

## Attitude of Parents on Open Schooling for Persons with Intellectual Disability

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### Abstract:

*The parents of children with intellectual disability are decision maker for present and future education of their children. The purpose of this study is to know the present awareness and attitude about open schooling among the parents of children with intellectual disability. In this present study the descriptive method is used to find out the attitude of parents on open schooling. Purposive sampling method was used to select the sample. Total 120 parents were selected for the study. The rating scale was developed during the study which consists of twenty nine items in six broad areas related to attitude. Based on minimum and maximum score of sample, attitudinal level categorize as low, medium and high positive attitude towards open schooling. Descriptive and inferential statistics used to analyze the data. Result shows that there is significant difference among the various age groups of the parent and their attitudinal level.*

**Key words:** Attitude; Parents: Open schooling and Intellectual disability.

### Introduction

In India, the Open and Distance Learning system has made remarkable progress in the last few decades. Both at the

university and higher education level as well as at the school level, the Open and Distance Learning system has firmly established itself as a major education provider for those who cannot go to the formal education system. This is in keeping with the thinking expressed by different scholars. According to Perraton (2004) the aims and purpose of open and distance learning at the secondary level for open schools in countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia is to make up for a shortfall of places in the formal secondary school, while also making it possible for young people at work to study part time.

The background for the importance given to Open and Distance Learning systems lies in the massive thrust given by the government to the literacy and school enrolment programme. The decade of the nineties saw many innovations in planning and implementation strategies with respect to both these programmes. The initiation of the District Primary Education Programme focused on the enrolment of the 6-14 age group into school, while the initiation of the campaign mode resulted in the adult literacy programme becoming a mass movement. The total number of persons, who have become literate, according to the Census 2001, is 560.68 million. For the first time since India's Independence, there has been a decline in the absolute numbers of non-literates during the decade. The literacy rate in 1947 was 14% with the female literacy figure being 8%. In the Census 2001, the literacy rate has gone up to 64.84% with male and female literacy at 75.26% and 53.67% respectively.

## **National Scenario**

The national education scenario also created an environment that called for providing opportunities for primary education. The need and importance of open schooling and distance education is seen in the statement given in the National Policy on Education (1986) which said that the future thrust will be in

the direction of Open and Distance Learning (NPE 1986). In keeping with the commitment of the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education to all up to the age of 14 years, the 86th Constitutional Amendment (2002) made elementary education a fundamental right for all children in the age group of 6-14 years. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched by the government in 2000 to ensure that the performance of the school system is improved. The specific objectives of the SSA are that all children complete five years of schooling by 2007 and eight years by 2010. Besides these, the National Literacy Mission also began implementing its Continuing Education Scheme which included the component of Equivalency Programmes (EPs) for adult neo literates. Equivalency Programmes are defined as an alternative educational programme equivalent to the existing formal general or vocational education. (UNESCO, 1993)

At the international level there has been a strong focus on the universalisation of elementary education. As early as 1993, the post Jomtien E-9 Summit of Nine High Population Countries adopted the Delhi Declaration wherein a specific resolution was made to work in collaboration on a distance education initiative to better reach neo-literates and marginalised groups. The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) asked countries to set a timeframe within which the goal of Education for All would be achieved. The United Nation Millennium Development Goal also included goals for Education for All especially for girls education. India, which was a signatory to the Dakar Framework for Action, made its National Plan of Action (2003). According to this, priority areas to address the regional, social and gender disparities were framed.

## **Open Basic Education**

Open schooling is seen as a flexible and appropriate to deliver education to children with intellectual disability at elementary level. Technology could be used to support open schooling. The advantage of technology and open learning could go a long way in widening accessibility to education for the majority of children and or people with intellectual disability, flexibly so that the learning process can go on. These groups may be able to access materials from home, which is seen as the safest, least expensive environment. This could be incorporated with occasional attendance at local study centers and a form of blended learning that incorporates Open Education Resources (OERs) such as Open Learn (Khokhar, 2007).

