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Parents' Attitudes Towards Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Schools in Haryana: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Inclusive education aims to provide equitable learning opportunities for children with disabilities in mainstream schools. Parents' attitudes play an important role in promoting the acceptance and successful inclusion of children with disabilities. The present study, entitled **"**Parents' Attitudes towards Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Schools in Haryana: A Comparative Study,**"** aimed to compare the attitudes of parents of children with disabilities and parents of children without disabilities and to examine differences in attitudes with respect to gender, type of school, and area of residence. A descriptive survey method was employed, and the sample consisted of 100 parents from inclusive schools in Sonipat district, Haryana, including 50 parents of children with disabilities and 50 parents of children without disabilities. Data were collected using a researcher-developed Parents' Attitudes Scale comprising 30 statements rated on a five-point Likert scale. The scale demonstrated high internal consistency, with a reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .969. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and independent-samples *t*-tests at the .05 level of significance. The findings revealed a statistically significant difference in attitudes between the two parent groups ($t = 2.714$, $p = .008$), with parents of children with disabilities reporting more positive attitudes. A significant gender difference was also observed ($t = 2.639$, $p = .010$), with female parents reporting more positive attitudes than male parents. However, differences based on type of school ($t = 1.788$, $p = .077$) and area of residence ($t = 1.463$, $p = .147$) were not statistically significant. The findings highlight the importance of understanding parental

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perspectives and suggest that inclusive education initiatives should encourage parental participation, awareness, and collaboration between families and schools to strengthen the acceptance of children with disabilities in inclusive settings.

Keywords: inclusive education, parents' attitudes, children with disabilities, parental perspectives, government and private schools, urban and rural areas, Haryana.

Introduction

Inclusive education is concerned with the participation and learning of all children, including children with disabilities, within educational settings that respond to learner diversity. International and national policy frameworks have emphasized the right to education, non-discrimination, accessibility, and participation. The Salamanca Statement called for education systems to respond to the diversity of learners (UNESCO, 1994), while the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to inclusive education (United Nations, 2006). In India, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, provides a legislative framework relevant to the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The implementation of inclusion depends not only on policy and school resources but also on the attitudes of the people who participate in children's educational lives. Parents may influence children's views about disability, their willingness to form friendships with classmates with disabilities, and their support for school activities promoting inclusion. Parents' confidence in teachers, school resources, safety, and the educational progress of children can also shape their perceptions of inclusive schooling.

The Parents' Attitudes Scale used in the present study addresses several aspects of these perceptions, including the benefits of inclusion, academic expectations, peer relationships, school support, teachers' roles, parental participation, and children's social-emotional development. Examining differences across parent categories and demographic contexts can provide information relevant to family-school partnership and inclusive school practice.

Review of Literature

Research on parents' attitudes towards inclusive education highlights the importance of parental acceptance and school support in promoting the inclusion of children with disabilities. de Boer et al. (2010), in a review of 10 studies, found that most parents held positive attitudes towards

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inclusive education, although concerns remained regarding support services and individualized instruction. Elkins et al. (2003) examined parents' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with special needs and highlighted the importance of appropriate educational provision. In India, Narumanchi and Bhargava (2011) explored the perceptions of parents of children without disabilities and reported support for inclusion alongside reservations about certain aspects of classroom organization. Runswick-Cole (2008) discussed the complexities parents face when considering mainstream and special-school placements, emphasizing the importance of children's individual needs and the suitability of educational provision. Bopota et al. (2020) investigated differences in attitudes towards inclusion between parents of children with and without disabilities. Collectively, these studies provide a basis for examining parental attitudes and suggest the importance of investigating differences according to parent category, gender, type of school, and urban or rural location in inclusive schools in Haryana.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

The study was undertaken to examine parents' attitudes towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools and to determine whether these attitudes differed by parent category, gender, type of school, and area. Parents of children with disabilities and parents of children without disabilities may encounter inclusion from different perspectives; examining both groups can help schools identify areas where communication, awareness, and partnership may be strengthened. The comparisons by gender, school type, and area provide additional information about whether attitudes vary across these selected groups.

