



# Inclusive Education of children with ASD: Parents' Perspective

<sup>1</sup>Malvika Samnani, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Sujata Shahi, <sup>3</sup>Manish Samnani, <sup>4</sup>Nivriti Chauhan

<sup>1</sup>Doctorate Scholar, IILM University, Gurgaon, Haryana, India

<sup>2</sup>Dr. Sujata Shahi, Associate Professor, IILM University, Gurgaon, Haryana, India

<sup>3</sup>Director, SOCH Centre for Children with Special Needs, Gurgaon, Haryana, India

<sup>4</sup>Psychologist SOCH Centre for Children with Special Needs, Gurgaon, Haryana, India

## ABSTRACT

The objective of this qualitative study, conducted in India, was to assess the perceptions of parents with children with autism spectrum disorder about inclusive education. This qualitative study collected data from in-depth interviews with parents of children with autism. Thematic content analysis used Coded texts and topic identification procedures.

**Results:** Seven themes were identified: 1) Teacher's Attributes; 2) Child Factor; 3) Social Inclusion; 4) Parent factors; 5) School services; 6) Parent Teacher Relationships and 7) Academic Extracurriculars. It was determined that one of the barriers to including children with autism was the lack of sensitization of teachers and the cultivation of their empathy.

**Conclusion:** The parents of children with autism experienced a lack of active inclusion in schools. Children were primarily excluded in school in various activities, where the educator did not know inclusive techniques for teaching. To this end, parents felt the need for more practical knowledge about implementing the methods to teach those with special needs. The parents of children with autism attending inclusive settings were not satisfied with implementing inclusion policies and regulations. They feel that despite awareness, equal opportunities were not provided to these children.

**Keywords:** *Social Inclusion, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Inclusive Education, India.*

## INTRODUCTION

### Why is the parent perspective important?

Autism spectrum Disorder is mainly characterized by a deficit in social communication and interactions and repetitive behaviors. According to the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5), autism spectrum disorder is classified into three severity levels: level one requires support, level two requires substantial support, and level three requires critical support. Most Autism Spectrum Disorder kids' education occurs in private schools with varied educational models in inclusive settings (Jayanthi Narayan et al., 2005).

The current definition of inclusive education is "*when all kids, regardless of any issues they may well have, are placed into age-appropriate general education classes that are in their local public schools to get elevated instruction, interventions, and support that enable them to reach success in the core curriculum.*" Alquraini & Gut (2012); Bui, Quirk, Almazan, & Valenti (2010). Several nations have embraced the inclusive model of education for all. By putting a strong emphasis on inclusive settings that would challenge discriminatory attitudes and achieve education for all, the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy, and Practice in Special Needs Education" (UNESCO, 1994) has played a significant role in the revolution of special education.

Parents and teachers in mainstream schools have a significant role to play when it comes to having an autism spectrum disorder child and wanting to place them in inclusive settings. The importance of parents' active participation in their children's education is emphasized in many nations' education acts (Yona Leyser et al., 2014). Parents hold varied perspectives towards inclusion as it is primarily influenced by diagnosis, age, and current placement of the child (Connie Kasari et al., 1999).

Multiple studies (Tryfon et al., 2019; Bopota et al., 2020) have been conducted on parents' perspectives towards inclusion in past decades, and the results have been mixed views. Interviews with parents help corroborate the widespread understanding of everyone's entitlement to inclusion and the demand for additional support and training across the board. Despite their support for inclusion, parents' attitudes toward inclusion-related practices remained ambivalent (Mathur, Shivani & Koradia, Kavita. 2018). On one hand, many parents have shown satisfaction towards their children's inclusion; on the other hand, they have also stated their dissatisfied feelings with the services of the schools for their ASD children (Philip Whitaker, 2007).

Research shows that parents' satisfaction with inclusive settings has been reported as positive. A study revealed that parents of younger and mild ASD kids held a positive attitude toward inclusion (Yona Leyser & Rea Kirk, 2017). Another study indicated that help from occupational and speech therapists, according to the parents, serves as an essential resource for support. Parents believed having a caregiver or shadow worker present at school would aid children with behavioral issues (Taub, D.J., 2006). Parents had a favorable view regarding their ASD children's acceptance and treatment in regular schools (Shivani Mathur and Kavita Koradia, 2018). However,

the same group of parents also expressed dissatisfaction with the standard of educational services provided by schools (Shivani Mathur & Kavita Koradia, 2018).

When asked about their views on being involved in creating an IEP (Individual Education Plan) for their child with ASD, parents admitted that there were many obstacles in the way and that they were going out of school to make sure that their kids had access to appropriate educational facilities (Jennifer A. Kurth et al., 2019). Another study stated that a climate of tolerance was fostered among unaffected pupils and parents in ordinary schools thanks to inclusive resource rooms. In conclusion, this qualitative study found various adverse effects related to raising an ASD child in Goa, India (Desai et al., 2012).