## **Parental attitude**

Most of the parents of children with intellectual disability willing to opt for open schooling for their children. They think that the open education system will provide all the appropriate facilities, feasibilities and environment for their children. Most of the parents have positive attitude on the open education for the children with intellectual disability. Only few parents have doubt or not agree with this idea. The involvement of parents of children with intellectual disability in the development of effective education programme is an important factor. Parents are decision makers in placing their children; they play a central role in their children's development and educational activities. Parents are the driving force behind many of the services provided to their children; parents are potential initiators and advocates of their children. Parents can give the feedback about development of their children and assessing the effectiveness of education programme through open distance learning for the children with intellectual disability.

## **Need and significance of the study**

Education is the right of every child, which needs to be ensured. The same is equally applicable to the children with intellectual disability. To achieve this, the open education approach is the best option to be adopted. Many of parents are not aware of the philosophy behind open schooling. Hence, it is essential to know the attitude and opinion of parents of children with intellectual disability towards open schooling. This can give us an insight to understand parental perception and enable us to take necessary steps to prepare parents to accept the concepts in the true sense of the term. The parents of children with intellectual disability are very powerful in advocating education for their children. They are decision makers for future and present education of their children. The need of this study is to know the views of parents of children with intellectual disability on open distance learning. With this consideration the present study is taken up to analyze the parental views and their attitude on open distance learning.

## **Objectives of the study**

- To find out the views of parents on open distance learning.
- To understand the difference in views of parents on open schooling with respect to age, gender, locality, educational qualification, occupation, income, category of disability of their children and severity of the disability.

## **Hypotheses**

In view of the above objectives following hypotheses were formulated.

- There will be no significant difference in the attitude of parents on open schooling with respect to age, gender,

locality, educational qualification, occupation, income, category of disability of their children and severity of the disability.

## **Methodology**

In this present study the descriptive method is used to find out the attitude of parents on open distance learning.

### **Sample and sampling technique**

Purposive sampling technique used to select the sample, which consists of total hundred and twenty parents whose children are intellectual disabled. It includes either mother or father of the child. Sample includes those parents whose children are enrolled for National Institute of Open Schooling-Open Basic Education (NIOS-OBE) class. The sample represents the parents of children with intellectual disability who are enrolled for NIOS-OBE in twin cities of Hyderabad & Secunderabad.

### **Tool**

The researcher has developed a rating scale which consists of three parts: Part I includes profile of the parents such as name, gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, income and residential localities. Part-II includes profile of the special child such as name, age, gender, type of the disabilities, severity level of the disabilities and other associated problems. Part –III consists of six broad areas such as infrastructure & administrative support; legal, ethical & government role; role of study centre & teacher’s competency; curriculum & academic achievement; Children benefits and parents preference, which have all together twenty-nine items. The total number of items in different areas is mentioned below in table-1

**Table-1 Total number of items in different areas of the tool**

S.No.	Areas	No. of items
1.	Infrastructure & administrative support	4
2.	Legal, ethical & government role	2
3.	Role of study centre & Teacher's competency	5
4.	Curriculum & academic achievement	3
5.	Children benefits	10
6.	Parents preference	5
	Total	29

### **Validity**

The items in rating scale were framed keeping in view the objectives of the study. The tool was circulated among the experts in the fields of special education for validation and suggestions were incorporated. The experts felt that the items included were relevant to the area selected and are without any ambiguity. Thus, it may be stated that the tool posses content and construct validity.

### **Reliability**

Test-retest method is used to test the reliability of the tool. It was found from the results that the responses were closely related and coefficient of correlation of two trials found to be 0.82. Thus, from the results obtained it can be stated that tool possess reliability.

### **Scoring**

The scoring was planned to be given as 4,3,2,1 for the rating scale, strongly agree (S.A.), agree (A), disagree (D.A.) and strongly disagree (S.D.A) respectively.