The study is relevant to inclusive schools, educators, school leaders, and families. The findings may help inform parent orientation, inclusive school communication, peer acceptance initiatives, and collaboration between families and schools. The results are specific to the sample and setting studied and should not be generalized beyond those boundaries without further evidence.

Objectives of the Study

1. To compare the attitudes of parents of children with disabilities and parents of non-disabled children towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools in Haryana.
2. To examine the difference in the attitudes of parents towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools in Haryana with respect to gender.

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3. To examine the difference in the attitudes of parents towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools in Haryana with respect to type of school (government and private).
4. To examine the difference in the attitudes of parents towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools in Haryana with respect to area (urban and rural).

Null Hypotheses

1. H_{01}: There is no significant difference between the attitudes of parents of children with disabilities and parents of non-disabled children towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools in Haryana.
2. H_{02}: There is no significant difference in the attitudes of parents towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools in Haryana with respect to gender.
3. H_{03}: There is no significant difference in the attitudes of parents towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools in Haryana with respect to type of school (government and private).
4. H_{04}: There is no significant difference in the attitudes of parents towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools in Haryana with respect to area (urban and rural).

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative descriptive survey research design. This design was used to describe parents' existing attitudes and compare group mean scores without manipulating any variables.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in inclusive schools in Sonipat district, Haryana. Schools devoted solely to special education were outside the stated scope of the study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the present study consisted of 100 parents of children studying in inclusive schools in Sonipat district, Haryana. Stratified random sampling was employed to select the participants. The sample was divided into two strata based on the disability status of their children: parents of children with disabilities and parents of children without disabilities. A total of 50 parents were selected from each stratum, resulting in a sample of 100 parents. This sampling approach ensured

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representation of both parent groups for the comparative analysis of attitudes towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools.

Research Tool

Data were collected using the researcher-developed Parents' Attitudes Scale toward Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Schools. The bilingual scale contains 30 statements and uses five response categories: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The statements cover perceptions of inclusive education and its benefits; academic expectations and outcomes; social interaction, peer relationships, and emotional development; school support, infrastructure, and policies; teachers' roles; parental involvement, awareness, and satisfaction; and attitudinal or behavioral changes. Higher scores indicate a more positive attitude.

Validity and Reliability

The Parents' Attitudes Scale was developed by the researcher to assess parents' attitudes towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools. To establish the content validity of the tool, it was reviewed by 20 experts from across the country, and their opinions and suggestions were considered to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of the statements in relation to the objectives of the study. The reliability of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to determine its internal consistency. The scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.969, indicating a high level of internal consistency among its 30 statements and supporting its reliability for assessing parents' attitudes towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools.

Data Collection and Ethics

Data were collected from 100 parents of children studying in inclusive schools in Sonipat district, Haryana, using the researcher-developed Parents' Attitudes Scale. The participants included 50 parents of children with disabilities and 50 parents of children without disabilities, selected through stratified random sampling. Before data collection, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and their informed consent was obtained. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that they could decline to participate. Confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided by the participants were maintained, and the collected data were used exclusively for research purposes. Ethical principles relating to voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality were followed throughout the study.

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Statistical Analysis

The data collected through the Parents' Attitudes Scale were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Mean and standard deviation were calculated to describe parents' attitudes towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools. Independent-samples *t*-tests were employed to examine differences in attitudes between parents of children with disabilities and parents of children without disabilities, as well as differences based on gender, type of school (government and private), and area of residence (urban and rural). The level of statistical significance was set at $p < .05$. The statistical results were interpreted to determine whether the observed differences between the groups were statistically significant.

Results and Interpretation

The data collected from 100 parents were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to examine their attitudes towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools in Haryana. The results are presented in tables and figures, followed by interpretations to explain differences in parental attitudes according to the selected variables.