In the Indian setting of a health and social welfare system that had very little knowledge of and services for ASD, the majority of parents employed various tactics to face the challenges that had arisen (Divan, G., Vajaratkar, V., Desai, M. U., Strik-Lievers, L., & Patel, V. , 2012). Parents in Singapore were worried about whether their ASD children would graduate from school as contributing members of society and receive classroom support (Meng Ee Wong et al., 2014). A study done in the schools of Canada, parents' concerns about school in suspension were found in a study, as 15.1% of the sample's children had already experienced suspension at some point. The same survey revealed that their ASD children had experienced teacher's or other parent's hostility, animosity, or prejudice (Elizabeth M. Starr and Janis B. Foy, 2010).

Previous review of literature states that there is a dearth of research on what has been done on implementation of inclusion of children with autism in India (Koller, D., Pouesard, M.L., Rummens, J.A,2017). One of the studies has categorically revealed that 73% of parents were unsatisfied with the existing facilities (Narayan J, Chakravarti SN, David J, Kanniappan M,2005). Some studies reflected a positive attitude among teachers while some still depicted a question on the whole idea of inclusion (Ajay Das, Nisha Bhatnagar,2014). There was hardly any study found by the author that has focused on barriers and facilitators except one [Aravamudhan S. Awasthi S, 2020, it was pertinent to study the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders which made the author explore more about parents' perception about participating in Inclusive settings and being the voice of children with ASD.

We interviewed parents of children with an autism spectrum disorder to understand the parental perspective towards inclusion in India.

## **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

**Theoretical Framework:** For this study, thematic content analysis, and the transcripts were analyzed for relevant content to identify emerging themes.

**Participation Selection:** For this study, purposive sampling was used by interviewing participants via telephone. The inclusion criteria for the selection of participants was parents whose children were in an inclusive setup;

parents with an understanding of spoken English language. After cleaning and organizing the data 10 participants were left out of 12. A group was formed and interviews were carried out.

### **Participants and Research Team**

First and foremost the participant was asked for an appointment whenever they were free. Rapport was established with the participant and was asked basic demographic details. The goal of the interview was conveyed. They were informed about the usefulness of the interview. After it was made sure that participants were ready for the interview, specific instructions were provided.

**Research Team:** Three researchers conducted the interview. The interviewer A was a female and postgraduate in Occupational Therapy and runs her own practice primarily working with children with autism. The interviewer did interviews as a part of her PhD dissertation on the topic of studying inclusion of children with autism from the parents perspective. Interviewer B and C were females and had completed their education qualification in Masters in Psychology. They were Research Assistants while the study was being conducted and had more than 1 year of experience in the field of research.

**Settings for conducting interview:** The interviews were collected online via telephone call and it was made sure that there was no disturbance. It was also made sure that no one was sitting with the interviewer while the interviews were being conducted.

**Description of sample:** Most of the participants were aged from 35 to 40 years old and education qualification was postgraduate. The understanding and speaking of the English language was mandatory as per the inclusion criteria of this study.

**Data Collection:** A Content Validity Index was created, and validity established which included an approval form for the validation of semi-structured interviews with caregivers/parents (developed by the researcher) content validity certificate. Following that, pilot study was also done before executing the interviews. The questions were open-ended. Probing questions were used where necessary, and participants were free to express their views at the end of the interview session. There was no repetition done of the interviews. The data collected was in audio format only and then the field notes were written after the interview. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

When enough data was collected where all the necessary conclusions were done and any further data collection was not giving value-added insights, the conduction of interviews were stopped, in other words, data saturation was done. As the interviews were done in English language only, no translation was required. The verbatim was done on the same day and then sent to interviewees if there was any comment or correction.

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

For the coding of the data produced, 3 coders coded the data. The thematic content analysis was used for the subjective interpretation of textual data's content through coding and identifying themes. All the researchers who conducted the interviews participated in data analysis. As the themes were identified and derived from the data, first, each researcher analyzed the interview transcription individually and then shared it with other researchers.

After consecutive discussions, the researchers confirmed the contents and produced themes. Data analysis was performed by repeatedly reading all data, line by line. Codes were created from the data and were sorted into categories and subcategories based on the level of abstractness and how different codes were related. Software-Nvivo was used to make word trees and manage the data. Relationships were identified by comparing the similarities and differences between the categories and subcategories.

## **RESULTS**

The research results were presented and organized by categories, themes, and subthemes. The categories and themes, along with their subthemes, were explained in-depth. Most of the All participants had experiences with sending their children to school, and they were able to share their perceptions regarding the inclusion of their children in different schools.

### **Results**

#### **Themes and Sub-themes**

A table of major themes and their sub-themes about parents' perspectives was created. These tables show the themes and subthemes in a tabular format: This is as shown below:

This study set out to investigate social inclusion of children with an autism spectrum disorder. The study looked into various responses given by the parents to a set of questionnaires that gave us eight themes.

