

Parental Engagement for Upbringing of Child in an Inclusive Set Up

Binayak Dey¹

¹Coordinator, Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), University of Kalyani, West Bengal, India.

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ABSTRACT

This study highlights the significance of parental involvement in promoting the academic progress of children with disabilities within inclusive educational settings. Its aim was to explore how parents support their children's learning, particularly those with special needs, and to identify the challenges they face. A thorough review of literature was conducted, followed by data collection from 48 parents through a self-structured questionnaire that highlighted the obstacles they encounter. The results demonstrate a strong link between parental involvement and academic success, especially for children with disabilities. Unlike typically developing children, children with disabilities significantly benefit from active parental engagement. However, barriers such as negative parental attitudes, financial difficulties, and a lack of awareness about the importance of involvement emerged as major challenges. The geographical distance between home and school, particularly for parents in remote areas, further restricts their ability to engage in school activities. This study emphasizes the importance of schools adopting inclusive communication strategies, offering necessary resources, and cultivating a supportive environment to encourage parental participation. Policymakers are urged to establish clear parental involvement policies that empower parents to actively engage in their children's

education. The findings underscore the critical influence of parental involvement on the academic success of children with special needs and call for a collaborative approach between parents, schools, and policymakers to ensure equal educational opportunities for all children. By fostering this partnership and embracing inclusive education, society can create an environment where every child, regardless of disability, has the opportunity to thrive.

Keywords: Parental Engagement, Upbringing of Child, Inclusive Set Up

INTRODUCTION

With the right to education now recognized as a fundamental right, the need to create an inclusive educational environment and implement inclusive practices has become essential for all educational stakeholders. Inclusion involves embracing individuals for who they are, regardless of differences, and valuing their unique abilities, rather than focusing on their appearance, speech, or behavior. It fosters appreciation for diversity, acknowledging that each person possesses unique creativity and talents. An inclusive environment enables children with and without disabilities to play and interact daily without prejudice, even if some children receive therapeutic services. The drive to ensure equal opportunities for all individuals to develop their potential in a non-discriminatory, democratic system led to the concept of integrated education. This

approach set the stage for inclusive education by creating a foundation for bringing children with disabilities into mainstream classrooms, thus enabling inclusive education to take root and flourish. The Action Plan for Inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (2005) defines inclusive education as an approach designed to address the learning needs of all individuals, with a particular emphasis on those at risk of marginalization and exclusion. This approach ensures that learners, regardless of disabilities, receive education in shared settings such as preschools, schools, and community learning centers. To support this, a well-structured network of resources and services is essential. A truly inclusive education system must be adaptable and flexible to cater to the diverse needs of learners. The ultimate goal is for all stakeholders—students, parents, educators, communities, administrators, and policymakers—to recognize diversity as an asset rather than a challenge.

At its core, inclusive education is founded on the belief that schools should accommodate all children, regardless of differences in ability, background, culture, language, or any other characteristic. To create an inclusive and supportive learning environment, collaboration among general and special education teachers, families, and communities is crucial. By working together, they can develop effective teaching strategies that cater to a wide range of learning needs. Inclusion is a continuous process aimed at fostering participation and enhancing learning opportunities for all students. While achieving complete inclusion is a complex goal, schools that actively work toward increasing student participation take meaningful steps in that direction. True participation involves engaging in learning, sharing experiences, and collaborating with peers. Inclusive education plays a vital role in ensuring that every child has an equal opportunity to access quality education, develop essential skills, and succeed. This approach enables

students from diverse backgrounds to engage in learning together in shared classrooms and schools, offering enriching educational opportunities for groups that have been historically marginalized, like children with disabilities and speakers of minority languages. By appreciating the distinct perspectives of all students, inclusive education fosters personal development, encourages collaborative learning, and helps build a more fair and inclusive society for everyone.