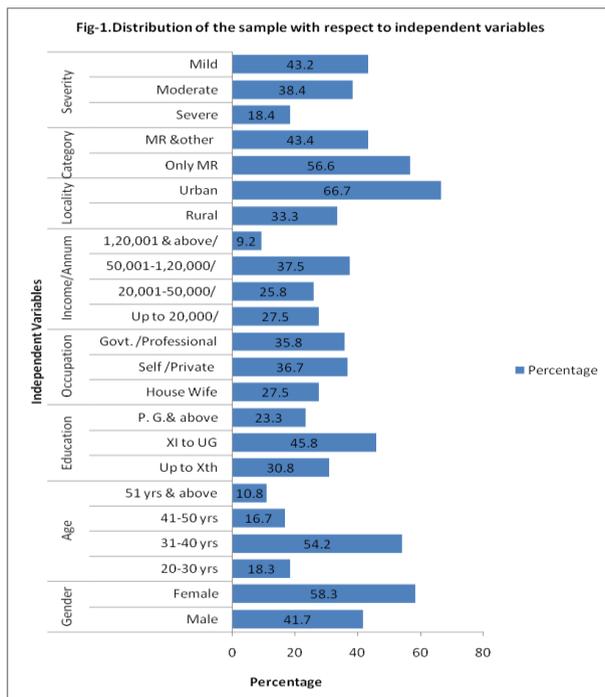
### **Data collection**

The researcher by taking prior appointment with the parents met them and administered the tool to each respondent. Before administering the tool close rapport was built with the respondents by talking and discussing about the child and the

various educational provisions. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and ensured that the responses would be kept strictly confidential and will be used for research purpose only. The researcher also explained the items in the other languages such as Hindi and Telugu where ever required.

### Distribution of the sample with respect to independent variables

This study is an investigation of the opinion of the parents on open schooling; certain independent variables have been identified. These independent variables are: 1. Gender. 2. Age of the sample. 3. Qualification of the sample. 4. Income of the sample, 5. Occupation of the sample, 6. Locality of the sample. 7. Category of the disability of their child and 8. Severity level of the disability. The detailed distribution of the sample with respect to different independent variables shown in fig-1.



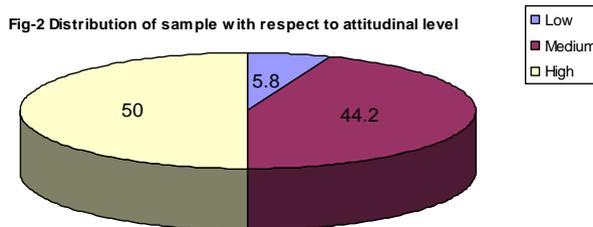
The fig-1 shows that in present study various independent variables such as gender, age of the sample, qualification of the sample, income of the sample, occupation of the sample, locality of the sample, category of the disability of their child and severity level of the disability with their categories were considered and the data were presented in term of percentage in the above figure-1.

### Distribution of sample with respect to attitudinal level

The study scale used for collecting data has minimum score of 29 and maximum score of 116. Since the maximum score that shows disagree/ negative attitude is 58 as per the items. Thus, the score above 58 is considered as the positive attitude and it categorize into there category that low which score range from 59 to 78; medium which score range from 79 to 97 and high positive attitude whose score range from 98 and above shown in table-2.

**Table-2 Distribution of sample with respect to attitudinal level**

Attitude	Number	Percentage
59-78(Low)	7	5.8
79-98(Medium)	53	44.2
99 & above (High)	60	50.0
Total	120	100.0



The fig-2 shows that no sample shows the negative attitude on open schooling. Thus out of the total sample 7 (5.8 %) shows low positive attitude; 53 (44.2%) shows medium positive attitude

and 60 (50%) shows high positive attitude on open schooling. The table also shows that maximum number 60 (50%) shows high positive attitude towards the open schooling and only very small sample 7 (5.8%) shows low positive attitude on open schooling.