#### **Teachers Attributes**

The majority of parents have stated that teachers are untrained in dealing with children with ASD. Teachers who work with ASD children often lack information about autism, which makes it difficult for them to offer the kind of support that a qualified professional would have been able to. As a result, parents are seeing a decline in their children's development.

Parents believe that if the inclusive environment is to be effective, teachers must be tactful and aware of the ASD children's needs. Parents have been moving their children between schools in search of qualified teachers, and they are finding it quite challenging to handle the admissions issues as well. They have expressed concern about how one teacher can effectively interact with every student, especially the special needs kids, in a class of 40 students. Parents are expecting more one on one interaction with their ASD kid in the classroom whether it being with a shadow teacher or a school teacher. Also, these days technology has spurred so parents seek their child's activities on whatsapp which says "this kind of pressure from parents to teachers are holding them back to focus on kids in need". Parents feel that teachers should focus on the areas in which the special kid is excelling more in. They feel that teachers need to put more effort with the kids so that they have a better clarity over special kids strengths and weaknesses. Many parents have contrasted the services provided to those with special needs in developed countries with those provided in India.

Few of the parents raised concern over people's mindset and shared that if they will treat their kids as a challenge things will never improve. A parent questioned “does a special needs kids parent make their home inclusive?”

### **Parent factor**

Making inclusive schools sensory sensitive has been a priority for many parents, as this will enable teachers to better manage sensory difficulties like pressure needs. Parents want teachers to use more engaging teaching strategies. Each special child is unique, so distinct programs are required, a parent claimed. To help their children become independent, parents are looking for a curriculum that focuses more on life skills than academics.

A parent shared that few of the doctors are not aware of Autism due to which diagnosis happens very late and they already lost the initial years. Few shared that a child needs to feel accomplishment so constant support from the shadow teacher might hamper that.

Few parents stated that it's not about just the special child, it's about the deficit no matter whether the child is special or not, as if a child has weak eyesight they should be made to sit on the first bench. This is the true inclusion, it's not about giving the special needs extra time a parent stated. A parent specified you can treat a child with autism as a challenge, or you can treat a child with autism as a normal child with learning disability. One shared that if you treat your child as a stigma or challenge then how can we blame others.

Parents have a perspective where they said that parents are so bowed down with their own problems in their professional and personal life that they have no time left to fight. A parent questioned “we should ask ourselves every 6 months that why are we sending our kids to school as if the objective is vague then it's just a timepass sending a special kid to school”. Parents shared that the mindset of the teachers, people, and parents is the biggest challenge that they are fighting with. When others say this kid can't do this or it's not possible, it brings parent's morale down. A parent shared “our attitude matters, if we start looking at the solution rather than seeing special kids as a problem things will change ”.

A small number of parents have stated that they are pleased with the services offered by the school where their child attends since the teachers are competent and they can notice improvements in their children. If there are shadow teachers in the school, as a parent proposed, “it can greatly aid in the improvement of special-needs children”. Financial worries have been cited by many parents as a major obstacle to their special needs child's education. A small number of parents have questioned the administration and one argued that “special education should be free because it is our constitutional right”.

Parents shared when it comes to coping with the challenges they faced, they just had no other choice than crying, compromising and accepting what is happening. Others kept pushing as far as possible and tried to work towards the solutions.

## Relationship parent- teacher

Majority of the parents have claimed that there is a lack of communication between a teacher and a parent. Few teachers have sought parents to solicit feedback and work together to improve student's skills, and a few of them have encountered situations in which the school severely restricts parent-teacher communication. This was entirely dependent on the many inclusive school models identified by parents. According to a parent, the majority of well-known inclusive schools do not grant special children this independence as a shadow teacher constantly supports the child and they do not get the opportunities to make mistakes or learn from them, and they were also dissatisfied with the parent-teacher relationship.

A parent said, "by being honest with the school about their child's abilities and weaknesses, they were able to communicate with the teachers about what was and wasn't working with the interventions they provided in school". Parents desire parent-school contact so that they can work together to better support the special needs child. According to a parent "schools have a tone of resources, so if they can identify or carefully monitor the child's areas of happiness and report back to the parent with that information, the parent may devote more time and resources to developing that skill or area of interest".

### Child factor

Parents shared "it's important for a neurotypical child to have compassion since, in the future, they might work with someone who has ASD, attend college with them, or even have an ASD spouse" so they should be aware of how to be with an ASD individual. Parents emphasized on how important peer communication is and how inclusive setups can be made effective with the same. A parent said, "in order to help their children interact with their peers, parents should ask them questions such, "Look what he's wearing", "Look what he got for lunch?", "Have lunch together?" She explained that this entirely depends on the child's ability. A parent also explained "there needs to be extensive scaffolding before a child can learn any social skills".

According to a parent, evaluating a child is important since it enables teachers and parents to better understand the child's situation, learning preferences, and potential adjustments. "They need to be taught how to do it at first, and then they need brief reminders" was stated by a parent with regards to the learning capacity of an ASD kid.

