

Parental Attitude towards the Special and Inclusive Education and Other Perspectives of Children with Visual Impairment

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ABSTRACT

Background: The present study was intended to understand parents' attitude towards the special and inclusive education and other perspectives of their visually impaired children attending special and inclusive schools. **Objectives:** Study was undertaken with the objective of examining the attitude of parents towards the education of their visually impaired children attending special and inclusive schools. **Sample:** The study was conducted on parents of 20 visually impaired children aged 11-18 years, attending special and inclusive schools in Ludhiana. **Design:** The survey method was used to elicit information about their attitude towards special schools and inclusive schools. **Tool:** Data was collected using the (non standardized) attitude scale constructed by the investigator. **Result:** The study revealed a significant difference in the attitude of the parents of children with visual impairment towards the concept of inclusive education, learning daily life skills and in the area of social and emotional behavior. **Conclusion:** The findings also highlight the fact that the parents of children with visual impairment attending inclusive schools showed a favorable attitude towards the teaching aspect in integrated schools.

Keywords: Parental Attitude, Special Education, Inclusive Education, Visually Impaired.

Introduction

An attitude is a relatively stable system of beliefs and feelings about something. Shave (1928) defines attitude as a complex of feelings and desires, fears connections, prejudices, and other tendencies that has given a set of readiness to act, to a person because of varied experiences. Good (1959) says 'attitude is a readiness to react towards or against some situation, person or thing or statement to a particular degree of intensity'. Bernstein et. al. (1988) describes it as a predisposition towards a particular cognitive, emotional or behavioral reaction to an object, individual, group, situation, or action. Parental attitude is an important factor in their children's education especially in case of visually impaired. It may be negative or positive. The negative attitude of parents regarding education school can prevent their children from getting education. Less parental support towards school leads to low level of motivation, and poor self esteem in children. On the other hand positive attitude of parents can be beneficial in creating interest in studies, improvement in class performance and higher achievement score in reading and writing. Since the parents attitude is so important, it is essential that the home and school work closely together, especially for children with disabilities.

Ravindren (2000) reported that there is a significant relationship between parents attitude towards education and study habits of children. Nalini (2003) found relationship among attitude of parents towards schooling and children's attendance at school, doing home work and participation in co-curricular activities. Patel (2003) conducted a survey and found that parents in urban areas have significant positive attitude towards education and schooling as compared to parents in rural areas. The study also found that socio- economic status plays a vital role in developing the positive attitude towards schooling and education. Singal (2006) did analysis on "Inclusive education in India: International concept" the article concluded by arguing for a need

to develop a contextual understanding of inclusive education that is reflective of current educational concern in India. Sharma (2007) revealed that the visually impaired studying in inclusive schools are more confident than visually impaired studying in special schools. Teotia (2014) too found a significant difference exists between mean score of self confidence of visually impaired students studying in inclusive schools and special schools of Punjab State and Chandigarh. The author reported that students studying in inclusive schools are more confident.

Objectives:

1. To investigate the attitude of parents of visually impaired children towards Special and Inclusive education.
2. To reveal the opinions of parents of visual impaired children about teaching aspects in Special and Inclusive schools.
3. To reveal the opinions of parents of visually impaired children about the learning daily life skills in special and inclusive schools.
4. To reveal the opinions of parents of visually impaired children about behavioral characteristics of their children studying in special and inclusive schools.

Method

Sample:

A sample of 20 parents of visually impaired children (10 children attending inclusive schools and 10 children attending special residential schools) was selected for the present study.

Design:

The descriptive survey method was employed to collect the data. Information about the children was collected from educational institutions, and purposive sampling procedure was used to select the sample of visually impaired children from inclusive schools. In the case of special schools, the children were selected through systematic random sampling, based on their name entries in the attendance register.

Tool:

The attitude scale for the parents of visually impaired children was constructed by the investigator. The data was collected through a questionnaire consisting 28 statements, all pertaining to education of children, their learning about daily life skills and social and emotional behavior of children.

Procedure:

The selected sample was explained the aims and objective of the present study and their consent to participate in the study was also taken. The selected parents were given the attitude scale and were asked to rate their attitude towards the special, inclusive education and other (teaching and daily living skills) perspectives of their visually impaired child.

