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Study on child perceived barriers to school inclusion in Telangana

■ V. KavithaKiran* and L. Umadevi

Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Home Science, HYDERABAD (TELANGANA) INDIA

(Email: kiran2adi@yahoo.co.in; umadevi.lingareddy@gmail.com)

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*Author for correspondence

ABSTRACT

The present study was taken up in 2 districts of Telangana state to know the barriers to school inclusion. Interview schedule, Focused group discussion, Questionnaire was used to collect the data from 160 out of school children. The study revealed that lack of infrastructure facilities, teacher absenteeism as major school related barriers. Child labour, migration due to poverty as major family related barriers as perceived by the out of school children.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian government at every level recognizes the need for educational reform and has made a conscientious effort to achieve it. In 2012, the Central Government enacted the Right to Education (RTE) Act, under which every child between the ages of six and 14 receives a free and compulsory education. Inspite of all these efforts of government and non-government organizations UIS (2014) data show that 58 million children roughly between the ages of 6 and 11 years are out of school, with barely any change since 2007. According to the UIS and the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, around 43 per cent of those out of school – or 15 million girls and 10 million boys – will probably never set foot in a classroom if current trends continue. Given the large size of the population in India, despite high enrolment, even small percentages of never-enrolled, along with dropouts, translate into an estimated 8.15 million children out of school in the 6-13 age group in the year 2009. While the enrolment is near universal in the younger age group, with only 3.7 per cent being out of school, the share of those out of school is slightly higher at 5.2 per cent for the older age group.

Every situation is complex, and children may be faced with several barriers simultaneously. Lack of access to education for a particular set of children may be the result of a combination of multiple barriers. Hence the present study was taken up to understand the child perceived barrier for school inclusion.

Jayaraj and Subramanian (2002) found that poverty is yet another major issue posing threat to the education of Indian children. Though the Government of India is implementing the education for all interventions, still poverty among the family forces children to become child labour and ultimately become out of school child. The study concludes with the findings that the phenomenon of child labour is explicable in terms of poverty that compels a household. The perceived poor quality of government schools drives many parents to seek costly private education in private schools (Härmä, 2010). Where school infrastructure is poor, teachers are poorly trained and motivated and classes too large in government schools, those who cannot afford private education will always be more at risk of exclusion.

Objective:

To study the child perceived barriers for school inclusion

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Location :

In Telangana state two districts *i.e.* Mahabubnagar and Adilabad were purposively selected for the present study as these districts were found to have low illiteracy levels.

Sample :

One hundred and sixty out of school children were selected from two districts of Telangana

Tools and techniques:

Questionnaire:

Questionnaire was developed to study the perception, attitudes and opinion of children to find the related barriers to inclusion. The questionnaire was first pilot tested on 25 sample and then standardized.

Focused group discussion (FGD) :

FGD sessions were planned carefully through identifying the main objective(s) of the meeting, developing key questions, developing an agenda, and planning how to record the session.

Statistical analysis :

The data collected was consolidated and analyzed with frequencies and percentages.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The information regarding the child perceptions/ views on school, teacher, parents was collected using interview schedule and group discussion. The data was consolidated and presented in Table 1.

The school infrastructure related barriers as perceived by child is given in the Table 1. The results of the study indicate that half of the sample do not know anything about the school as they never went to school and the children who were enrolled but dropped out of the school perceived that lack of proper toilet facilities and their maintenance as major barrier to school inclusion. It was interesting to note from the study that 16 per cent of the selected children in Mahabubnagar perceived that the school did not have proper classroom facilities. Whereas in Adilabad selected sample perceived that drinking water and toilet facilities as major infrastructure barrier to school inclusion.

UNICEF (2013) through wash in schools empowers Girls' Education, programme rehabilitated the water, sanitation and hygiene facilities of targeted schools to overcome problem of school exclusion experienced by most of the girls.

According to the PROBE report (1999), the main reason for school dropouts is disinterest or a feeling of irrelevance from the child about what she/he is learning. Hence it is often suggested that educational strategies, spending and curriculum need to be decentralized to the district level to make them more suitable to local needs. These strategies need to focus on equipping children to understand and grow in their local environments, rather

Table 1 : School infrastructure related barriers as perceived by children **(n=153)**

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Mahabubnagar (n=79)		Adilabad (n=74)		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
1.	Absences of proper classroom	13	16.4	8	10	21	13.7
2.	Absence of drinking water and toilet facilities	11	13.9	10	13.5	21	13.7
3.	Absence of proper furniture	4	5	5	6	9	5
4.	Absence of toilet facilities	12	15.1	9	12	21	13.7
5.	Do not know	40	50.6	42	56.7	82	53.5

than focusing on rote-learning (Raina, 2001). The results of the study indicate that majority of the school dropouts perceived that disinterest towards studies due lack of comprehension as major barrier to school inclusion in both Adilabad and Mahabubnagar districts. The study indicates that 11 per cent children inMahabubnagar and 10 per cent children in Adilabad perceived lack of play activities as major hindrance for school inclusion. It was interesting to note from study that (12% in Mahabubnagar and 13% in Adilabad) perceived that rote learning and writing as barrier to school inclusiveness. It was surprising to note from the study that few percentage of sample perceived that school timings as long.