### Quantitative analysis of data

The collected data were scored and analyzed by using the percentage and chi-square statistical technique with respect to various dependent and independent variables. It is further interpreted and presented below in the table-3 and also in graphical form.

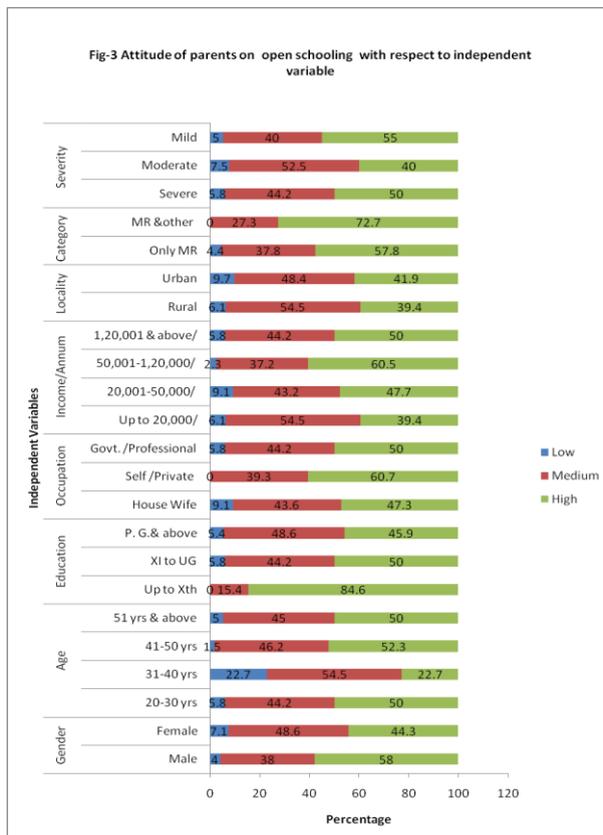
**Table-3 Attitude of parents on open schooling with respect to independent variable**

Variable	Category		Attitude level			Chi Square with df
			Low	Medium	High	
Gender		Percentage				2.33 df.2
	Male		4.0	38.0	58.0	
	Female		7.1	48.6	44.3	
	Total		5.8	44.2	50.0	
Age	20-30 years		22.7	54.5	22.7	**23.1 df.6
	31-40 years		1.5	46.2	52.3	
	41-50 years		5.0	45.0	50.0	
	51 years & above		0	15.4	84.6	
	Total		5.8	44.2	50.0	
Education	Up to Xth		5.4	48.6	45.9	3.82 df.4
	XII & U. G.		9.1	43.6	47.3	
	P.G. & above		0	39.3	60.7	
	Total	5.8	44.2	50.0		
Occupation	House Wife	6.1	54.5	39.4	4.73 df.4	
	Self/Private employed	9.1	43.2	47.7		
	Govt.jobs/Professional	2.3	37.2	60.5		
	Total	5.8	44.2	50.0		
	Up to 20000/ annum	6.1	54.5	39.4		
	20001-50000/ annum	9.7	48.4	41.9		

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Income	50001-120000/ annum	4.4	37.8	57.8	6.46 df.6
	120000 & above/annum	0	27.3	72.7	
	Total	5.8	44.2	50.0	
Locality	Rural	7.5	52.5	40.0	2.43 df.2
	Urban	5.0	40.0	55.0	
	Total	5.8	44.2	50.0	
Category of disability	Only M.R.	8.8	58.8	32.4	0.95 df.2
	M.R. with other	11.5	46.2	42.3	
	Total	10.0	53.3	36.7	
Severity of disability	Severe	9.1	54.5	36.4	0.93 df.4
	Moderate	13.0	56.5	30.4	
	Mild	7.7	50.0	42.3	
	Total	10.0	53.3	36.7	

\*\*P<0.01



The table-3 and fig-3 shows various categories and their attitudinal level on open distance learning. It also shows that there is difference in attitudinal level of different categories of sample.