Table 1: Comparison of Attitude Scores of Parents of Children with Disabilities and Parents of Non-Disabled Children towards Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Schools

Attitude	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	p-value
Parents of Children with Disabilities	50	4.288	0.491	2.714	98	.008**
Parents of Children without Disabilities	50	4.011	0.530			

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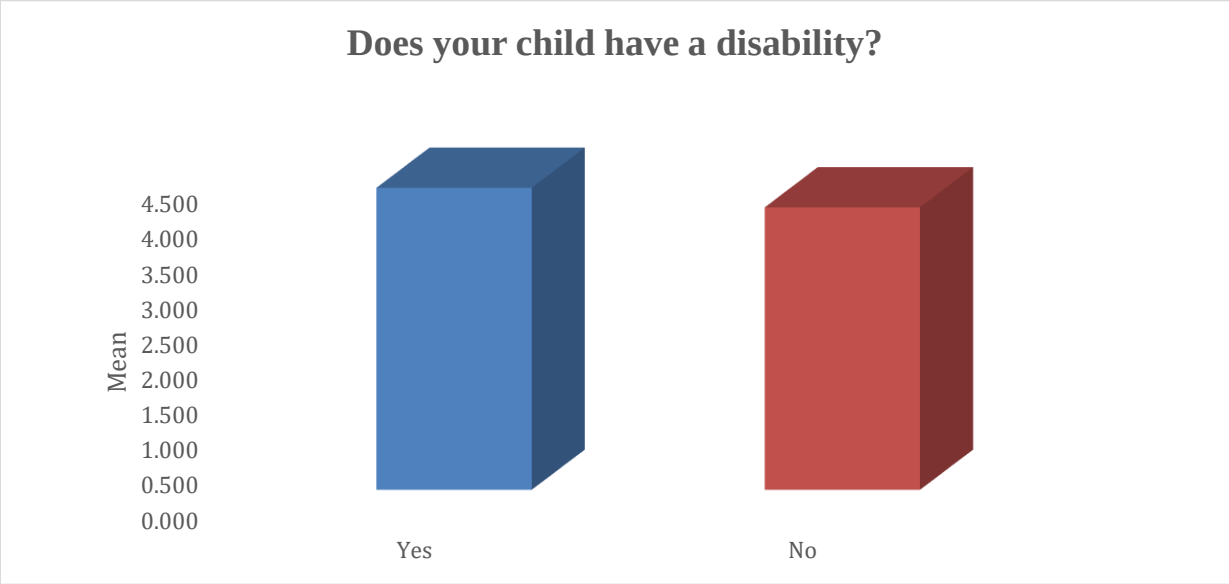


Figure 1: Graphical Representation of Mean Attitude Scores of Parents of Children with Disabilities and Parents of Non-Disabled Children

Parents of children with disabilities obtained a higher mean attitude score (\ (M=4.288, \ SD=0.491\)) than parents of children without disabilities (\ (M=4.011, \ SD=0.530\)). The reported difference was statistically significant, \(t (98) =2.714, \ p=.008\), which is below the .05 significance level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. In this sample, parents of children with disabilities reported significantly more positive attitudes towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools.

Table 2: Comparison of Attitude Scores of Parents towards Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Schools with respect to Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	p-value
Male	43	3.994	0.468	2.639	98	.010**
Female	57	4.267	0.542			

