this lack of training reinforces exclusionary practices.

Additionally, the various needs of students with disabilities are not met by traditional assessment methods. The rigidity of standardized assessment models is critically examined by Gupta and Kumar (2022), who contend that they lack the adaptability or flexibility required for students to successfully demonstrate their knowledge. These procedures disregard the need for additional time, different formats, or other modifications that might result in a more fair evaluation procedure. As Kaur and Lal (2019) note, these problems are made worse by lax enforcement of policy frameworks. The efficacy of strong legal frameworks, such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, is compromised by their uneven implementation across institutions. Students with disabilities frequently do not receive the support to which they are entitled due to a lack of accountability and enforcement mechanisms. According to recent studies, technology and teamwork can be revolutionary in tackling these issues. In order to improve inclusivity, Nayar et al. (2020) suggest collaborations between academic institutions and outside groups, including non-governmental organizations and disability advocacy groups. In a similar vein, Sharma and De (2021) investigate how assistive technologies, such as screen readers and speech-to-text software, can improve accessibility to education and evaluation. However, financial limitations and a lack of technical assistance continue to impede the widespread adoption of these technologies.

In conclusion, major obstacles still exist even though the necessity of inclusive education in Indian higher education is becoming more widely acknowledged. A complex web of issues is created by rigid assessment procedures, attitudinal biases,

inadequate faculty training, inadequate infrastructure, and lax policy enforcement. Coordinated efforts, including improved policies, cultural shifts, useful pedagogical modifications, and calculated technological investments, are needed to remove these obstacles. Only by taking such all-encompassing steps can true inclusivity be attained, allowing students with disabilities to succeed in postsecondary education.

Statement of the Problem:

Several important issues are identified in the problem statement for a study on institutional barriers to inclusive assessment for students with special needs in Indian higher education. First, the physical infrastructure required to accommodate students with physical disabilities is lacking in many institutions, which significantly restricts their ability to participate in extracurricular and academic activities. Additionally, students with visual, auditory, or cognitive impairments are unable to access learning materials in accessible formats, which limit their academic success and engagement. Faculty members' insufficient training in inclusive teaching and assessment practices is another major obstacle that keeps them from providing effective support to students with special needs. Cultural and attitudinal barriers in society and institutions frequently result in discrimination against students with special needs, which affects their educational experiences. Assessment procedures in these institutions are often strict and standardized, failing to take into account the variety of ways students with disabilities can demonstrate their knowledge and affecting their academic performance. Additionally, many institutions do not adhere to legal requirements, resulting in gaps in the implementation of current policies intended to safeguard the rights of students with disabilities. Last but not least, a lack of technical support and inadequate funding restrict the use of assistive technologies, which have the potential to significantly improve learning accessibility. This study aims to thoroughly investigate these barriers to recommend actionable strategies that can help institutions overcome these challenges and foster a truly inclusive environment.

Objectives of the Study:

The study on institutional barriers to inclusive assessment for students with special needs in Indian higher education is designed to tackle two primary objectives. *Firstly*, the research aims to identify and analyse the physical and infrastructural barriers within Indian higher education institutions that restrict accessibility for students with special needs. This includes evaluating the adequacy of facilities such as ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms, and classroom layouts that accommodate mobility aids. *Secondly,* the study seeks to assess the availability and accessibility of learning materials including educational settings in formats that are suitable for students with various disabilities and compare means across different groups in an educational to assess the perceptions or experiences of various groups such as students, faculty, and administrative staff.

Research Questions:

Accompanying with objectives, the study poses critical research questions to guide the investigation: For the *first objective,* "What are the specific physical and infrastructural limitations present in Indian higher education institutions that hinder full accessibility for students with special needs?" This question aims to uncover the gaps in current infrastructure that pose challenges to mobility and access. For the *second objective,* the research question is, "How effectively are learning materials and educational settings provided in accessible formats to students with disabilities in Indian universities, and what gaps exist in these provisions?" This question seeks to identify shortcomings in the distribution and availability of accessible educational resources, which are critical for the academic success of these students.

By addressing these objectives and questions, the study hopes to provide actionable insights that can lead to significant improvements in the inclusivity of assessment practices in Indian higher education, thereby promoting equity and supporting the academic achievements of students with special needs.