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN INCLUSIVE SET UP

Parental engagement and community participation are essential components of inclusive education, ensuring that education is accessible to all. Most parents want their children to be welcomed into the broader community with the same respect and resources provided to their peers without disabilities. Families and community groups can actively support inclusive education by collaborating with school authorities to make necessary accommodations for students with special needs. Research shows that when families engage in their children's education, students tend to achieve more, stay in school longer, and participate more fully (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). Involvement from family members, whether a parent, guardian, grandparent, or older sibling, in all areas of a child's life plays a significant role in shaping their personality and self-identity. Parental involvement in inclusive education fosters positive relationships, encourages new behaviors, and enhances self-confidence and optimism among children, parents, and teachers alike. This family engagement is a crucial element in driving the success of both students and schools.

The primary goal for parents of children with special needs is to ensure their child has a positive school experience. Children with lifelong disabilities require educational opportunities tailored to their age and abilities. Collaboration between parents and teachers provides the strongest support for

these children, helping them develop essential skills for success in life. Parents possess valuable insights into their child's preferences, strengths, weaknesses, needs, and capabilities, and sharing this information with teachers is crucial for creating an effective educational plan. It's important for parents to be actively involved in all decision-making aspects of their child's education. When family members identify a child's needs early on, it is their responsibility to inform the school so that appropriate support can be provided. Parents play a vital role in their child's education, particularly when the child has special needs. While special education teachers strive to make a difference, they cannot do it alone; they require the active support of families. Parents should work on their child's goals at home and collaborate closely with teachers. When parents engage with their child's learning outside of school, children tend to progress more quickly, achieve better results, and feel their parents' commitment to their education. The time spent together not only enhances learning but also strengthens the bond between parents and children.

Several studies have highlighted the crucial role of parental involvement in the academic success of children, particularly those with special educational needs. Jigyal, K. et al. (2019) emphasized the need to strengthen parental engagement in supporting children with special needs both at school and home. Thornton (2015) found a positive correlation between parental involvement and students' academic progress, with most parents actively participating in their children's education. Similarly, Afolabi (2014) demonstrated a strong relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement in inclusive education settings. Hafiz et al. (2013) confirmed that higher levels of parental involvement significantly enhance children's academic performance. Xu, M. et al. (2010) further established that active parental participation fosters self-regulated learning and improves reading achievement, especially benefiting students

with special needs. These findings collectively underscore the importance of parental engagement in fostering academic success and overall development in children.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Inclusive education integrates programs for children with disabilities directly into the general educational system, rather than operating as a separate system within it. Parental engagement is essential for the success of all children, but especially for young children in inclusive settings. Parental involvement is often influenced by teacher actions; when parents feel that their participation is welcomed by teachers, they frequently overcome obstacles to become involved, even when resources are limited. Teachers also see parental engagement as more than just a physical presence at school, recognizing that parents can have a meaningful educational impact on their children's learning in inclusive environments. Active family involvement has long been associated with better educational outcomes for young children, both with and without disabilities.

This study is significant as it seeks to explore how parental engagement influences the holistic development of children in inclusive settings. While schools and educators play a vital role in fostering inclusion, parents serve as the first and most consistent educators, shaping their child's attitude toward learning, diversity, and social interactions. Parental involvement in an inclusive setup is not just about academic support; it extends to creating an enabling environment at home, advocating for necessary accommodations, and collaborating with teachers and specialists to ensure their child's success. Additionally, India's legal framework, including the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Act of 1995, the Right to Education (RTE) Act, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act of 2016, emphasizes inclusive education. However, successful implementation depends on active parental

participation, as policies alone cannot guarantee inclusion without strong family support.

Understanding the challenges and opportunities associated with parental engagement in an inclusive setup will provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and families. It will help in designing strategies, training programs, and support systems that enable parents to take an active role in their child's education. Moreover, fostering parental involvement can bridge the gap between home and school, ensuring a more cohesive and supportive learning environment that benefits all children, particularly those with special educational needs. This study, therefore, aims to contribute to the discourse on inclusive education by emphasizing the indispensable role of parents, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes, social inclusion, and a more equitable learning experience for all children.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The statement of the problem of present research is:

"PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT FOR UPBRINGING OF CHILD IN AN INCLUSIVE SET UP"

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The present study was delimited to the parents of special child. The study was also delimited to the teachers working under special school and was taken as sample for the study.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Parental Engagement: Parental engagement refers to the active participation of parents in their child's education, both at home and in school. It includes their involvement in academic activities, communication with teachers, and participation in school-related events. This engagement reflects parents' attitudes, values, and aspirations regarding their child's education, influencing their academic progress and overall development.

