



From Belief to Practice: Understanding Response to Intervention (RTI) or Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), Implementation among Primary School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), also known as Response to Intervention (RTI), is an educational reform initiative aimed at providing quality education and evidence-based treatments for all students. The main objective of the study was to investigate how teachers perceive the beliefs and practices regarding the RTI/MTSS process. The quantitative survey design was used to achieve the main goal for this study. Primary school teachers of these two districts (Multan and Jehlum) were considered a population regardless of their gender. 700 teachers were selected using a stratified random sampling method. A 34-item self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data. Inferential data analysis was used to compare the teachers' beliefs and practices about the RTI/MTSS process with demographic characteristics like location, gender, district, and teaching experiences. The study's results show that teachers had stable and clear ideas about the RTI/MTSS process. Although the teachers saw a moderate and small improvement in their practices, this suggests that their beliefs and actions did not match. The study also established that there were statistical differences in perceived norms between the male and female teachers, the teachers from the different districts, and the teachers with different experience in teaching, but no difference in vignette practices. Further research may attempt to investigate the commonality of the intervention process that has been effective at increasing rates and establish potentially teachable strategies in independent practice.



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1. Introduction

The American education system aims to provide each learner with an optimum education and evidence-based interventions for their academic and behavioral needs through the MTSS, also known as RTI, an instructional reform. Teachers accomplish this by regularly monitoring each learner, enabling them to make informed decisions about how to modify their teaching methods (Preston, Wood, & Stecker, 2016). Even though the Elementary and Primary Education Act of 2001 (NCLB) does not define the RTI/MTSS framework directly, it refers to it five times (Porter-Magee, 2004). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) aims to identify students with disabilities, reduce minority

representation in special education, and improve teacher responsibility. However, integrating these practices requires increased cooperation and communication between general education and special education staff, as well as addressing the issue of isolation between special educators and general educators (Lesh, 2013).

Similarly, some researchers like Sanetti and Luh (2019) and Coyne et al. (2018) highlight the importance of academic aspects in response to intervention (MTSS) in the broader framework. MTSS focuses on academic support needs, including academic education, intervention, and data assessment for academic achievement. Assessments ensure the continuation of excellent practices in both academic and behavioral education when evidence supports their success. However, education scholars' differing opinions on a unified framework for RTI/MTSS Reynolds and Shaywitz (2009) have caused uncertainty among local school districts, administrators, and teachers over the best approach and most effective interventions. The Florida Department of Education Statewide Response to Instruction/Intervention Implementation Plan indicates progress in this vision (Burns, 2008).

Similarly, the Response to Intervention/Multi-Tiered System of Supports (RTI/MTSS) in primary schools is improving despite challenges such as scheduling, fidelity of treatment, and compliance issues. Research on RTI/MTSS primarily focuses on primary education (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017), but there is an increase in primary research papers focusing on student interventions in specific subject areas, particularly literacy. Furthermore, research on educational professionals' effectiveness in teaching struggling students often lacks practical application due to factors like lack of theoretical knowledge, irrelevant topics, writing styles, and time constraints. This study supports evidence-based teaching methods and the RTI/MTSS frameworks, which focus on student academic development monitoring and ongoing implementation if the program is ineffective. This approach helps improve learning outcomes through classroom instruction and identifies the need for more effective teaching methods. Kauffman et al. (2018) highlight the challenges of implementing RTI/MTSS in schools, suggesting that it often reinforces deficit-based assumptions. Ferri (2012) recommends thorough analysis of MTSS/RTI frameworks to effectively address all student needs, ensuring the assessment and implementation of curriculum and learning outcomes.

The RTI/MTSS educational model leverages data to enhance the effectiveness of student instruction. However, there is little knowledge about planning, implementation, and teachers' and staff's roles in primary schools (Porter, 2022). Durrance (2023) suggests that primary schools in Multan and Jehlum, Pakistan, use Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and Response to Intervention (RTI) to address educational, behavioral, and socio-emotional challenges. However, researchers argue that the government lacks a clear focus on each component, and there are significant differences in the implementation of treatments and techniques for assessing improvements. The purpose is to minimize the difference between best practices and practice today. This is because organizational change, problem solving with others, and continued implementation of systems at the district level pose difficulties when using the RTI and MTSS frameworks. Leaders of change need to be aware of the change concept in order to sustain the change and implement research-based practices effectively. The primary teachers from two districts were involved in a study on the implementation of the RTI/MTSS framework and the difficulties of their job.