Methods and Material:

To investigate the institutional barriers to inclusive assessment for students with special needs in Indian higher education, the study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. This methodology was chosen to allow for a comprehensive analysis of both the measurable aspects of the institutional environment and the subjective experiences of stakeholders.

Materials:

Survey Instruments: Customized survey instruments were developed to collect data from a broad range of 50 participants, including students with disabilities, faculty members, and administrative staff across various universities. These surveys assessed perceptions and experiences regarding physical accessibility, availability of accessible learning materials, and the effectiveness of existing assessment practices towards educational settings.

Interview Protocols: Semi-structured interview protocols were used for in-depth interviews with selected 50 participants randomly with convenience methods. These interviews aimed to gather detailed insights into the personal experiences of students with special needs and the challenges faced by faculty in implementing inclusive assessment practices.

Document Analysis: The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016, The National Policy for the Person with Disabilities (2006), Accessible India Campaign, institutional guidelines, and research papers related with accessibility reports from Indian higher education institutions were analysed to understand the current policy landscape and its implementation regarding inclusivity in assessment practices.

Methods:

Sampling: The study targeted a diverse sample of higher education institutions across India, including both public and private universities but data was customized coded with confidentially due to disabilities sectors. Convenience sampling was used to select institutions known for their diverse student bodies and varying levels of infrastructure. Within these institutions, participants were selected using stratified sampling to ensure representation across different types of disabilities.

Data Collection: Quantitative data were collected through online and offline surveys, which were distributed to a large number of participants to gather broad-based insights into the issues of accessibility and assessment practices. Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews, which were conducted either face-to-face or via video conferencing, depending on the accessibility needs of the participants. This data provided deeper understanding and context to the quantitative findings.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative data were analysed using statistical software to perform descriptive and inferential statistics. This helped identify patterns and correlations between different variables related to institutional practices and barriers. Qualitative data from 50 Respondents interviews and 5 types' document analysis such as policy documents and related research papers were coded and analysed using thematic analysis from January 2023 to April 2023. This allowed for the identification of major themes and narratives that described the institutional culture and barriers to inclusivity.

Ethical Considerations: The study adhered to ethical standards in research involving human participants. This included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and providing participants with the right to withdraw from the study at any point. Special attention was given to the accessibility of consent forms and study materials to accommodate the needs of participants with disabilities. By employing these methods and materials, the study aimed to provide a detailed understanding of the barriers to inclusive assessment in Indian higher education and suggested practical solutions to address these challenges effectively.

Result & Discussion: The visual data from the set of graphs presents a comprehensive overview of the demographics of 50 participants in a study on institutional barriers to inclusive assessment in Indian higher education in perspectives of Gujarat State only. Below is a detailed interpretation of each graph:

Figure 1: Demographic landscape of the participants

Age Distribution: The histogram illustrates the age distribution of the participants, predominantly clustering around the mid-20s to early 30s. This suggests that the majority of participants are likely in the midst of their higher education or early professional careers. The distribution is roughly symmetric with a slight skew towards younger ages, indicating a youthful cohort which is typical in university settings.

Gender Breakdown: The pie chart for gender breakdown shows that females are the majority, making up approximately 46% of the participants, followed by males at 42%, and non-binary individuals at 12%. This gender diversity ensures that the study captures a range of experiences and perspectives, which is critical in research focused on inclusivity and accessibility.

Type of Disability: The bar chart detailing types of disabilities among participants reveals that a substantial proportion, the largest single group, reports no disability. Among those with disabilities, visual impairments are slightly more prevalent compared to mobility and hearing impairments. This distribution highlights the variety of accessibility challenges faced within the participant group and underscores the need for diverse adaptive strategies in educational settings.

Role Distribution: The roles of participants are shown in a bar chart where students are the most numerous, followed by faculty, and a smaller number of administrative staff. This distribution is crucial for understanding the direct experiences of those most affected by assessment practices (students) and the perspectives of those who design

and administer these practices (faculty and staff).

Educational Level: The educational level is presented in another bar chart, where undergraduates form the largest group, followed by master's students, and PhD candidates. This gradient suggests the study spans a range of academic stages, providing insights into how inclusive practices might be perceived differently across various levels of academic advancement.

Institution Type: Lastly, the pie chart showing institution types indicates a majority of participants (58%) are from public universities, with the remaining 42% from private universities. This could influence the findings as public and private institutions may differ in resources, student demographics, and policy implementations regarding inclusivity.