Results and Discussion

Table:1 Significance of difference between Means of Attitude of Parents towards Special and Inclusive Schools

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio
Parents of children in special schools	10	17.75	1.82	2.27*
Parents of children in inclusive schools	10	18.52	2.32	

*Significant at 0.05 level

The study revealed that there is a significant difference in the attitude of parents of visually impaired children towards Special and Inclusive schools. Parents of visually impaired children attending special schools have very little knowledge/awareness about significance of inclusive education, as right from the beginning of their child's schooling, they had an exposure to special school. These parents were happy about the fact that their children are residing in boarding schools where boarding and lodging is free. They further pointed out the economic factor as one of the main reasons for enrolling their children into special schools. Some of them have misconception that they have to pay huge fee to enroll their wards in normal schools. In contrast, the parents of visually impaired children attending Inclusive schools have an opinion that inclusive education is better than the special education, in which visually impaired children receive education along with their sighted peers. It is a system which provides general education with some special provision. They further pointed out, that in an inclusive set up the visually impaired children get the chance to read and learn with other children,

further, it saves the children from developing various psychological complexes, which promotes normal mental growth in visually impaired children. They believe that their children will receive education that is tailored to their knowledge, abilities, aptitudes, interests, and personality qualities. The orientation received by these parents during the process of their child's schooling at inclusive schools, has given them the insight and the significance about integrated education.

Daily Living Skills

Table:2 Difference between Mean Score and SD of Attitude of Parents towards education about Daily Living Skills in Special and Inclusive Schools

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio
Parents of children in special schools	10	15.05	2.30	1.63
Parents of children in inclusive schools	10	15.67	2.33	

NS=Not significant

It was noted that there was no significant difference in the parents' opinion towards learning daily living skills in special and inclusive schools. Children attending special schools are trained in the school by teacher, while children attending inclusive schools are trained by local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or special teachers.

Teaching Aspects

Table:3 Difference between Mean Score and SD of Attitude of Parents towards Teaching Aspects in Special and Inclusive Schools

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio
Parents of children in special schools	10	16.79	1.84	0.62
Parents of children in inclusive schools	10	16.99	2.11	

NS=Not significant

It was noted that there was no significant difference in the parents' opinion towards teaching aspects in special and inclusive schools. Parents of visually impaired children attending both special and inclusive schools were of the opinion that education for visually impaired children plays an important role, as most of the learning for these children takes place through auditory and tactile senses/ sensorial experiences. They further expressed, that in inclusive school setup visually impaired children are treated equally. Teachers not only focus on the educational needs, but also make use of the necessary learning materials to teach both academics and vocational needs. Considering the opinion of the parents of both school systems it was observed that the parents of the inclusive school setup had a better perspective about the teaching aspect in an inclusive setup.

Behavioral Characteristics

Table:4 Difference between Mean Scores and SD of Attitude of Parents towards Behavioral Characteristics in children studying in Special and Inclusive Schools

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-ratio
Parents of children in special schools	10	16.54	1.93	0.62NS
Parents of children in inclusive schools	10	16.80	2.26	

NS= Not significant

Table 4 shows that there was no significant difference in the opinion of the parents of visually impaired children, attending special and inclusive schools towards the social and emotional behavior of visually impaired children. Parents of visually impaired children attending inclusive schools are of the opinion that their children have a balanced social and emotional behavior. They were of the opinion that since the visually impaired children attending inclusive schools are day scholars, their interaction begins at home, continues at school and in the community at large, when compared to their counterparts studying in a special school which is residential in nature. Parents of visually impaired children attending special school too opined that even their children are visually impaired still they are emotionally balanced. Parents of visually impaired children attending special and inclusive schools reported that they have not come across behavioral abnormalities like teasing each other, throwing objects or being aloof from others etc. Parents had never considered their visually impaired child as a burden to them and the family.

Conclusion

The family plays a significant role in the development of the visually impaired child. It is the parents who exert the major influence on the development of the visually impaired child from birth to maturity. One of the most important attributes of parental attitude is consistency. The present study also highlights the fact that the parents of the visually impaired children attending the inclusive schools showed a favorable attitude towards the teaching aspect in integrated schools. Their visually impaired children's social and emotional behavior and sibling relationship was cordial with both the visually impaired children and their sighted siblings experiencing both positive and negative aspects of emotions in their day-to-day life. This was mainly attributed to the factor that these children were a part of the family in their daily routine. The same was not observed in the case of visually impaired children attending special schools, as their interactions with their siblings and their family members was only for a short duration, especially during the vacations. The reason being, that these children are placed in a residential school (special school).

Educational Implications

The study revealed that there is a significant difference in attitude of parents of visually impaired children studying in special residential schools and in inclusive schools. As inclusion is an

educational practice in which children with disabilities are educated in classrooms with children without disabilities. The purpose of inclusion is to make sure that students with special needs are integrated in the general education setting for as much of the day as possible, with the supports they need to be successful. Inclusion strategies can include co-teaching, consultative services, paraprofessional support, modifications to curriculum or testing, accommodations for specific disabilities, and other services an individual student needs in order to access the in a general education classroom. Governments also do their best efforts to promote the inclusive education, so this study will be helpful to change the attitude of parents of visually impaired children towards inclusive education.

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