The international community's awakening to the plight of students with disabilities necessitates the adoption of Response to Intervention (RTI) and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) in Pakistani primary schools. However, this is usually accompanied by various integration barriers; there is the overwhelming lack of both training for teachers and resources required to foster these strategies. Teachers' perception of the usefulness of such interventions may influence their motivation and level of knowledge in differentiated instruction and the implementation of RTI/MTS. Therefore, this research will aim to assess the current state of RTI/MTSS in primary school classroom instruction, as well as identify the factors that hinder its effective implementation and to understand how staff members perceive RTI/MTSS, as well as their knowledge and ability to implement it effectively.

The study, "From Belief to Practice: Understanding Response to Intervention (RTI) or Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Implementation among Primary School Teachers," fills a gap in current literature on educational RTI/MTSS implementation.

- The study evaluates the implementation of primary schools and examines RTI/MTSS issues, using teacher perceptions to compare teachers' beliefs and classroom practices.
- The study will recommend the implementation of RTI/MTSS and provide challenges to enhance teachers' efficiency and confidence in implementing these strategies.
- This study emphasizes the necessary intervention programs based on RTI/MTSS implementation, as it adds to identifying learning issues in children.

The Objectives of the study are to investigate how teachers perceive the beliefs and practices regarding the RTI/MTSS process and to evaluate the demographic variables of location, gender, district, and teaching experiences in relation to teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the RTI/MTSS process.

2. Literature Review

The National Center on Response to Intervention, Center on Instruction, and National High School Center have provided technical assistance reports on RTI/MTSS implementation in primary schools. Despite prioritizing research-based interventions, there is a lack of peer-reviewed documentation, leading to the adoption of frameworks without substantial evidence-based research (Carrera, 2020). RTI/MTSS, originating from various disciplines, has significantly impacted how educators identify and address learning disabilities, as well as schools' early intervention and student assistance initiatives.

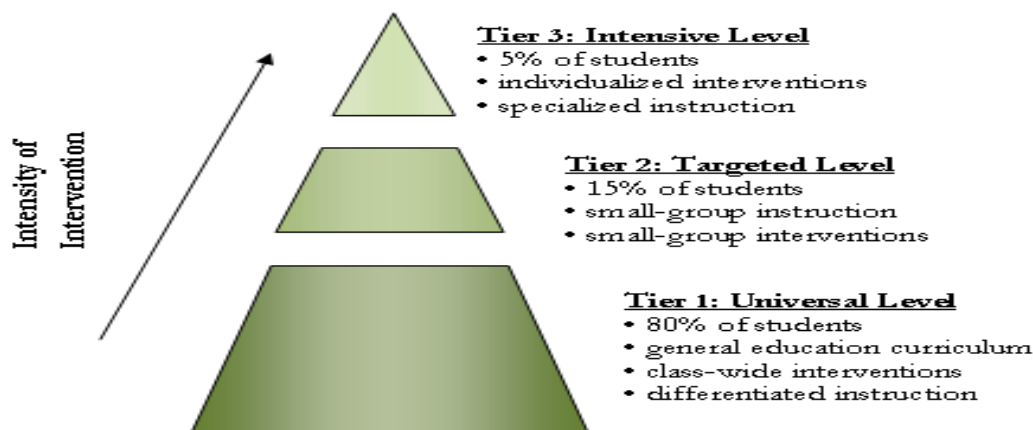
Preston, Wood and Stecker (2016) highlight that many teachers' lack knowledge about the origins, purpose, and future directions of RTI/MTSS. The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) suggests professional development contextualizing RTI/MTSS and its connection to positive student outcomes for greater acceptance. The study by Batsche et al. (2005) provides an overview of learning disabilities, examines RTI/MTSS development, proposes future directions, and addresses implementation concerns. This understanding can guide teachers toward more effective MTSS/RTI implementation.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, the educational profession anticipated the implementation of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), like response to intervention (RTI) (Kemmis et al., 2014). Proponents of nationwide MTSS/RTI aimed to transform the educational system by implementing reform models that prioritize uniformity, tiered interventions, and progress monitoring (Hallahan et al., 2020). Children struggling with academic performance in reading, writing, and mathematics use the RTI/MTSS framework. However, Fletcher et al. (2018) primarily assist students who don't meet grade-level expectations in these subjects. Under every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) 2015, only students who need additional assistance receive support (Jimerson et al., 2015). The framework provides personalized research-based interventions, using data-driven decision-making to determine placement and monitor progress. It ensures timely intervention adjustments to help students meet grade level expectations (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2011).