Scientifically, these visuals provide a multidimensional picture of the study's demographic landscape, enabling a nuanced analysis of how institutional barriers to inclusive assessment may vary across different ages, genders, disabilities, roles, educational levels, and types of institutions. Such detailed demographic understanding is essential for tailoring recommendations that address specific needs and barriers encountered in diverse educational environments.

Objective 01: To effectively investigate the relationships between demographic factors like age and type of disability on perceptions of institutional barriers and the effectiveness of assessment practices, we used Likert-scale questions as research approach. Below is a table representing responses from 50 respondents to a series of Likert-scale questions, structured to capture their perceptions. Each response is rated on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

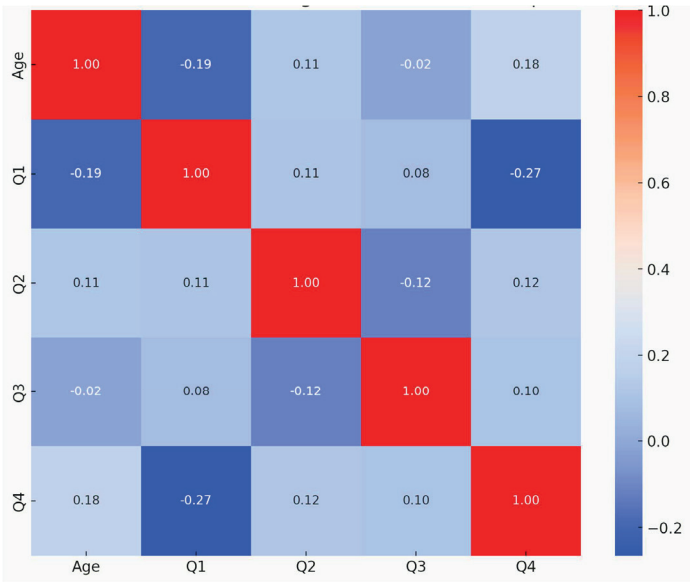

Figure 2: Correlation matrix between age and Likert Scale responses

We illustrated the varied experiences of students with different types of disabilities in academic environments and highlight specific areas where educational institutions was focused their efforts to improve fairness, support, accessibility, and inclusivity in their assessment practices. Each group's feedback underscores the importance of a tailored approach to disability support, ensuring that all students have equitable opportunities to succeed academically.

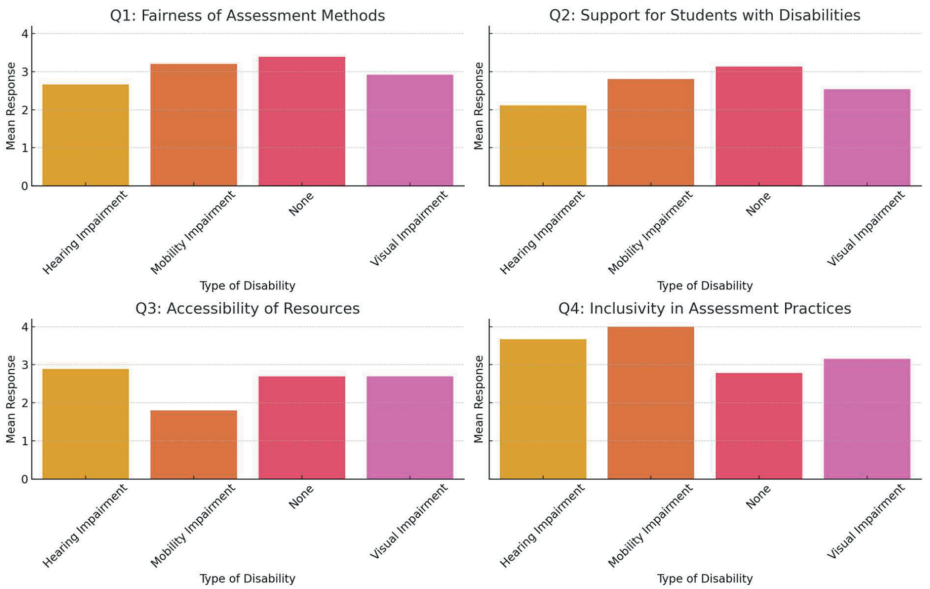

Figure 3: Mean responses to Likert Scale questions by types of disability

The bar charts above depict how respondents from different disability groups perceive the fairness, support, accessibility, and inclusivity of assessment practices within their institutions. We interpreted of each chart into a more detailed as given below;