Upbringing of Child: In this study, the upbringing of a child refers to the guidance, care, and education provided by parents and teachers. It encompasses the lessons, values, and behavioural norms instilled in children during their formative years, shaping their academic, social, and emotional growth.

Inclusive Set Up: An inclusive setup ensures that students with special needs receive education alongside their peers in a general classroom setting, with necessary support from special education professionals. This collaborative approach involves adapting teaching methods, modifying curriculum delivery, and providing individualized assistance to create an accessible learning environment that accommodates diverse learning needs.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the role of parents in an inclusive set up for upbringing of child through better academic achievement?
2. What are the problems faced by parents in dealing with differently able learners regard to their learning?
3. What are the factors affecting involvement of parents in the education of their children?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To study the role of parents in comprehending home academic work for their children.
2. To examine the challenges faced by parents in dealing with differently able learners regard to their learning.
3. To identify the factors affecting involvement of parents in the education of their children.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted using a systematic approach, following the steps outlined below:

Step I: A mixed-method approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research methods, was

employed to examine the role of parents in supporting their children's education at home. The study also explored the challenges faced by parents in assisting children with disabilities and identified key factors influencing parental involvement in inclusive education.

Step II: The qualitative aspect involved an extensive review of books, research articles, journals, and online resources to gain insights into parental engagement in inclusive education. For the empirical study, a structured questionnaire with close-ended questions was designed to collect data on the difficulties parents encounter while supporting children with disabilities in inclusive settings. Additionally, unstructured interviews were conducted to explore the underlying factors that influence parental involvement.

Step III: The collected data were systematically analyzed, and key findings were documented to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the study's objectives.

Step IV: Based on the analysis, a detailed report titled **"Parental Engagement for Upbringing of Children in an Inclusive Setup"** was compiled, presenting the study's findings and conclusions.

DISCUSSION ON PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

This study reviews literature to analyze recent empirical studies on the importance of parental engagement in implementing inclusive education and its role in promoting positive outcomes for children with disabilities. To address the first objective - examining the role of parents in supporting their special needs children's academic work at home - the literature review process involved gathering and reviewing various articles, books, journals, and meta-analyses on inclusion and parental involvement. Relevant sources were selected from online databases, and additional manual searches of journals on inclusive education were conducted to validate references.

The discussion around parental engagement in enhancing academic achievement for children with special needs has long been a topic of debate, with varied perspectives on parents' roles. Research studies provide insights into whether a relationship exists between parental involvement and academic success. A study by Ann Hawes Carmen and A. Plourde Lee (2005) found a slight positive correlation but could not reject the null hypothesis, indicating no significant link between parental involvement and sixth graders' reading comprehension and achievement. Conversely, a 2013 study, *Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement: A Study on Secondary School Students* by Hafiz Muhammad Waqas Rafiq et al., revealed a significant relationship between parental involvement in children's academic activities and their academic achievement levels. Further, Xu, Benson, Mudrey-Camino, and Steineret (2010) argued that parental involvement in homework can inform parents about their child's strengths and weaknesses, particularly in reading, and found that active parental involvement stimulates children's interest in school, especially for those with special needs. This finding was supported by Afolabi, Mukhopadhyay, and Newly's (2013) study, which highlighted positive outcomes for learners with exceptional needs in inclusive settings due to parental involvement.