Another parent has put an importance on teachers' attitude and said, "the degree of inclusion depends on the teacher, since when her child studied under a teacher who consistently emphasized compassion, he simply flourished".

## School services

As many schools rejected the child after learning that the child had ASD, parents believe it is a significant achievement that few schools are inclusive. The challenges faced during the admission time has been pointed out by 95% of the parents in the interviews. Few parents have questioned the services of the school as they feel the resources are restricted and that has a negative impact over the inclusion of an ASD child, on the contrary the other set of parents mentioned school offering good services.

## Academic extracurriculars

Parents have underlined the need for their ASD children to receive more skillful training in order for them to become independent. Some of them might also get employment with some professional skills training. Parents have emphasized the importance of extra curricular activities for ASD kids and have said that these activities will help the kid with social inclusion.

## Social Inclusion

Social skills is one of the deficit stated in DSM under ASD diagnostic criteria. Many parents have shared that it is difficult for their ASD kid to interact with their peers and even if their kid is trying it is challenging for a regular kid to understand their way of socializing. A parent stated “as the special kid is growing with the regular students in the same setup so regular students do not interact well with the special kids as they become more aware and find it difficult interacting with ASD kids”. Many feel that the inclusive setup is a sham as the engagement with these kids is next to nil and just having a special kid with a regular kid doesn’t make that inclusion effective.

For children with ASD, parents have placed a strong emphasis on social skill development so that they can communicate with their peers and learn about social norms. A parent explained “since some therapies are offered in-school or off-campus, it is important to have a social circle where children may communicate, share ideas, and learn how to act in a polite and appropriate manner”. One shared “what is the point of defining inclusion if there are no social skills developed or emphasized upon or trained upon. Inclusion has no meaning if there is no social skill. A parent stated “special kids should grow with other regular kids and shouldn’t be kept aloof”. The majority of parents defined social inclusion as all children participating in various activities with their peers. Adding to it that is possible when the kids are sensitized too, one gave an example if an ASD kid and regular kids are participating and there is an incident by the ASD kid so focus should not be done on the kid it should be diverted from the kid.

A parent stated that the school has great potential because social inclusion entails raising society’s awareness of and promoting acceptance of the diversity of the world’s population. A few teachers, according to parents, have



normalized the use of sensory objects in the classroom, which serves to deflect attention away from the special-needs student and normalise the differences in the classroom.

## DISCUSSION

The majority of parents have stated that teachers are untrained in dealing with children with ASD. As a result, parents are seeing a decline in their children's development. Parents believe that teachers should have some kind of certification or training, funded by the school. Such effects have been reported previously, where parents assume teachers in inclusive classes to be more qualified in recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of their students and are, therefore, more able to support the needs of individual students. (Florian and Spratt 2013; Tjernberg and Mattson 2014).

Parents have been moving their children between schools in search of qualified teachers, and they are also finding it quite challenging to handle the admissions issues.

Also, these days technology has spurred parents to seek their child's activities to update on WhatsApp; a parent said, "this kind of pressure from parents to teachers is holding them back to focus on kids in need." Some of them specified that the special kids are looking out of the window, doing nothing, and the teacher is unable to do anything meaningful due to limited time. A study implicated a significant influence of class size on teachers' work quality (Hashir Ahammed, 2021)

Parents feel that teachers should focus on the areas in which the special kid is excelling more. They feel that teachers need to put more effort into the kids so that they have better clarity over special kids' strengths and weaknesses. A parent mentioned her child being good at sciences, but there is no special education staff to work on his strengths in upper grades. Such effects have been reported previously where researchers have found that SEN learners were not typically encouraged to pursue coursework or careers in science or mathematics (Burgstahler & Chang, 2009). (E. Van Bergeijk et al., 2014)

Many parents have contrasted the services provided to those with special needs in developed countries with those provided in India. They have mentioned that staff in other developed countries are more experienced, and they believe that people, in general, are more sensitive to and accepting of children with special needs. The research is consistent with the findings of a study that reported that With RPD 2016, India has undoubtedly made progress in terms of inclusion. However, it still needs time and adjustments to catch up to the developed nations (Perna Sharma and Priyanka Dhyani, 2020).

Few parents raised concern over people's mindset and shared that if they treat their kids as a challenge, things will never improve. A parent questioned, "does a special needs kid's parent make their home inclusive?" Previous studies have consistently reported significant associations between parents' attitudes and the success of inclusion. Their attitudes have been shown to be more favorable when allowed input into the decision-making process (Lewis, Chard, and Scott, 1994).

