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## Inclusion of Disabilities in Elementary Schools: A Parental Metaphoric Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to discover the metaphors used by parents of disabled children for inclusion of their children in regular classrooms. A phenomenological methodology for gathering metaphors was used to gather the data. In-depth interview with 22 parents having 5 types of disabled children were analyzed conducting metaphor analysis. Major findings showed that the ways parents think has largely arise by social acceptance and rejection of their children in mainstream schools. Because of averse medical facilities inside schools' parents preferring to keep their children at home. More conventional type of belief existed within parents' metaphoric expression rather than progressive one in terms of inclusion of these children towards mainstream education system.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Education, Students with Disabilities, Elementary schools, Parents of disabilities, Mainstream Education.

### INTRODUCTION

Parenting a child with disability is not easy. Associated with a combination of cognitive developmental, behavioral difficulties, these children often suffer numerous health complications like epileptic seizures, muscular dysfunctions, occasional spasticity (Nakken & Vlaskamp, 2002) and many more. The continuous assistance needed by these children has significantly affected individuals associated with them, but primarily parents. Their involvement in these children's journey is complicated even in developed nations (Singal, 2016), despite the fact that they are designated as "privileged partners" in international agreements like the Salamaca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994). Dealing with countless emotional and sociological resilience, when parents are ready to send their children to mainstream education

(Saikia, 2016) the present education system is still having difficulty meeting these children's basic educational needs even after 12 years in implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009) and six years of the Right of People with Disabilities Act (2016). In addition, a larger social domain influences the teaching community's cognitive process attitude towards disabled people, reserving them to accept them in mainstream schools (Robinson, & Goodey, 2017). A general emphasis on inclusive school culture not always affect the treatment and care some students seek in apprehensive way. For instance, participating in same activities with a distinguished peer group is more important for them apart from curricular demands (Orelove & Dymond, 2001) but it appears that legitimate need of these group for inclusion in a friendly atmosphere is unmet.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Empirical research highlighted, parents are dealing with socio-cultural (Elton-Chalcraft, Cammack and Harrison, 2016) and integral (Scully, 2014) vulnerabilities relating to the condition of their ward. Even though they are aware of the inherent complexity for the reason of their emotional attachment to the child, the socio-cultural and incidental complexity have a profound impact on them. Additionally, a further unintended but real exclusion occurred as a result of the parental ignorance regarding the fundamental laws existed for protection of the child's educational rights (Rastogi & Kumar, 2020). Although many parents view the inclusion process as a better approach, many of them continue to trust special education facilities to provide their children with the best possible education in terms of access to specialized resources and healthcare providers (Naskar & Upadhyaya, 2019). The choice of special schools by parents also made out to avoid the charitable and sympathetic attitude of other parents for who sent their normal children to mainstream schools (Narumanchi and Bhargava, 2011). Apart from this, quality being a long-term concern in Indian schools (World Bank, 2019a; ASER, 2020; World Bank, 2019b) reflected in parents' action towards inclusion of their child in elementary schools. Despite the fact that parents who themselves lack a high level of education are aware of the poor educational opportunities offered to their children in schools (Singal, 2016). Shekhar (2020) found that parents who were currently sending their child to school had, on average, switched schools at least three times. In studies, parental frustration (Kalita and Sarmah, 2012), and lack of physical amenities like school buses (Peshawaria et.al, 1995), special restrooms (Singal, 2016) are some main factors that causes parents of disabled children to withdraw them from school. A contrast of evident also found in studies while some parents are unhappy with over prioritization of functional and vocational activities apart from academics in special schools (Vaida, 2014), parents in different location are happy with special schools for same reason (Singal et.al, 2011). The evidence indicates that every parent having a disable child faces their own array of issues while dealing with their teaching learning.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Studies indicate, the situations parents encounter constantly interact with sociocultural and situational effects. Given that, the recent proliferation on Sustainable Development Goals (United Nation, 2015) are receiving more attention on a global scale, it is crucial to emphasise the challenges and opportunities that parents with disabilities face when trying to include their children in schools. Therefore, comprehending the belief is essential for knowing how they feel and think about putting their child in inclusive environments. This might help us comprehend how they conceptualize their core beliefs. Parents' conscious and unconscious use of language can reveal shortcomings rooted in their wider context. The purpose of the current study is to examine parents' experiences and beliefs by looking at the metaphors they use to describe events, thoughts, and feelings related to including their disabled child in a regular classroom. In connection to above purpose study aims to answer following research questions:

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1. What metaphors do parents of children with disabilities use to describe inclusion of their children in mainstream classrooms?
2. What conceptual category/categories can parents' metaphors generate?