In 2014, Afolabi further examined barriers impacting parental involvement (PI) in the education of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and established a meaningful connection between PI and academic achievement. The academic influence of parental involvement was also shown in Rosie Thorton's (2015) study, which compared second-grade students with and without special needs. Sukys, Dumciene, and Lapeniene (2015) found that 68.8% of parents could identify their child's specific learning challenges, and just over half were actively involved in home-based education, with highly educated parents engaging more in discussions with their

children. Additionally, the recent study by Jigyal, Miller, Mavropoulou, and Berman (2019) emphasizes the need for schools to engage parents in educational policies actively, advocating for strengthened parental involvement for children with SEN in Bhutan.

FINDINGS ON PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The studies in above literature led to the following findings:

- Parental engagement is more strongly associated with the academic achievement of children with disabilities compared to that of typically developing children. Most studies have shown a positive correlation between parental involvement and academic success for children with disabilities, while fewer studies have shown a significant link for typically developing children, with some failing to reject the null hypothesis of no relationship. Thus, the care, attention, and involvement of parents at both home and school are especially crucial for children with disabilities.
- Additionally, parents' ability to recognize their child's specific learning challenges tends to increase with their education level, as highly educated parents are generally more engaged in communication with their children.

- Schools play a crucial role in fostering parental involvement to support the academic achievement of children with special needs. When teachers engage parents through school meetings or events, and parents offer support both at home and at school, the likelihood of children reaching their academic goals increases significantly.

Therefore, the responsibility for socializing and educating children is a shared obligation between parents and schools. In the context of inclusive education, where all students are valued regardless of their differences, be it disability, socioeconomic status, or language, greater parental involvement is essential to help children with special needs achieve their academic goals. Increased parental engagement not only enhances students' chances of academic success but also fosters their development into productive members of society.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION ON PROBLEMS FACED BY PARENTS IN DEALING WITH DIFFERENTLY ABLE LEARNERS REGARD TO THEIR LEARNING

To focus on second objective, a self-structured questionnaire consisting with eleven items and data were collected from forty-eight (48) number of samples. This questionnaire is close-ended in nature and validated on the basis of the experts' valuable opinions.

Table 1.1 Challenges faced by Parents

Sl. No.	Items on challenges faced by parents	Frequency (%)
1	The parents of disabled children are victimized and therefore feel isolated in the society.	42 (87.50%)
2	Lack of parent-to-parent support services organized by respective school for individual counselling.	36 (75%)
3	Lack of self-knowledge on learning disabilities.	26 (54.16%)
4	Financial instability.	12 (25%)
5	Stress on mental and physical health of parents in managing the disabled children.	22 (45.83%)
6	Paying more attention to the disabled child hampers the relationship of parents with their normal child.	14 (29.16%)
7	Lack of awareness of government programs among parents that train them to understand the need of children with learning disability.	28 (58.33%)
8	Parents face unnecessary harassment at the hands of school authorities.	8 (16.66%)
9	Parents suffer from inferiority complex as they lack the knowledge of special teaching technique method to teach disabled children.	38 (79.16%)

10	Challenges faced by parents due to not allowing parents to stay in the classroom at the time of teaching to special children for better understanding.	24 (50%)
11	The school lacks reproductive materials for teaching to special children.	36 (75%)

Table 1.1 outlines various challenges faced by parents of differently-able learners concerning their education. Among the findings, 87.50% of parents agreed that parents of children with disabilities often feel victimized and isolated in society. Additionally, 75% reported a lack of parent-

to-parent support services from their schools, while 54.16% admitted to having insufficient knowledge about learning disabilities. Finally, 25% of parents identified financial instability as a significant concern.