Making inclusive schools sensory sensitive has been a priority for many parents, as this will enable teachers to better manage sensory difficulties like pressure needs. Parents want teachers to use more engaging teaching strategies. A parent claimed that each special child is unique, so distinct programs are required. Previous studies have consistently reported a severe lack of educational assistance for parents/caregivers and teachers. The mainstream educational system is inadequately resourced to allow for the integration of children with ASD (Laurence Hasson et al., 2022). To help their children become independent, parents are looking for a curriculum that focuses more on life skills than academics. It was stated that inclusive education curricula should prioritize a child's independence, communication skills, and self-assurance rather than academics. In a study, five persons with ASD participated in a life skills training program. The results showed that all five adults improved their targeted life skills, and four achieved independence in their targeted abilities. (Parisa Ghanouni et. al, 2021).

Parents have the perspective that they said that they are so bowed down by their own problems in their professional and personal life that they have no time to fight. A parent questioned, “we should ask ourselves every 6 months why are we sending our kids to school as if the objective is vague then it is just a timepass sending a special kid to school”.

Parents shared that the mindset of the teachers and people, and mindset is the biggest challenge that they are fighting with; when others say this kid can't do this or it's not possible brings parents' morale down. A parent shared, “our attitude matters; if we start looking at the solution rather than seeing special kids as a problem, things will change.” Previous research suggests that societal stigma and access issues, as well as a commonly reported lack of understanding about autism, affect how families perceive the disorder (Despina Papoudi et al., 2021). Another study stated that attitudes are linked to cooperation with the school and satisfaction with teachers (Cecilia Simon et al., 2022).

A small number of parents have stated that they are pleased with the services offered by the school where their child attends since the teachers are competent and they can notice improvements in their children. As a parent proposed, if there are shadow teachers in the school, “it can greatly aid in the improvement of special-needs children.” Parents have also expressed their concern about the teachers, “stating that it is impossible for them to focus on all 40 students in a class and that in order to provide a good education, the school needs to add shadow teachers”.

A few parents have recommended that all parents should be made aware of the special child who would be studying with their children at the beginning of the term so that they can encourage their children to socialize with him or her. The general population has to become more informed about ASD (Matar A. Alsehem, 2017). According to many parents, when classmates incorporate special children in their plays, the special children become far more self-assured. The previous research suggests that the school was seen as essential in fostering an environment that allowed inclusion because of its emphasis on encouraging strong peer relationships, preventing bullying, and providing support personnel (Marita et. al, 2015)

Financial worries have been cited by many parents as a major obstacle to their special needs child's education. Previous studies have consistently reported that parents emphasize the advantages of various services; however,

if the service is not publicly offered, availability or cost are problems (Annu Helkkula et al, 2020). A small number of parents have questioned the administration, and one argued that “special education should be free because it is our constitutional right”.

Parents have had a lot of difficulties getting their children into good schools because many inclusive institutions only have a small number of places available for special needs students. Parents agreed that society needs more special needs education and information. In a study, parents indicated worry about various obstacles preventing their kids' inclusion( Robin D. Waltman, 2021).

Parents shared that when it came to coping with their challenges, they just had no choice but to cry, compromise, and accept what was happening. Others kept pushing as far as possible and tried to work towards the solutions. Parents are scared to step out of their comfort zone, and they find it difficult to tackle with the school and teachers. According to studies, parents of children with ASD engaged in more avoidance and fewer social support-seeking tactics than parents of children without ASD(Christelle Vernhet, 2011).

A few parents reported that there is a severe lack of contact between parents and teachers, which hinders a child's development. More limited study has sought to understand why parent-teacher communication is inadequate, despite the fact that numerous studies have highlighted this issue (Gazi Azad et.al, 2015)

Few teachers have sought parents to solicit feedback and work together to improve student's skills and a few of them have encountered situations in which the school severely restricts parent-teacher communication. This was entirely dependent on the many inclusive school models identified by parents.

A parent said that by being honest with the school about their child's abilities and weaknesses, they were able to communicate with the teachers about what was and wasn't working with the interventions they provided in school. Previous research suggests that parents and teachers who follow the same routines at home and at school are more likely to see improvements in the outcomes for children with ASD (Azad et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2015; Garbacz et al., 2016 ).

Parents desire parent-school contact so that they can work together to better support the special needs child. According to a parent, “schools have a ton of resources, so if they can identify or carefully monitor the child's areas of happiness and report back to the parent with that information, the parent may devote more time and resources to developing that skill or area of interest”. The greatest strategy to develop exceptional children's skill sets is to exchange the roles of parents and teachers, says a parent. Additionally, there is growing proof that parental involvement is linked to kids' success in school, behavior, and social-emotional development the kids with ASD (Benson, Karlof, & Siperstein, 2008; Garbacz, McIntyre, & Santiago, 2016).

Parents shared that it's “important for a neurotypical child to have compassion since, in the future, they might work with someone who has ASD, attend college with them, or even have an ASD spouse.” So they should be aware of how to be with an ASD individual. The majority of parents have reported that fostering independence in their children with ASD, particularly in daily activities, is their top priority. Added that communication was an essential element of the objective rather than fundamental education.