## **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

Investigating the opinions and beliefs mostly points to a qualitative approach to understanding using various exemplary techniques such as questionnaire, observations, interviews etc. Metaphoric expression of an individual gain more insights towards 'ways of thinking', 'transferer of meaning' between semantic elements. The fundamental idea is that one type of thing is understood and covered in terms of another, coming from a different language or logical system (Lakoff & Mark, 2003). The current study used phenomenology, a prominent qualitative methodology. This kind of research aims to comprehend the fundamental principles and structure of the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24). Parents (n=22) from 6 districts in the state of Odisha who were chosen purposefully took part in the study. (See table.1 for details). Information-rich situations are those from which a lot can be learned about matters that are crucial to the investigation's objective (Patton,2015). Purposive sampling was used in this study with the intention of choosing parents whose disabled children attend regular schools. The data from all the parents were collected through a semi-structured interview schedule. The schedule was systematically piloted on 4 parents. Following the responds, the linguistic structures of some questions were modified and refined, made them ready for administration.

Table. 1: Overview of Sample

Sample	Type of Disable Child
8 Parents	Learning
6 Parents	Physical
2 Parents	Intellectual
5 Parents	Hearing
1 Parent	Cerebral Palsy

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

A metaphor directed content analysis was done for analyzing the data, which implies assembling linguistic metaphors first, then transforming them into conceptual metaphors (Cameron & Low, 1999, p. 88). The deep socio-cultural thinking patterns of parents were uncovered through sentences reflected in each interview transcript Thus, these metaphors help in developing conceptual category. Categorization of metaphor was done in order to draw evidence to validate each conceptual category found in the study. All the interviews were conducted in Odia language and translated in to English. During analysis multiple metaphorical schemata (Deignan, 1999a) presented with scattered meanings were avoided from conceptual category formation.

## **THE RESULTS**

After segregating multiple metaphorical schemata, 2 main conceptual categories were identified (see table.2 for details). The sub conceptual categories and interpretations were explained below.

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Table. 2: Parental Metaphors

Main conceptual categories	Sub conceptual categories	Metaphors about Inclusive Education
Positive	Progression	“gives extra time,” “understanding each other,” “people are changing,” “time is changing,”
	Hope	“felt my pain,” “very sweet person,” “like a friend,” “good human being,” “showing sympathy,” “relaxed with attendance,” “giving good marks”
Negative	Incompatibility	“not known to disease,” “patient child,” “difficult one,” “pushing to darkness,” “living child not a dead one,” “teachers are not doctors,” “school does not treat,” “home is good”
	Imposed acts	“calling dumb,” “peer pulling leg,” “not nice to my ward,” “never trust,” “God’s will,” “past life deeds,” “no hope of marriage,” “good child’s suffering”
	Pain	“bearing extra load,” “a headache,” “constant stress”
	Despair	“no loss of school,” “nobody cares truly,” “a drop of water to dying man,” “financial draining,” “a dream”

### The Belief of Disable Parents

The parents of disabilities shows both positive and negative metaphoric expressions towards the inclusion of their children in mainstream classrooms. In positive conceptual category two sub conceptual categories were developed having 11 no. of metaphors. In negative conceptual category 4 sub conceptual were developing by producing 26 no. of metaphors.

In positive conceptual category parents expresses progression [sub conceptual category] in inclusive process is happening because teachers are “giving extra time” and their child and peers “understanding each other”, which made them feel “people are changing” and the “time is changing” for their children’s learning. Parents are hopeful [sub conceptual category] towards inclusion process since teachers and staff members “felt my[their]pain” which made them think they are “very sweet person” “like a friend” or a “good human being” who are also “showing sympathy” and “relaxed [their child] with attendance” and sometimes “giving extra marks”.

In negative conceptual category parents are incompatible [sub conceptual category] towards sending their children to mainstem schools because teachers are “not known to [the]disease” of their children. Because their children are “patient child[ren]” who may put teachers “difficult one” to teach. Sending to school is like “pushing to darkness” as they felt “living child [is better]not a dead one”. Because their child needs medical attention and “teachers are not doctors’ or “school does not treat”, they believe “home is good” for their children. Parents expressed some imposed act [sub conceptual category] restricting their children from taking education in mainstream schools. They think “calling dumb” or “leg pulling [by peers]” is not “nice to their[my]wards” for which they “never trust” them. Parents expresses their community and teachers says its “God’s will” or “past life deeds” for which they are suffering. Parents have “no hope for marriage” of their disabled children and for which their “good[normal] child is suffering” by helping him/her assisting with daily activities. When the disable child cannot do independent activities,

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they feel pain [sub conceptual category] like “bearing extra load” and “a headache” or a “constant stress”. Despair [sub conceptual category] parents think if their child is not going to school there is “no loss of school” and “nobody cares truly” for their children. That the govt. and school provisions for their children are like “a drop of water to dying man” and they are “financial[ly] draining” for their disabled children. A transport facility is “a dream for them” as expressed.

**Progressivist and Conventional Belief of Parents**

The participants show two types of beliefs towards the inclusion of their children in mainstream classrooms. In progressivist subcategory parents put a logic towards the phenomenon. For example parents are negatively perceiving mainstream education because “nobody cares actually” or “there are “no loss of school” if their child is not going there. In conventional subcategory parents often made conservative expressions such as “God’s will” or “past life deed” are the reasons for which their children are here by such condition.