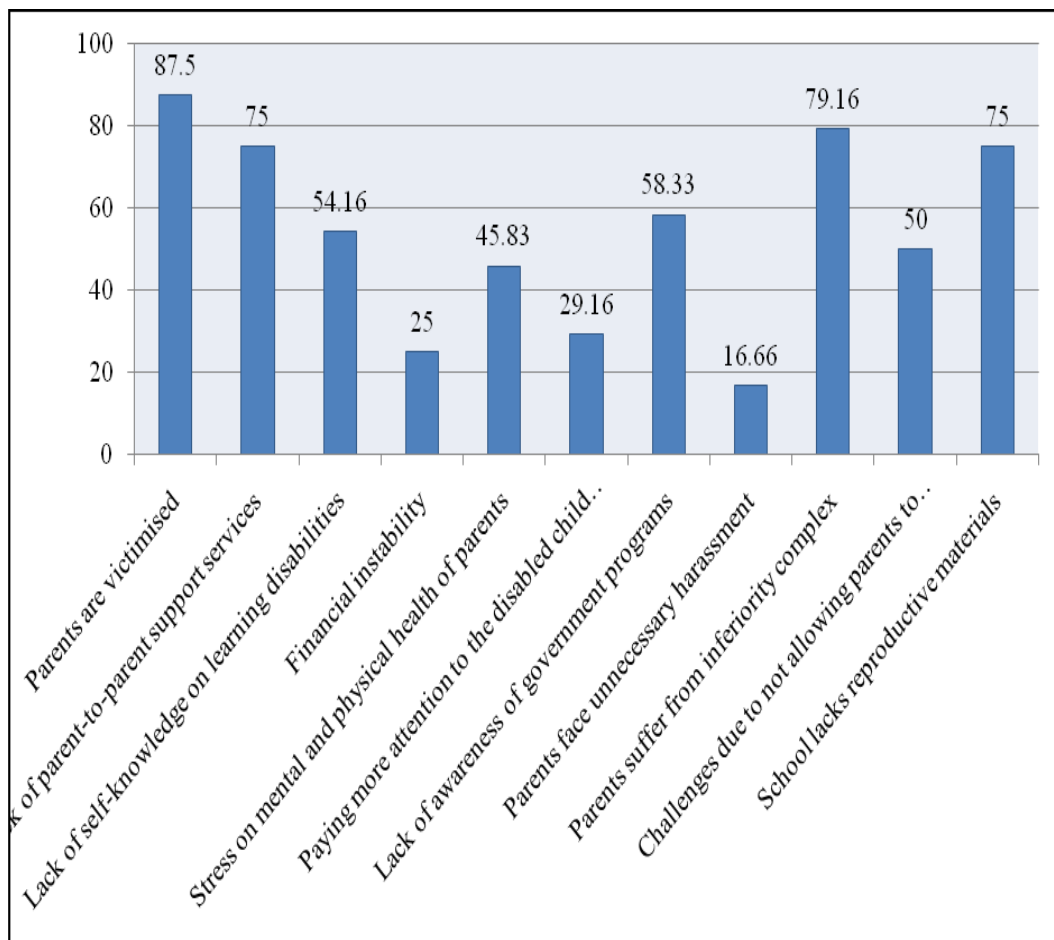


Figure 1.2 Bar graph showing percentages on challenges faced by parents in dealing with differently able learners

Approximately 45.83% of parents experience stress affecting their mental and physical health while caring for their children with disabilities. Additionally, 29.16% of parents acknowledged that focusing more on their disabled child can strain their relationship with their typically developing child. Furthermore, 58.33% of parents admitted to a lack of awareness about government programs designed to

help them understand the needs of children with learning disabilities. Around 16.66% of parents reported experiencing unnecessary harassment from school authorities. Additionally, 79.16% of parents expressed feelings of inferiority due to their lack of knowledge about specialized teaching techniques for children with disabilities. Half of the parents indicated they face challenges because they are not allowed in

the classroom to better understand their child's needs. Furthermore, 75% of parents stated that schools lack appropriate resources for teaching children with special needs. Figure 1.2 illustrates the challenges faced by parents of differently-able learners concerning their education.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION ON FACTORS AFFECTING INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN

Teachers were asked about the factors they believed influenced parental involvement in their children's schools. Their responses included issues such as parents' negative attitudes, poverty, lack of knowledge about secondary schools, and the distance to certain selected secondary schools, among others. Teachers noted that negative attitudes, particularly regarding school discipline, often lead to conflicts that hinder parental engagement. The findings revealed that out of four teachers, three indicated that parents generally exhibit negative attitudes toward becoming involved in matters concerning their school-going children.