Parents emphasized how important peer communication is and as a day, there are short lunch breaks so it is easier for the neurotypicals to join and play but challenging for other kids who might be on the spectrum or would be shy or can be introverts. If other kids who have challenges in communication will get a chance to be in a group they will blossom.

A parent said, “there needs to be extensive scaffolding before a child can learn any social skills”. Such effects have been reported previously where the study indicated that play scaffolding is an essential element in encouraging toddlers with ASD to attain their full potential (Jillian M. Pierucci, 2015). Another parent said, “in order to help their children interact with their peers, parents should ask them questions such as, "Look what he's wearing?," "Look what he got for lunch?," and "Have lunch together?" She explained that this entirely depends on the child's ability. A parent stated that developing social skills is crucial for increasing a child's overall sense of self-worth, dependability, and confidence.

According to a parent, “evaluating a child is important since it enables teachers and parents to better understand the child's situation, learning preferences, and potential adjustments”.

As they begin to learn how to interact, it is equally crucial that parents become sensitized to ASD. A study indicated that in order to prevent students from being "defined by their diagnosis," it is vital to go beyond the label for each individual with ASD (Molloy and Vasil, 2002). Additionally, she began working individually to help her child develop empathy. Another parent mentioned, the “degree of inclusion depends on the teacher” since when her child studied under a teacher who consistently emphasized compassion, he simply flourished.

A parent shared that as the community grows, advocates and acceptance towards special needs children will emerge.

### **School services**

As many schools rejected the child after learning that the child had ASD, parents believe it is a significant achievement that few schools are inclusive. The challenges faced during the admission time have been pointed out by 95% of the parents in the interviews. Few also said that even if a school takes in an ASD kid, they tend to drop out of school due to various reasons, one being behavioral issues in a child as school tends to terminate kids. Some educators believed that the behavior of autistic pupils was improper in a school setting and bothersome in the classroom (Johansson, 2014). Self-harm, severe outbursts, and physical aggressiveness toward peers were all deemed inappropriate behaviors that could have an adverse effect on inclusion (Sansosti and Sansosti 2012). Teachers were particularly worried about potential disturbance and how these behaviors would affect other pupils at the school (Jacqueline Roberts & Kate Simpson, 2016).

Many believe that the school's resources are limited, the parents are overbearing, and other neurotypical children are occasionally mischievous and inattentive, making it difficult for teachers to deal with them as well and leaving little time to work with ASD kids.

The majority of parents thought that the school offered good services in the form of speech therapists and OT equipment. Lack of equipment and resources specifically for students with High Functioning Autism (HFA), and

a lack of time to provide additional support to students with autism, especially in older grades, were some of the perceived obstacles (Lindsay et al. 2013)

### **Academic extracurriculars**

Parents have underlined the need for their ASD children to receive more skillful training in order for them to become independent. Some of them might also get employment with some professional skills training. The majority of parents agreed that preparing their children for independence comes before academic success. After completing a social interaction training program, ASD children displayed improved social and affective behaviors, eye contact, nonverbal and verbal communication, and joint attention. (Bogseon Hwang & Carolyn Hughes, 2000).

Few parents have advocated for the inclusion of extracurricular activities that are primarily intended to assist students to understand that they are a part of a group or society. Numerous studies have demonstrated that extracurricular activities enhance numerous favorable academic, emotional, and behavioral outcomes (Kristina Munyon, 2016).

Many parents stated that a child with ASD should also have the choice to determine what they want to pursue next.

### **Social inclusion**

Inclusion gives other kids the understanding to be compassionate about autistic kids similarly it gives social exposure to the autistic kid to what is the appropriate behavior in social settings. Social skills are one of the deficiencies stated in DSM under ASD diagnostic criteria, many parents have shared that it is difficult for their ASD kid to interact with their peers, and even if their kid is trying, it is challenging for a regular kid to understand their way of socializing.

A parent stated, “as the special kid is growing with the regular students in the same setup so regular students do not interact well with the special kids as they become more aware and find it difficult interacting with ASD kids”. Since ASD students have a more social impairment, classmates may consider those who exhibit the most severe ASD symptomatology as less desirable friends (Stiliadis & Wiener, 1989). Many feel that the inclusive setup is a sham as the engagement with these kids is next to nil and just having a special kid with a regular kid doesn't make that inclusion effective.

The importance of social skills was underlined by all parents. A parent stated that a child who has not been imparted or trained for social skills is just a child sitting in a class. Previous research showed that with targeted training programs, ASD children's overall social skills in the areas of social cognition, social communication, social motivation, and social awareness significantly improved ( Elizabeth A. Laugeson et. al, 2012). In addition, he said, “what is the point of defining inclusion if there are no social skills developed or emphasized upon or trained upon. Inclusion has no meaning if there is no social skill”.

For children with ASD, parents have placed a strong emphasis on social skill development so that they can communicate with their peers and learn about social norms. A parent explained, “since some therapies are offered in-school or off-campus, it is important to have a social circle where children may communicate, share ideas, and learn how to act in a polite and appropriate manner”.