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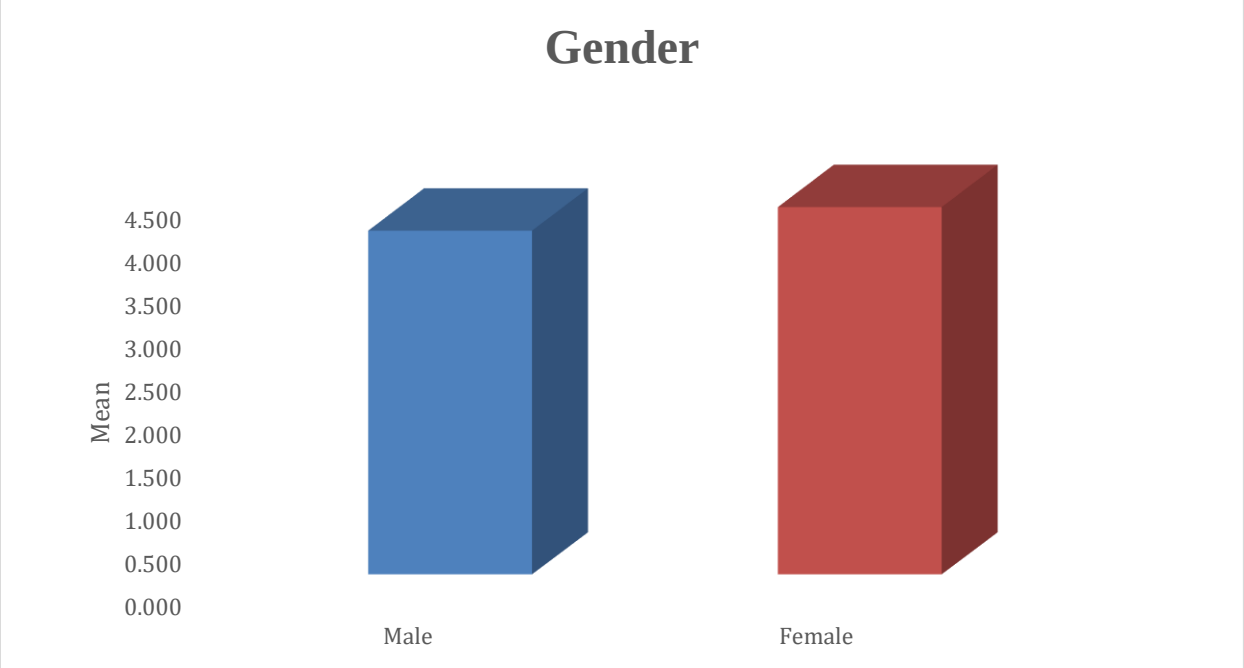


Figure 2: Graphical Representation of Mean Attitude Scores of Parents with respect to Gender

The mean attitude score of female respondents (\ (M=4.267, \ SD=0.542\)) was higher than that of male respondents (\ (M=3.994, \ SD=0.468\)). The reported difference was statistically significant, \ (t (98) =2.639, \ p=.010\), which is below the .05 significance level. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in parents' attitudes towards children with disabilities with respect to gender is rejected. Within this sample, female respondents reported more positive attitudes than male respondents.

Table 3: Comparison of Attitude Scores of Parents towards Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Schools with respect to Type of School (Government and Private)

Types of School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	p-value
Government	38	4.268	0.481	1.788	98	.077
Private	62	4.076	0.544			

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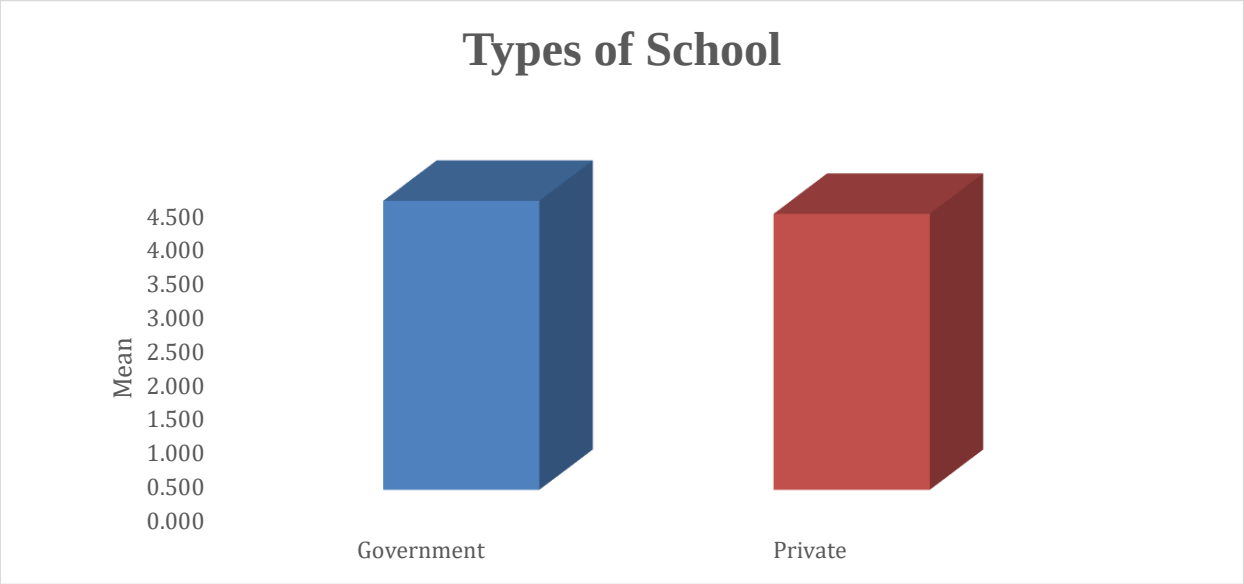