To understand whether the observed difference in the attitude of different category is significant or not, the chi-square statistical technique has been applied and the result presented in the table 3. The table predicts that there is significant difference in the attitude of parents of different age group at 0.01 level with degree of freedom 6 (\*\*P<0.01). In all others categories attitudinal differences is not statically significant.

## **Result**

The table-3 and figure-3 above clearly shows the attitudinal level of different categories of sample. Result shows that there is highly significant difference in attitudinal level of different age groups of parent. Only 48.6 % mothers have shown medium positive attitude where as 58.0 % father have shown high positive attitude on open schooling. The positive attitudes of parents on open schooling have shown increase with respect to increase in age of the parents. Total 84.6 % of parents who is above 50 years have shown high positive attitude on open schooling. Out of 120 sample 72.7 % of parents have shown high positive attitude towards open schooling whose income is more than one lakh and twenty thousand per annum. Majority of parents (55.0 %) who belongs to the urban areas have shown high positive attitude whereas majority of parents (52.5%) who belongs to rural area shows medium positive attitude towards open schooling. Maximum percentage of parents who have children with intellectual disability along with other associated condition and with only intellectual disability have shown medium positive attitude on open schooling. Majority of parents

with mild, moderate and severe intellectual disabled child have shown medium positive attitude on open schooling.

## **Discussion**

The findings of the study show that the maximum percentage of mothers have shown medium positive attitude on open schooling whereas maximum number of fathers shows high positive attitude on open schooling, the reason behind it may be that fathers are more confident about their children than the mothers. Mothers at sometimes may be more conscious & protective about their children.

The older age parents shows high positive attitude on open schooling, the reason may be that with the passage of time they become more aware and develop positive feelings towards open schooling whereas the mother of younger age were lacking in that. Based on the findings of the study it is suggested that the younger parents of children with special needs should enrich their knowledge and experiences by sharing about their children with the other parents and professionals.

The parents whose educational qualifications are high showed high positive attitude towards open schooling, the reason behind it may be that they might have come across various literatures about open schooling and special education as well as philosophy behind it. Their knowledge and experience might have been more in the field of education.

The maximum percentage of parents who are in government jobs or in professional jobs have high positive attitude open schooling, the reason behind may be that they are aware about the facility and feasibility of open schooling as well as various educational provisions for the children with special needs.

The parents of urban areas have shown high positive attitude towards inclusive education than the parents of rural areas. The reasons may be that, the parents of urban area are

aware of various educational provisions for their children with special needs, they also might be aware about various services available for the children and in addition to that they also might have come across literature related to open schooling.

The maximum percentage of parents who have children with only intellectual disability might be more confident about their children than the parents of children with intellectual disability along with other associated conditions. Probably because of this reason maximum percentage of the parents with only intellectual disabled children have shown medium positive attitude towards open schooling than the parents of children with intellectual disability along with other associated conditions. At the same time maximum percentage of parents have shown only medium positive attitude the reason behind it might be that they are not confident about various support services needed to the children, will be provided in open schooling system.

## **Conclusion**

The present study showed the relations between independent variable and the various dependent variables. The findings of the study show that there is difference in attitude of different category of sample. There is highly significant difference in the attitude of parents of different age group. The positive attitudes of parents on open schooling have shown increase with respect to increase in age and education and income of the parents. Maximum percentage of fathers shown high positive attitude on open schooling where as maximum percentage of mother shown medium positive attitude. The important thing is that no one shown negative attitude on open schooling, that means everyone had more or less positive attitude on open schooling. Thus based on the findings of the study it is suggested that awareness about philosophy behind open schooling and various educational provisions for the children with special needs

among the parents specifically the mothers, younger age parents, parents of rural areas and parents with low educational and economic profile need to be ensured.

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