A parent shared “special kids should grow up with other regular kids and shouldn’t be kept aloof”. The majority of parents defined social inclusion as all children participating in various activities with their peers. Adding to it that is possible when the kids are sensitized too, one gave an example of an ASD kid and regular kids are participating and there is an incident by the ASD kids so focus should not be done on the kid it should be diverted from the kid.

A parent stated that the school has great potential because social inclusion entails raising society's awareness of and promoting acceptance of the diversity of the world's population. A few teachers, according to parents, have normalized the use of sensory objects in the classroom, which serves to deflect attention away from the special-needs student and normalize the differences in the classroom. All of the parents have put a lot of focus on social skills since they believe that communication skills are essential in society. The environmental arrangement, social skills training, and prompting are rated highly successful in increasing prosocial interactions for individuals with autism spectrum disorders (Jennifer. R Ledford et. al, 2016)

## CONCLUSION

In this qualitative study, the parents of children with autism experienced an inclusive setting. Children were mostly not included in the school settings. To this end, parents felt worried as they faced a lot of hardships to get their child admitted to the inclusive setup. Thus, it was needed to create awareness about special needs children, majorly with the diagnosis of autism.

## REFERENCES

1. Cremin, Katie & Healy, Olive & Gordon, Michael. (2017). Parental perceptions on the transition to secondary school for their child with autism. *Advances in Autism*. 3. 87-99. 10.1108/AIA-09-2016-0024.
2. Taub, D.J. (2006). Understanding the Concerns of Parents of Students with Disabilities: Challenges and Roles for School Counselors. *Professional School Counseling Journal*, October 2006, 10(1),52-57
3. Barlow, J. H., & Cullen, L. A. (2002). Increasing touch between parents and children with disabilities: preliminary results from a new program. *Journal of Family Health Care*, 12(1), 7-9
4. Dillenburger, Karola & Keenan, Mickey & Doherty, Alvin & Byrne, Tony & Gallagher, Stephen. (2010). FOCUS ON PRACTICE: Living with children diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder: parental and professional views. *British Journal of Special Education*. 37. 13 - 23. 10.1111/j.1467-8578.2010.00455.x.

5. Mathur, S., & Koradia, K. (2018). Parents' attitude toward inclusion of their children with autism in mainstream classrooms. *IAFOR Journal of Psychology & the Behavioral Sciences*, 4(2), 47-60.
6. "Children with Special Needs (CWSN): Definition and Categories." (n.d.). *Wecapable.com*. Retrieved September 15, 2022, from <https://wecapable.com/cwsn-categories-of-children-with-special-needs/>
- Bansal, S. (2018). Understanding Teachers' Perspective of Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs (CWSN). *Educational Quest*, 9(1), 115-123.
7. Mukkiri, S., Kandasamy, P., Subramanian, M., Chandrasekaran, V., & Kattimani, S. (2021). Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs and Autism: Status in the Schools of Puducherry, India. *Journal of Child Science*, 11(01), e255-e261
8. Rahman, A., Divan, G., Hamdani, S. U., Vajaratkar, V., Taylor, C., Leadbitter, K., ... & Green, J. (2016). Effectiveness of the parent-mediated intervention for children with autism spectrum disorder in south Asia in India and Pakistan (PASS): a randomized controlled trial. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 3(2), 128-136.
9. Desai, M. U., Divan, G., Wertz, F. J., & Patel, V. (2012). The discovery of autism: Indian parents' experiences of caring for their child with an autism spectrum disorder. *Transcultural psychiatry*, 49(3-4), 613-637.
10. Desai, M. U., Divan, G., Wertz, F. J., & Patel, V. (2012). The discovery of autism: Indian parents' experiences of caring for their child with an autism spectrum disorder. *Transcultural psychiatry*, 49(3-4), 613-637.
11. Kakooza-Mwesige, A., Bakare, M., Gaddour, N., & Juneja, M. (2022). The need to improve autism services in lower-resource settings. *The Lancet*, 399(10321), 217-220.
12. Hashir Ahammed. (2021, May 4). *Challenges Faced by Teachers of Learners with Learning Disability*. ResearchGate; unknown. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351303413\\_Challenges\\_Faced\\_by\\_Teachers\\_of\\_Learners\\_with\\_Learning\\_Disability](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351303413_Challenges_Faced_by_Teachers_of_Learners_with_Learning_Disability)
13. E. Van Bergeijk, Ranaldo, M., & Shtayermman, O. (2014). *Teaching STEM to students with autism spectrum disorders*. ResearchGate; unknown. Retrieved from

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/297374813\\_Teaching\\_STEM\\_to\\_students\\_with\\_autism\\_spectrum\\_disorders](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/297374813_Teaching_STEM_to_students_with_autism_spectrum_disorders)