Figure 3: Graphical Representation of Mean Attitude Scores of Parents with respect to Type of School

The mean attitude score of parents associated with government schools (\ (M=4.268, \ SD=0.481\)) was higher than that of parents associated with private schools (\ (M=4.076, \ SD=0.544\)). However, the difference was not statistically significant, \(t(98) =1.788, \ p=.077\), as the p-value exceeds the .05 significance level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. The findings do not provide sufficient statistical evidence of a difference in parents' attitudes towards children with disabilities between government and private schools in this sample.

Table 4: Comparison of Attitude Scores of Parents towards Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Schools with respect to Area (Urban and Rural)

Area	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	df	p-value
Urban	52	4.076	0.572	1.463	98	.147
Rural	48	4.229	0.467			

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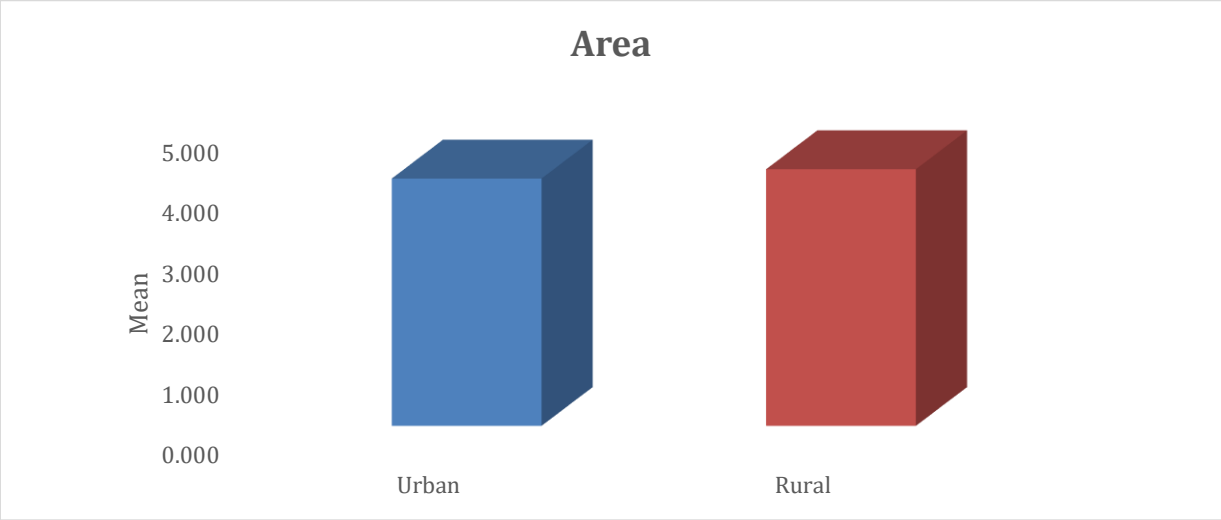


Figure 4: Graphical Representation of Mean Attitude Scores of Parents with respect to Area (Urban and Rural)

Parents from rural areas reported a higher mean attitude score (\ (M=4.229, \ SD=0.467\)) than parents from urban areas (\ (M=4.076, \ SD=0.572\)). However, the recalculated difference was not statistically significant, \ (t (98) \approx-1.44, \ p\approx.153\). Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. The results do not provide sufficient evidence of a statistically significant difference in parental attitudes between urban and rural areas.