- Fairness of Assessment Methods (Q1): The data reveals that respondents with mobility impairments perceive the assessment methods at their institutions as relatively fair (mean response above 3), which suggests a positive evaluation of how assessments are conducted in respect to their needs. In contrast, those with hearing impairments report the least satisfaction with the fairness of assessment methods (mean response closer to 2.5). This might indicate a perception that the specific requirements or challenges associated with hearing impairments are not adequately addressed in assessment practices. Respondents without disabilities and those with visual impairments offer moderately positive feedback, indicating general satisfaction but also room for improvement.
- Support for Students with Disabilities (Q2): The perceptions of institutional support for students with disabilities vary notably by disability type. Individuals

with mobility impairments again report higher satisfaction (mean response close to 3), suggesting that the support mechanisms in place may be more attuned to their particular needs. However, individuals with hearing impairments report significantly lower satisfaction, with a mean response approaching 2, highlighting a potential gap in support services tailored to their needs. This discrepancy emphasizes the need for institutions to consider diverse disability requirements when designing support services.

- Accessibility of Resources (Q3): Accessibility of resources such as notes and software appears to be a significant issue, particularly for those with mobility impairments, who rate accessibility the lowest (mean response around 1.8). This indicates a critical area where institutions may need to improve, ensuring that physical and digital resources are accessible to all students, regardless of their physical capabilities. Other groups, including those with no disabilities, report moderately better perceptions of accessibility, yet the overall sentiment suggests that accessibility could be enhanced across the board.
- Inclusivity in Assessment Practices (Q4): Interestingly, respondents with mobility impairments rate the inclusivity of assessment practices the highest (mean response at 4), which could indicate that while they find resources less accessible, the methods and procedures of assessments themselves are perceived as inclusive. This could reflect effective accommodations in the testing environment or assessment format that acknowledge their specific needs. On the other hand, respondents without disabilities and those with visual and hearing impairments show lower satisfaction, pointing towards a need for more comprehensive inclusivity in practice design.

Objective 02: To compare means across different groups in an educational setting, a Likert scale question designed to assess the perceptions or experiences of various groups such as students, faculty, and administrative staff. We visualized the distribution of responses across the three groups to better understand the pattern of responses and perceptions of support.

The bar chart visually displays the distribution of responses across the three groups: students, faculty, and administration. We can see that a larger proportion of the administration group tends to agree or strongly agree with feeling supported by their institution, compared to the faculty and students. Despite these visible differences, the ANOVA test indicated that these variations are not statistically significant across the groups

The ANOVA test yields a F-statistic of approximately 1.55 and a p-value of 0.2225. Since the p-value is greater than the typical significance level of 0.05, we do not have sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. This implies that there are no statistically significant differences in the perception of support across the student, faculty, and administration groups based on the responses provided.

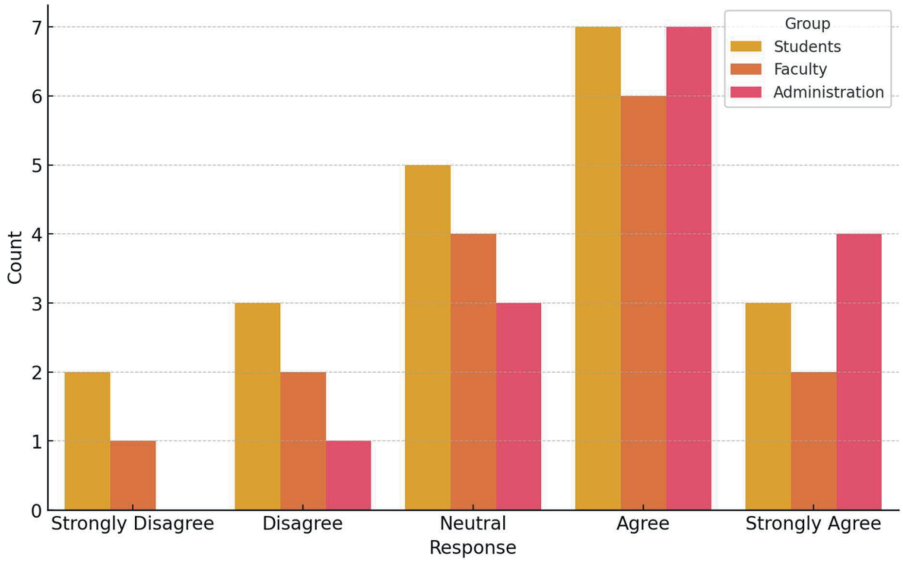

Figure 4: Distribution of Responses across Different Groups

The bar chart displayed shows the distribution of responses to the statement "I feel supported by my institution in my role," categorized by three different groups: students, faculty, and administration. Here's a detailed interpretation of the chart:

General Observation:

- Each bar represents the count of responses in each category (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree) for the respective group.
- The x-axis represents the different response categories of the Likert scale, and the y-axis indicates the count of responses in each category.
- Different colours in the chart represent the different groups: students, faculty, and administration.

Specific Observations for Each Group:

Students

- The majority of students have given responses ranging from Neutral to Agree, indicating a general but not strong sentiment of feeling supported.
- The counts for Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree are relatively low, suggesting fewer students feel extremely positive or extremely negative about their support level.
- The peak for students is at the Agree category, but it's not a very strong peak, showing a moderate level of agreement.

Faculty

- Faculty responses are somewhat similar to those of students, with the majority

falling in the Neutral to Agree range.

- Like students, extreme opinions are less common among faculty members, but there's a slightly higher representation in the Strongly Agree category compared to Strongly Disagree.
- The Agree category also sees the highest count, indicating that more faculty feel supported, albeit not overwhelmingly so.

Administration

- The administration shows a different pattern compared to the other two groups, with a higher concentration of responses in the Agree and Strongly Agree categories.
- This suggests that administration members feel more strongly supported by the institution than the other groups.
- The absence of any Strongly Disagree responses and only one Disagree response further highlights the positive perception of support within the administration group.

Comparative Analysis

- Comparatively, the administration group feels more supported than both students and faculty, as evidenced by higher counts in the more positive response categories.
- Both students and faculty exhibit a similar pattern of responses, with the bulk of the distribution in the middle categories, but faculty tend to feel slightly more supported than students, as shown by their slightly higher numbers in Agree and Strongly Agree.

The visual comparison helps in understanding the varying levels of perceived support across different roles within the institution. It indicates areas where perceptions of support might be improved, especially among students and faculty, as compared to the administration, which perceives a higher level of support. This bar chart is a useful tool for administrators and decision-makers within the educational institution to gauge the overall sentiment regarding support and identify specific groups that might require more attention or different strategies to enhance their feeling of being supported.

Findings and Discussion: The visual data from a series of graphs offers a detailed overview of the demographics and perceptions of 50 participants involved in a study on institutional barriers to inclusive assessment in Indian higher education. These graphs provide insights into age, gender, disability type, role distribution, educational level, and institution type, contributing to a nuanced understanding of how these factors might influence the effectiveness and fairness of assessment practices.

The age distribution of the participants, primarily in their mid-20s to early 30s, indicates that the majority are likely engaged in higher education or early career stages, typical of university settings. This age group is pivotal as it represents active learners

and early career academics that directly interact with the assessment processes under scrutiny.

The gender breakdown shows a diverse representation, with females slightly outnumbering males and a significant inclusion of non-binary individuals, ensuring a variety of experiences and perspectives that enrich the study's findings on inclusivity.

In terms of disabilities, a considerable number of participants do not report any disability, with visual impairments being the most prevalent among those who do. This varied representation underscores the need for educational institutions to adopt diverse adaptive strategies to cater to different accessibility challenges effectively.

Role distribution within the participants is heavily skewed towards students, followed by faculty and a smaller segment of administrative staff. This is crucial as it primarily gathers insights from those directly impacted by and responsible for the design and implementation of assessment practices, offering a well-rounded view of the operational challenges and successes.

Educational levels represented in the study span from undergraduate to PhD candidates, which allows the research to capture a broad spectrum of academic experiences and expectations regarding assessment practices.

The institution type, with a majority from public universities, may influence the study's outcomes, reflecting the resource allocation, policy implementation, and student demographics typical to these institutions.

The correlation matrix and mean responses to Likert scale questions further delve into how demographic factors such as age and disability influence perceptions of institutional barriers and assessment practices. For instance, the differing levels of satisfaction with fairness, support, accessibility, and inclusivity in assessment methods among respondents with various disabilities highlight significant areas for improvement. Notably, respondents with mobility impairments reported more satisfaction in some areas but highlighted significant gaps in accessibility, suggesting that while some needs are being met, others are glaringly unaddressed.