Educators use RTI/MTSS models to identify students with disabilities and provide appropriate treatments (Arrimada, 2023). These models offer multiple levels of education for those below the expected grade level. Regular progress monitoring is necessary for instruction, and school teachers implement a multi-tiered instructional strategy to meet each student's specific needs, preventing potential cultural prejudice in determining eligibility for special education (Alahmari, 2019). The first tier of education involves general education teachers providing instruction to all students. Tier 1 aims to use a scientifically validated curriculum, (Bartholomew & De Jong, 2017), with 80% of students expected to achieve mastery. If students show insufficient progress, they transition to Tier 2. Tier 2 focuses on specific interventions for 15% of the population that did not show progress with Tier 1. Tier 3 caters to 5% of students who have shown inadequate growth in both Tiers. A smaller group of students requires more intensive instructional interventions, and Tier 3 involves personalized, rigorous training. The instructor closely monitors the student's response to interventions and adjusts their program accordingly to assess their needs (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017).

Gersten et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of differentiation in improving Tier 1 instruction quality. Teachers argue against waiting for more tailored Tier 1 instruction for struggling reading students. The tiered concept of RTI/MTSS includes Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction designed to complement Tier 1 instruction. Teachers expect these to align with the topic they teach. Effective implementation of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions requires teachers to demonstrate desired skills and promptly address any mistakes or misunderstandings (Ogden & Fixsen, 2014).

Figure 1



An integral component of the RTI/MTSS framework, it aims to pinpoint students who are at risk in reading and offer academic and behavioral assistance to those who are functioning at a level higher than their grade. The RTI/MTSS framework's success relies on teachers' honest performance, but structural differences between elementary and primary schools hinder its ability to maintain treatment integrity. Primary teachers typically turn to others for remediation when their skills are inadequate. Beliefs significantly influence abilities and behaviors, and understanding primary teachers' and support personnel's views on RTI/MTSS and their ability to execute evidence-based procedures is crucial for achieving its goals.

3. Research Methodology

The researchers applied a quantitative survey methodology to accomplish the primary objective of this study. The School Education Department of Pakistan recently employed all primary school teachers in the Multan and Jehlum districts, where they are executing a pilot project of inclusive education. The training, which included the inclusion of differently abled students and struggling students in mainstream classrooms, was attended by teachers from these two districts. Primary school teachers of these two districts were considered a population regardless of their gender. A stratified random selection technique for sampling was employed to choose a sample of 700 primary school teachers from 2682 primary school teachers from Jehlum and 5946 primary school teachers from Multan, comprising both male and female participants. A self-developed questionnaire with 34 items was employed to collect the necessary information. The questionnaire comprised three sections: demographic characteristics, teachers' beliefs regarding RTI, and teachers' actual classroom practices.

A pilot study was conducted with a sample of twenty-five (25) primary school teachers (PST) from a population not included in the original sample to evaluate the reliability of the research instrument. The reliability estimates of the questionnaire were 0.877, signifying a high level of reliability for the study instrument. After obtaining approval from the relevant district authorities and school administrators, the researchers conducted the administration of the instrument in person. Each institution required approximately 15 to 20 minutes to administer the questionnaire. A total of 700 questionnaires have been successfully collected from the complete sample of teachers. The gathered data was evaluated according to two criteria. Initially, researchers utilized descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, to analyze two factors: teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the RTI/MTSS process. Teachers' perspectives were compared by using inferential statistics, specifically the independent sample t-test and one-way ANOVA, to examine the relationship between demographic variables such as location, gender, district, and teaching experiences and teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the RTI/MTSS process.

4. Data Analysis

Table 1 reveals that respondents, 386 (55.1%), were serving in urban areas, while 314 (44.9%) were serving in rural areas. Furthermore, there were 397 (56.7%) female teachers, and 303 (43.3%) were male teachers. Similarly, experience-wise profiles of teachers indicate that 274 (39.1%) teachers had experience teaching between 0–10 years, 234 (33.4%) had between 11 and 20 years of experience, and 192 (27.3%) had 21 years or more. In terms of the participants' districts, 361 (51.6%) were from Multan, while 339 (48.6%) were from Jehlum.

Table 1: Demographic Data of Participants (N=700)

Demographic Variable		Participants Responses	
		Frequency	%age
Location	Urban	386	55.1
	Rural	314	44.9
	Total	700	100.0
Gender	Male	303	43.3
	Female	397	56.7
	Total	700	100.0
Teaching Experience	0-10 years	274	39.1
	11-20 years	234	33.4
	21 years and more	192	27.4
	Total	700	100.0
District	Multan	361	51.6
	Jehlum	339	48.4
	Total	700	100.0

Table 2 discusses the beliefs and practices of teachers regarding the RTI/MTSS process. The mean value of 4.12 suggests that, on average, teachers' beliefs were quite high, indicating strong agreement or positive beliefs. The standard deviation of 0.37 shows low variability, meaning most teachers' beliefs were closely aligned with the average. The mean value of 3.42 indicates a slight improvement in teachers' practices on average, and the standard deviation of 0.64 suggests moderate efforts in teachers' practices regarding the RTI/MTSS Process.

