

Perspectives of Parents of Children with Special Needs towards Education and Special Schools: A Study in the Indian Context

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“Abstract”

Education is a fundamental right and a crucial determinant of social inclusion and empowerment, particularly for children with special needs (CWSN). Parental perspectives play a pivotal role in shaping educational outcomes for CWSN and in deciding the suitability of inclusive education versus special schools. This study examines the perspectives of parents in India toward the education of their children with special needs, with a particular focus on their attitudes toward special schools. Using a mixed-methods approach, the paper delves into the factors influencing parental choices, challenges faced, and the socio-cultural context shaping their preferences.

Keywords : Special schools, children with special needs , Parents.

1.Introduction

Education for children with special needs has undergone significant

evolution in India, guided by international conventions and national legislations such as the Right to Education Act (2009) and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016). Despite these advancements, the educational journey for CWSN remains fraught with challenges, often influenced by parental attitudes and societal norms. This paper investigates the perspectives of parents on two key dimensions:

1. Education of children with special needs.
2. The role and relevance of special schools.

2.Objectives

1. To explore parental attitudes towards the education of CWSN in India.
2. To understand parental preferences for special schools versus inclusive education.
3. To identify the challenges parents face in securing quality education for CWSN.
4. To provide recommendations for enhancing parental involvement and improving educational outcomes.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Education for CWSN in India

Education for CWSN is offered through two primary systems:

Inclusive Education: Integrating CWSN into mainstream schools.

Special Schools: Schools designed specifically for children with disabilities.

3.2 Role of Parents

Parents play a critical role as decision-makers and advocates for their child's education. Their perspectives are influenced by:

1. Awareness of Rights and Resources.
2. Social Stigma and Cultural Beliefs.
3. Accessibility and Quality of Educational Institutions.

3.3 Special Schools: Pros and Cons

While special schools offer tailored education and therapy, critics argue they perpetuate segregation. Parents often weigh these factors when choosing between inclusive and special education.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining:

Quantitative Surveys: To collect data on parental perspectives and choices.

Qualitative Interviews: To explore deeper insights into parental experiences and challenges.

4.2 Sample

A purposive sampling method targeted 100 parents of CWSN across rural and urban India. The sample included parents with children enrolled in:

1. Inclusive schools..
2. Special schools.
3. Home-based education.

4.3 Data Collection Tools

1. Semi-structured interview guides for qualitative insights.

5. Findings and Analysis

5.1 Perspectives on Education for CWSN

Parental Aspirations:

70% of parents expressed a desire for quality education and life skills for their children. They want their child to do the activities of day to day life independently.

Only 40% Parents prioritized practical skills over academic achievements.

Challenges Faced:

1. Lack of awareness about inclusive education policies.
2. Financial constraints.

3. Limited access to trained teachers and support services. Rural parents preferred special schools due to the absence of inclusive education options.

5.2 Parental Views on Special Schools

Positive Perceptions:

1. 55% of parents viewed special schools as better equipped to meet their child's needs.

2. Parents appreciated the availability of therapy, individualized attention, and a supportive environment.

Concerns:

Fear of social isolation

lack of integration with mainstream peers.

Limited academic opportunities.

5.3 Comparison with Inclusive Schools

Advantages of Inclusive Schools:
Exposure to diverse peers, fostering social inclusion.

Disadvantages: Lack of teacher training and infrastructure to support CWSN.

Dipression, emotional stress amongst CWSN.

Lack of opportunities as compared to other students.

5.4 Regional Variations

Urban parents were more likely to opt for inclusive schools, citing better infrastructure and awareness, and Societal concerns too

6. Discussion

The findings reveal a complex interplay of factors influencing parental perspectives. While parents recognize the value of education in empowering CWSN, systemic barriers often limit their choices. Special schools are perceived as a safer option, but their segregative nature raises concerns about long-term social integration. The preference for inclusive education is stronger in urban areas, highlighting the need for equitable resources and awareness in rural regions.

7. Recommendations

1. **Policy Interventions:** Strengthen the implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) to ensure access to inclusive education.

2. **Infrastructure Development:** provisions should be made to make the public places and schools accessible to all types of disabilities.

3. **Capacity Building:** Train teachers in inclusive pedagogies and equip schools with necessary infrastructure.

4. **Parent Awareness Programs:** Conduct workshops to inform parents about educational rights and resources.

5. **Enhance Special Schools:** Improve curriculum and extracurricular opportunities in special schools to balance academic and social development.

6. **Encourage Collaboration:** Foster

partnerships between mainstream and special schools to share resources and best practices.

8. Conclusion

Parental perspectives significantly shape the educational experiences of CWSN in India. This study highlights the need for a balanced approach that recognizes the strengths and limitations of both special and inclusive schools. By addressing systemic barriers and enhancing parental involvement, India can move closer to ensuring accessible and equitable education for all children, irrespective of their abilities.

9. References

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