Indian Institute of Education Pune (2006), investigated the problem of school dropout which has been continually troubling the primary education system and found various factors like teacher absenteeism, corporal punishment, verbal abuse and criticism affecting fewer attendances were explained. It was also suggested that local teachers should be made available for teaching in schools so as to reduce the problem of teacher absenteeism and improve punctuality; incentives should be provided to encourage women teachers and the cultural gap between parents and teachers should be bridged through more elaborate form of participation in the school management and control system.

In the present study also teacher absenteeism and class room practices were found to be major teacher related barriers as perceived by the selected respondents. The results indicated that children (12 % in Mahabubnagar and 10 % in Adilabad) perceived teacher absenteeism as major barrier and 14 per cent of children from both Mahabubnagar and Adilabad perceived that classroom practices adopted as major barrier to school inclusion. Though corporal punishment was banned, few of respondents (7%) perceived it as barrier along verbal abuse and criticism for school inclusion.

The child perceptions of family related barriers to school inclusion were given in Table 4. The study clearly indicates that in Mahabubnagar half of selected respondents perceived that their parents send them to work as they have to clear debts and one fourth of the

Table 2 : Curriculum as barrier to school inclusion **(n=153)**

Sr. No.	Dimension	Mahabubnagar (n=79)		Adilabad (n=74)		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
1.	Cannot understand lessons	16	20.2	13	17.5	29	18
2.	No play activities	9	11.3	8	10.5	17	11
3.	Lot of reading and writing	10	12.6	10	13.5	20	13
4.	Long timings	4	5	3	4	7	4
5.	Do not know	40	50.6	42	56.7	82	53.5

Table 3 : Children perceptions about teacher related barriers to school inclusion **(n=153)**

Sr. No.	Dimension	Mahabubnagar (n=79)		Adilabad (n=74)		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
1.	Frequent teacher absenteeism	10	12.6	8	10.8	18	11.7
2.	Corporal punishment	6	7	5	7	11	7.2
3.	Verbal abuse and criticism	8	10	5	7	13	8.4
4.	Classroom practices	11	14	10	14	21	13.7
5.	Indifferent treatment	4	5	4	5	8	5
6.	Don't know	40	50.6	42	56.7	82	53.5

Table 4 : Child perceived family related barriers **(n=153)**

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Mahabubnagar (n=79)		Adilabad (n=74)		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
1.	Send to work	39	49.3	19	25.6	58	37.9
2.	Look after siblings	20	25.3	15	20.2	35	22.8
3.	Work at home	10	12.6	8	10.8	18	11.7
4.	Health status of the child	-	-	-	-	-	-
5.	Migration	10	12.6	32	43.2	42	27.4
6.	Disabilities	-	-	-	-	-	-

sample perceived that they have to look after siblings when their parents are away for work. In Adilabad nearly half of the respondents perceived migration as major barriers as their parents keep migrating to other places during unseasonal time it has become a major hindrance for the child to continue education. Nearly one fourth of the sample in Adilabad expressed looking after siblings and parents send them to work as major barriers to school inclusion. With four children in family they become a source of income generation and are engaged in cotton fields and bedi factories. In few villages of Mahabubnagar it was found that the interested headmasters, CRC, held meeting and agreed to teach children as per their conveniences and during unseasonal periods. But parents were not interested as they can migrate to some other places where they can find employment during the unseasonal periods. In families where both parents are employed, the children usually girl child has to take care of siblings and other household activities. The problem is that either the child should work at fields or at home instead of being in school. The poor socio-economic condition of