One of the significant barriers to parental involvement in their children's education is the distance between home and school. Many parents, particularly those living in remote or underprivileged areas, expressed difficulties in actively participating in their child's academic journey due to the long commute required to reach the school. This challenge was closely linked to financial constraints, as travelling frequently to attend meetings, school events, or address concerns about their child's academic performance and behaviour was not always feasible. Parents struggling with limited financial resources often had to prioritize daily necessities over school visits, making it difficult for them to engage in their child's education as much as they would like. As a result, opportunities for meaningful collaboration between parents and teachers were reduced, limiting the support system available to students.

In addition to logistical and financial challenges, a lack of awareness and understanding about the importance of parental engagement emerged as a key factor contributing to low participation levels. Some parents, particularly those with limited formal education, felt uncertain about their role in supporting their child's learning and discipline. They either assumed that teachers were solely responsible for academic and behavioural development or hesitated to get involved due to their own insecurities about interacting with school authorities.

Furthermore, the attitude of teachers and school administrators played a crucial role in shaping parental involvement. Some parents perceived unwelcoming or dismissive behaviour from school staff, which discouraged them from actively engaging in their child's education. When parents felt that their concerns were not valued or that their participation was not encouraged, they were more likely to withdraw from school-related matters, leaving disciplinary and academic issues entirely in the hands of educators. This detachment weakened the school-home partnership, which is essential for a child's overall development.

Addressing these challenges requires proactive measures from schools and policymakers to bridge the gap between educators and parents. Schools must adopt inclusive communication strategies, such as flexible meeting schedules, digital engagement platforms, and community outreach programs, to accommodate parents facing geographical and financial barriers. Additionally, efforts should be made to sensitize teachers and administrators to create a more welcoming and collaborative atmosphere, ensuring that parents feel valued and empowered to take an active role in their child's education.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Parents should ensure that their children have access to basic necessities such as

food, shelter, and clothing, as well as essential learning materials like exercise books, pens, and calculators. They should also provide adequate academic and moral support, unconditional love, and opportunities for their children to develop responsible citizenship. It is important for parents to monitor their children's daily school attendance and assist them with homework and assignments to prevent confrontations when their children do not meet expectations.

Teachers should cultivate an atmosphere of friendliness, care, warmth, respect, and recognition for the parents of students enrolled in community secondary schools to encourage their involvement in school activities. Educators and other stakeholders should motivate parents and students through praise, certificates of appreciation for effective participation in academic activities, rewards, and recognition of parents with exemplary records as active school participants. Education policymakers should establish a parental involvement policy for community secondary schools that clearly outlines parents' key responsibilities regarding their children's education and academic activities. Teachers should ensure that parents are informed and engaged in school activities, including their children's academic matters and decision-making processes. This approach will foster transparency and increase parents' morale, motivation, and accountability in participating in school activities.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine parental involvement in their children's education. Parents play a crucial role in the lives of both typically developing and disabled children. Their engagement in all aspects of a child's life undoubtedly makes a significant impact. In this context, we focus specifically on the extent of parental involvement in the academic success of children with special needs. Our findings demonstrate that parental involvement is indeed a valuable asset in the academic

journey of their children. Moreover, our study reveals that for children with special needs, parental involvement is even more critical for their benefit. Additionally, it has been shown that highly educated parents can further enhance their child's academic prospects.

The research findings indicated that parents valued their involvement in their children's education. A frequently cited reason for this was the enhanced discipline observed in their children, which extended from home to school. The study also revealed that parents felt appreciated and recognized by the school when they participated in their children's education, which positively contributed to resolving conflicts between parents and school authorities.

As a society, we must be sensitive to the needs of children with disabilities and support their parents in every way possible. To advance as a nation, particularly in India, we must embrace inclusive education. Our progress hinges on uplifting those who are marginalized. We have made efforts to provide every possible resource for children with special needs, enabling them to integrate into the broader society rather than remain an exclusive group. Parents of children with disabilities should not feel marginalized in society; instead, they should be actively involved in their child's academic life in any way we can facilitate.

Declaration by Author

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Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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