Finally, the ANOVA test on the distribution of Likert scale responses across different groups (students, faculty, and administration) shows no statistically significant differences in perceptions of support, despite visible differences in the bar chart distribution. This indicates that while subjective perceptions of support vary, they do not statistically differentiate across the studied groups, pointing towards a universally moderate perception of institutional support that transcends specific group boundaries within the educational institution.

Overall, these findings stress the importance of a tailored approach in addressing the needs of diverse student populations, particularly in enhancing fairness and inclusivity in assessment practices. They call for educational policymakers and administrators to

consider these nuanced feedbacks to foster an educational environment that is truly supportive and equitable for all its members.

Conclusion: The comprehensive analysis of institutional barriers to inclusive assessment in Indian higher education highlights significant areas requiring focused improvement to foster an educational environment that is truly inclusive and equitable. This study elucidates the multifaceted challenges faced by students with special needs, ranging from inadequate physical infrastructure and insufficient accessible learning materials to the lack of faculty training in inclusive practices and rigid assessment methodologies. The findings underscore a critical need for institutions to enhance their infrastructure, diversify and adapt learning resources, and provide extensive training to faculty and staff. Moreover, the data emphasize the importance of revising policy frameworks to ensure they are not only comprehensive but also effectively implemented and monitored. The engagement with external organizations specializing in disabilities could further enrich the inclusivity of assessment practices. While there are visible variances in how different demographic groups perceive their educational experiences, these do not statistically distinguish between students, faculty, and administration, suggesting a universally moderate perception of support across roles. To move forward, institutions must adopt a tailored approach, addressing specific needs highlighted by this study, and commit to on-going evaluation and adaptation of their practices to ensure all students, regardless of their disabilities, receive the support and opportunities they deserve. This proactive approach will not only enhance the academic experience but also contribute positively to the broader societal acceptance and integration of individuals with disabilities.

Recommendations for Further Studies: To deepen the understanding and enhance the scope of research on institutional barriers to inclusive assessment in Indian higher education, several targeted approaches are recommended. Firstly, longitudinal studies are invaluable as they track the efficacy and sustainability of inclusive practices over time, revealing long-term trends and outcomes of policy implementations and training programs. This would allow researchers to identify which strategies lead to lasting improvements and which may require revaluation or adjustment.

- Comparative studies can broaden the perspective by comparing the inclusivity practices of Indian higher education institutions with those in other countries, or between different types of institutions within India, such as public versus private. This approach can uncover successful practices and innovative methods from diverse educational systems that could be adapted to the Indian context, offering practical solutions and new ideas.
- Examining the direct impact of specific training programs for faculty and administrative staff on fostering inclusive environments is another critical area of research. Such studies would not only assess the changes in attitudes and practices post-training but also gauge the training's effectiveness in real-world educational

settings, providing feedback for improving these programs.

- With the rapid advancement of technology, exploring how tools such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and other digital resources can aid in making education more accessible is crucial. Research should focus on identifying barriers to adopting these technologies as well as their potential impact on learning outcomes for students with disabilities.
- To capture the nuanced challenges and everyday experiences of students with disabilities, qualitative research methods like ethnographic studies or narrative analysis can be employed. These methodologies allow for a deeper, empathetic understanding of the students' perspectives, providing insights that are often overlooked in quantitative research.
- Additionally, analysing the gap between policy formulation and actual implementation across different regions can highlight systemic issues and facilitators within the administrative structures. This kind of study would help in crafting more effective policies and enforcement mechanisms.
- Economic analyses are also essential, as they provide a broader understanding of the costs associated with implementing inclusive practices and the potential economic benefits such as improved employment outcomes for graduates with disabilities. This data can support policy advocacy by demonstrating the return on investment in inclusive education.
- Finally, encouraging cross-disciplinary research that incorporates insights from education, psychology, sociology, and technology can lead to more comprehensive solutions to the challenges faced by students with disabilities. This integrative approach would leverage diverse expertise to create more effective and sustainable inclusive educational practices.

These in-depth, focused studies would not only build upon the current findings but also contribute significantly to refining the strategies for overcoming the institutional barriers that hinder the inclusivity of assessment practices in higher education.

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