Discussion

The findings of the present study provide insights into parents' attitudes towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools in Haryana. The results revealed a statistically significant difference between parents of children with disabilities and parents of children without disabilities, with parents of children with disabilities demonstrating more positive attitudes. This finding may reflect their greater personal experience with disability-related educational needs and inclusive practices. A significant difference was also observed between male and female parents, with female parents reporting more positive attitudes than male parents. This suggests that gender may be associated with variations in parental perspectives towards inclusion, although further research is needed to understand the factors underlying this difference. In contrast, the differences in attitudes between parents associated with government and private schools and between urban and rural parents were not statistically significant. These findings indicate that school type and area of

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residence did not produce statistically significant variations in parental attitudes within the present sample. Overall, the results highlight the importance of parental awareness, acceptance, and involvement in promoting inclusive education. Schools may strengthen inclusive practices by encouraging constructive communication between parents and educators, providing information about the educational needs of children with disabilities, and creating opportunities for collaboration among families. However, the findings should be interpreted in the context of the study's sample of 100 parents from inclusive schools in Sonipat district, Haryana, and should not be generalised to all parents without further investigation.

Educational Implications

- **Parental Awareness:** Schools should organise awareness programmes to promote understanding and acceptance of children with disabilities among parents.
- **Parent–Teacher Collaboration:** Regular parent–teacher meetings should be encouraged to strengthen cooperation between parents, general educators, and special educators.
- **Gender-Sensitive Programmes:** Awareness activities should address differences in parental attitudes and encourage the active participation of both male and female parents.
- **Sensitisation Workshops:** Workshops and orientation programmes should be organised to reduce misconceptions, stereotypes, and negative perceptions about disability.
- **Inclusive School Environment:** Schools should develop supportive learning environments that promote equal participation, respect, and acceptance of children with disabilities.
- **Government and Private Schools:** Inclusive education initiatives should be promoted in both government and private schools to strengthen parental awareness and support.
- **Urban and Rural Outreach:** Awareness and sensitisation programmes should be accessible to parents in both urban and rural areas.
- **Family Involvement:** Parents should be encouraged to participate in educational planning, school activities, and decisions concerning the learning needs of children with disabilities.

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- **Policy and Administrative Support:** School administrators and policymakers should develop strategies that encourage parental participation and strengthen collaboration between families and schools.
- **Promotion of Social Inclusion:** Schools should organise inclusive activities that encourage interaction, mutual respect, and positive relationships among children with and without disabilities.

Limitations

1. **Geographical Limitation:** The study was confined to inclusive schools in Sonipat district, Haryana, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other regions.
2. **Limited Sample Size:** The study included 100 parents, comprising 50 parents of children with disabilities and 50 parents of children without disabilities.
3. **Limited Respondent Groups:** The study focused exclusively on parents and did not include other stakeholders, such as educators and school administrators.
4. **Self-Reported Data:** The findings were based on responses to a researcher-developed Parents' Attitudes Scale and may have been influenced by participants' personal perceptions.
5. **Limited Variables:** The study examined parent category, gender, type of school, and area of residence, while other factors potentially associated with parental attitudes were not investigated.

Conclusion

The present study examined parents' attitudes towards children with disabilities in inclusive schools in Sonipat district, Haryana. The findings revealed a statistically significant difference between parents of children with disabilities and parents of children without disabilities, with the former demonstrating more positive attitudes. A significant difference was also observed between male and female parents, with female parents reporting more positive attitudes. However, differences based on type of school (government and private) and area of residence (urban and rural) were not statistically significant. These findings highlight the importance of parental attitudes in promoting inclusive education and emphasise the need for awareness programmes, sensitisation activities, and collaboration between parents and schools. Strengthening parental

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understanding and involvement may contribute to a more supportive and accepting educational environment for children with disabilities. Overall, the study underscores the importance of promoting positive parental attitudes to support the effective implementation of inclusive education.

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