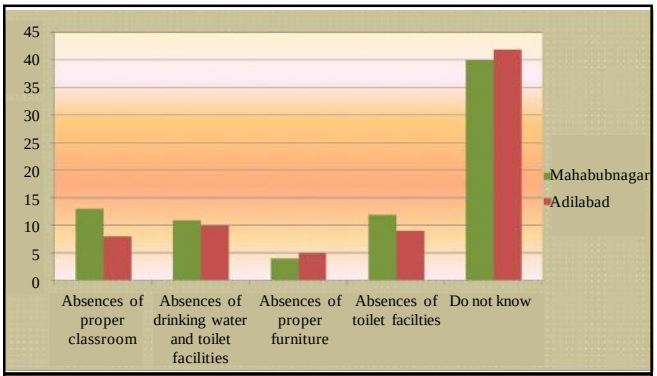

Fig. 1 : School infrastructure related barriers as perceived by children

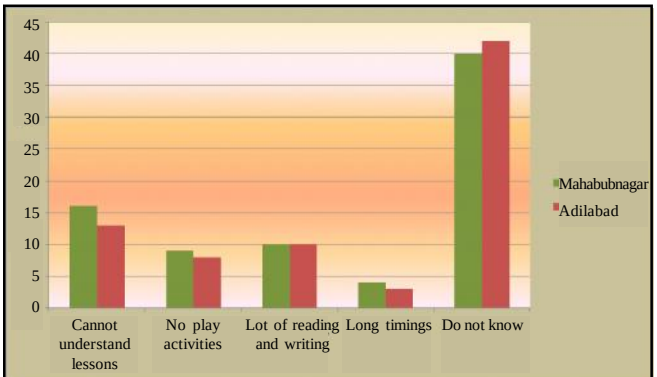

Fig. 2 : Curriculum as barrier to school inclusion

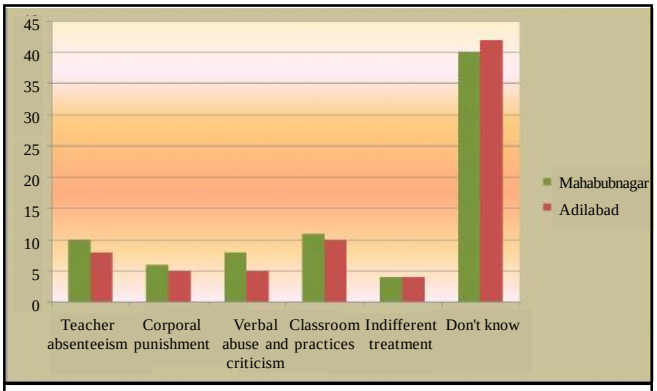

Fig. 3 : Teacher related barriers to school inclusion

the families are pushing these children into child labour.

The Table 5 indicates the child's perception of his existing status. The study indicates that 44 per cent of the selected sample perceived their status as good and happy. Around 39 per cent replied that they don't know and interestingly 15.68 per cent of sample perceived their existing status as bad an unhappy which clearly indicates that more than half of the selected sample like to go to school and study like their counterparts

Table 5 : Child perception on his existing status

Sr. No.	Perception on existing status	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Good and happy	68	44.44%
2.	Bad and unhappy	24	15.68%
3.	Undecided(mixed feelings)	61	39.86%

The leisure time activities of the child were given in the Table 6. 60 per cent of the respondents have playing as leisure time activity whereas 40 per cent watching TV as their favourite time pass. It was surprising to note that 18.9 per cent of the children responded that they don't get any free time as they are engaged fully either in household or income generating activities.

Table 6 : Leisure time activities of the respondents (n=153)

Sr. No.	Activities	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Playing	92	60.13%
2.	Watching TV	63	43.3%
3.	No leisure time	29	18.9%

The child views on their future plan are given in Table 7. It was surprising to note from the study that more than two thirds of the sample have no plans for their future and interestingly one fourth of them wanted to go back to school to study so that they can also do

some respectable jobs. And very less 11 per cent of them wanted to continue in the same way and end up becoming some unskilled worker.

Table 7 : Future plans of the child			(n=153)
Sr. No.	Activities	Frequency	Percentage
1.	No plans	103	67%
2.	Will go to school and get good job	39	25%
3.	Unskilled worker	11	8 %

To the question of whether they would like be in school again 37 per cent of them answered affirmative and 25 per cent negative. Around 37 per cent of them were no sure whether they have to go to school or work (Table 8).

Table 8 : Wish to be back in school			(n=153)
Sr. No.	Wish to go back to school	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Yes	57	37.25%
2.	No	39	25.4%
3.	Don't know	57	37.25%

Recommendations :

An essential first step is creating and implementing a system to monitor and track all children from the time they are enrolled to the time they graduate grade VIII, and a uniform protocol for identifying children who are out of school, have dropped out, or are at risk of dropping out.

A continuing process of evaluating goals and objectives related to school policies, practices, and organizational structures as they impact a diverse group of learners. Making curriculum adaptations to suit the needs of learners. To teach learning material in varied ways to sustain the interest of the child.

School infra structure facilities to be improved. Care to be taken that schools have all basic amenities like drinking water, well maintained toilets, play equipment etc.

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