Table 2: Teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the RTI/MTSS Process

Sr. No	Factors	Mean	SD
1	Teachers' Beliefs	4.12	.37
2	Teachers' Practices	3.42	.64

Table 3 shows that the urban participants were 386, while the rural participants was 314. Furthermore, the mean value of the rural participants is consistently higher than the mean value of the urban population across teachers' beliefs. The mean value of the urban participants is consistently higher than the mean value of the rural participants across teachers' practices. The study found no significant differences in teachers' beliefs or practices based on their school location, with signature values of 2.27 for teachers' beliefs and 0.099 for teachers' practices.

Table 3: Location-based difference in teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the RTI/MTSS process

Factors	Category	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig
Teachers' Beliefs	Urban	386	44.83	2.85	698	-1.210	.227
	Rural	314	45.23	5.58			
Teachers' Practices	Urban	386	38.08	6.90	698	1.654	.099
	Rural	314	37.19	7.25			

Table 4 shows that the male participants were 303, while the female participants were 397. Moreover, the mean value of female participants regularly exceeds that of male participants regarding teachers' beliefs. The study found significant gender-related differences in teacher opinions, with a signature value of 0.009. The mean value of male

participants consistently exceeded that of female participants across teachers' practices. The study revealed no significant differences in teachers' practices attributable to gender, as indicated by a signature value of 0.748.

Table 4: Gender-based difference in teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the RTI/MTSS process

Factor	Category	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig
Teachers' Beliefs	Male	303	45.50	3.92	698	2.629	.009
	Female	397	44.64	4.53			
Teachers' Practices	Male	303	37.78	7.14	698	.322	.748
	Female	397	37.60	7.02			

Table 5 shows that the Multan participants were 361, while the Jehlum participants were 339. Moreover, the mean value of teachers' beliefs among Multan participants consistently surpasses that of Jehlum participants. The study revealed significant district-related differences in teachers' beliefs, as evidenced by a signature value of .000. The mean value of Jehlum participants consistently exceeded that of Multan participants across teachers' practices. The study revealed no significant differences in teachers' practices that were attributable to the district, as indicated by a signature value of 0.988.

Table 5: District-based difference in teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the RTI/MTSS process

Factors	Category	N	Mean	SD	df	T	Sig
Teachers' Beliefs	Multan	361	45.86	4.71	698	5.493	.000
	Jehlum	339	44.11	3.60			
Teachers' Practices	Multan	361	37.67	7.00	698	-.015	.988
	Jehlum	339	37.68	7.15			

Table 6 revealed a calculated value of F of 14.287, which was accompanied by a significance value of 0.000. The findings indicate a statistically significant difference in teachers' beliefs based on their teaching experience. Furthermore, a calculated value of F of .426, which was accompanied by a significance value of 0.653. The findings indicate no statistically significant difference in teachers' practices based on their teaching experience.

Table 6: Teaching Experience -based difference in teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the RTI/MTSS process

Factor		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teachers' Beliefs	Between Groups	508.558	2	254.279	14.287	.000
	Within Groups	12405.351	697	17.798		
	Total	12913.909	699			
Teachers' Practices	Between Groups	42.687	2	21.344	.426	.653
	Within Groups	34890.347	697	50.058		
	Total	34933.034	699			

5. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The findings of this study reveal that, while the majority of teachers held strong and consistent beliefs about the RTI/MTSS process, their practices displayed only moderate and slight progress, indicating a disparity between belief and implementation. The study did not find any significant differences based on school location, but it did find significant differences in teachers' views based on gender, district, and teaching experience, but not on their practices. This study aimed to examine the significance of addressing teachers' beliefs and behaviors to facilitate the adoption of Response to Intervention among primary school teachers. The research yielded the findings of Cook et al. (2015) which hold significant relevance for both research and practice. The research significantly enhanced the beliefs of teachers, and these improvements correlated with indications of classroom application. Research indicates that the views and attitudes of providers or implementers are likely to affect the adoption and utilization of RTI/MTSS (Leonard et al., 2019). Research is increasingly concentrating on comprehending the implementation processes of RTI/MTSS and creating solutions that facilitate the transition for challenging children (Sutton, 2024).

Allsopp, Farmer and Hoppey (2016) designed MTSS as a proactive, prevention-focused service delivery framework to address the needs of all students through the application of a continuum of RTI/MTSS.

Future research on the practical application in other districts could explore this topic more thoroughly. Furthermore, researching the application of the RTI/MTSS framework in grades 5-8 could enhance this research. This study further investigated how teachers in primary schools use RTI/MTSS to improve the performance of struggling students. In the future, Punjab might undertake a comprehensive analysis at the provincial level. Future studies might look into the shared elements of the implementation process that led to success and identify replicable teaching methods and intervention strategies.

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