Table. 3: Parental Belief Progressivist and Conventional

Main conceptual categories	Sub conceptual categories	Metaphors about Inclusive Education
Parental Belief	Progressivist	“gives extra time,” “understanding each other,” “people are changing,” “time is changing,” “felt my pain,” “very sweet person,” “like a friend,” “good human being,” “calling dumb,” “peer pulling leg,” “no loss of school,” “nobody cares truly,” “a drop of water to dying man,” “financial draining”
	Conventional	“showing sympathy,” “relaxed with attendance,” “not known to disease,” “patient child,” “difficult one,” “pushing to darkness,” “living child not a dead one,” “teachers are not doctors,” “school does not treat,” “home is good,” “giving good marks,” “not nice to my ward,” “never trust,” “God’s will,” “past life deeds,” “no hope of marriage,” “good child’s suffering,” “bearing extra load,” “a headache,” “constant stress”

Both subcategories are positive and negative expressions inherited. In progressivist belief category 14 metaphoric expression were given by the participants. There are 21 no of metaphoric expression provided in conventional subcategory of parental belief. A social-cultural impact is still paramount for holding conventional belief of parents in the study areas. A detail of above subcategories given in table.3.

**DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to reveal belief of parents of disabilities towards inclusion of their children in mainstream classrooms. The findings of the analysis revealed an increased no. of metaphors in parents’ belief considering it as an unsuccessful way for their ward. These results may indicate that parents tend to view including children with disabilities as little progression towards supportive action and more towards incompatible positions (Nakken & Vlaskamp, 2002). When it should not be avoided that, the



children of these parents are presently learning at mainstream schools and not going to any special schools, the negative metaphoric belief of their parents may be resulted by limited rationale of Govt. towards inclusion of these children by only rehabilitating and normalizing (Singal, 2007) rather than providing need-based education. It was under the provisions that children with disabilities must be included in government schools, but private schools are exempt from this requirement because they are not subject to the same regulatory pressure (James & Woodhead, 2014). While bullying behavior by peers proven to be significantly affect the children's school going habit, the findings found this (Elton-Chalcraft et al.,2016; Dimitrios et al.,2008). Parental beliefs were mostly driven by social acts of teachers or community members for vulnerable condition of their children in this study (Cammack and Harrison, 2016). For instance, it is inherent that parents of normal recommending academic classes separately for disable and normal students, for the academic instability and their belief about children with special needs would not be able to perform up to mark (Narumanchi & Bhargava, 2011). Where parents are already dealing with stress and bearing extra load for their child, the minimum and basic facility of transportation for their children to school is still a dream for them (Peshawaria et.al, 1995). Unexpectedly, parents believe that granting extra marks and relaxing attendance requirements will help their children pass the test with comfortable. Parents continue to think that improving one's grade is a good learning occurrence (Thompson,2016).

The study also found the conventional thought process of parents is more skewed towards belief in including children with disabilities in to general schools. research support the notion that Indian parents continues to accept metaphysical descriptions given by others for the condition faced by having or parenting a disabled child, such as karma (destiny) (Lang,2001). Additionally, while enrollment had seemed to become a natural progression, a variety of other factors influenced regular attendance and participation in the education provided in these classrooms (Singal, 2016). The unfavorable lack of medical facilities makes parents reevaluate and sometimes overthink potential emergencies involving with their children (Nakken & Vlaskamp, 2002) hence prefers to keep them at home. According to research, parents who are overly concerned with their child's safety, don't understand the value of education, or are otherwise neglectful of their child can be obstacles to their child's education (Plan, 2014). Additionally, the findings showed that the parents believed their normal [good] child was also suffering because of taking care of special child with daily tasks, similar kind of study done Hallberg (2013) revealed the emotional and psychological suffering of having a disable sibling is more prominent than physical one. Some disabled children are neglected in preference to other siblings found by Lang (2001).

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The study's findings are helpful because they reflect the participants' ingrained thinking from their conscious and unconscious linguistic expression. The study's main point emphasizes how crucial it is to take into account disable parents' beliefs in order to include their kids in regular education from all angles. Due to the fact that parents are a disabled child's primary carers, it is crucial to remove any reservations involved in their belief for mainstream education that may exist. It is important to include them in decision making processes and ask for opinions/suggestions which may best suitable for their child. Because leaving the mainstream government school would be expensive for children with special needs and there would be few real opportunities, the idea of loyalty for a need-based education is very weak. The minimum physical and medical assistance should be made available taking in the medication profile of any child enrolled in mainstream education system. For the sustained protection of these students' social rights and, primarily, for their dignity, adequate disability-awareness programmes should be held for all stakeholders involved.

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## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The metaphors a person uses to define a subject may have an impact on the way they view a phenomenon. (Massengill et al., 2005). Translating the language of expression may restrain the ontological and structural linguistic force. It is important to maintain the natural metaphoric expression for real meaning making. The study's translation of the transcript from Odia to English could have linguistic flaws.

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