14. Sharma, P., & Priyanka Dhyani. (2020). UNCOVERING SPECIAL EDUCATION IN INDIA AND UNITED STATES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS. *International Education and Research Journal (IERJ)*, 6(5). Retrieved from <http://ierj.in/journal/index.php/ierj/article/view/2036>
15. Lewis, T. J. (2017). *Full Inclusion and the Education of Children and Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders - Timothy J. Lewis, David Chard, Terrance M. Scott, 1994*. Behavioral Disorders. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/019874299401900404>
16. Laurence Hasson, Saskia Keville, Jen Gallagher, Dami Onagbesan & Amanda K. Ludlow. (2022). *Inclusivity in education for autism spectrum disorders: Experiences of support from the perspective of parents/carers, school teaching staff and young people on the autism spectrum*. *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities*. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/20473869.2022.2070418>
17. Ghanouni, P., & Quirke, S. (2021). Resilience and Coping Strategies in Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-022-05436-y>
18. Papoudi, D., Clara Rübner Jørgensen, Guldberg, K., & Hedda Meadan. (2021, June). *Perceptions, Experiences, and Needs of Parents of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children with...* ResearchGate; Springer Nature. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342252823\\_Perceptions\\_Experiences\\_and\\_Needs\\_of\\_Parents\\_of\\_Culturally\\_and\\_Linguistically\\_Diverse\\_Children\\_with\\_Autism\\_a\\_Scoping\\_Review](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342252823_Perceptions_Experiences_and_Needs_of_Parents_of_Culturally_and_Linguistically_Diverse_Children_with_Autism_a_Scoping_Review)
19. Cecilia Simón Rueda, Martínez-Rico, G., Robert Alexander McWilliam, & Cañadas, M. (2022, April 23). *Attitudes Toward Inclusion and Benefits Perceived by Families in Schools with Students with Autism...* ResearchGate; Springer Verlag. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360150731\\_Attitudes\\_Toward\\_Inclusion\\_and\\_Benefits\\_Perceived\\_by\\_Families\\_in\\_Schools\\_with\\_Students\\_with\\_Autism\\_Spectrum\\_Disorders](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360150731_Attitudes_Toward_Inclusion_and_Benefits_Perceived_by_Families_in_Schools_with_Students_with_Autism_Spectrum_Disorders)
20. Alsehem, M. A., Abousaadah, M. M., Sairafi, R. A., & Jan, M. M. (2017). Public awareness of autism spectrum disorder. *Neurosciences*, 22(3), 213–215. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.17712/nsj.2017.3.20160525>



21. Marita Falkmer, Katie Anderson, Annette Joosten & Torbjörn Falkmer (2015). *Parents' Perspectives on Inclusive Schools for Children with Autism Spectrum Conditions*. International Journal of Disability, Development and Education. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1034912X.2014.984589>
22. Anu Helkkula, Alexander John Buoye, Choi, H., & Keiningham, T. L. (2020, December 13). *Parents' burdens of service for children with ASD – implications for service providers*. ResearchGate; Emerald. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342151148\\_Parents'\\_burdens\\_of\\_service\\_for\\_children\\_with\\_ASD\\_-\\_implications\\_for\\_service\\_providers](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342151148_Parents'_burdens_of_service_for_children_with_ASD_-_implications_for_service_providers)
23. Waltman, R. (2021). *Parental Perceptions of Inclusion of Autism Spectrum Disorder Students in the Educational Process*. ScholarWorks. Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/10011/>
24. Christelle Vernhet, Michelon, C., Dellapiazza, F., & Vesperini, S. (2011, May). *Perceptions of parents of the impact of autism spectrum disorder on their quality of life and correlates:...* ResearchGate; Springer Verlag. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356539437\\_Perceptions\\_of\\_parents\\_of\\_the\\_impact\\_of\\_autism\\_spectrum\\_disorder\\_on\\_their\\_quality\\_of\\_life\\_and\\_correlates\\_comparison\\_between\\_mothers\\_and\\_fathers](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356539437_Perceptions_of_parents_of_the_impact_of_autism_spectrum_disorder_on_their_quality_of_life_and_correlates_comparison_between_mothers_and_fathers)
25. Azad, G., Gormley, S., Marcus, S., & Mandell, D. S. (2015). *Parent-teacher problem solving about concerns in children with autism spectrum disorder: The role of...* ResearchGate; Wiley. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328969755\\_Parent-teacher\\_problem\\_solving\\_about\\_concerns\\_in\\_children\\_with\\_autism\\_spectrum\\_disorder\\_The\\_role\\_of\\_income\\_and\\_race\\_AZAD\\_et\\_al](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328969755_Parent-teacher_problem_solving_about_concerns_in_children_with_autism_spectrum_disorder_The_role_of_income_and_race_AZAD_et_al)
26. S. Andrew Garbacz, Laura Lee McIntyre, & Santiago, R. T. (2016, December). *Family involvement and parent-teacher relationships for students with autism spectrum disorders*. ResearchGate; American Psychological Association. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311521511\\_Family\\_involvement\\_and\\_parent-teacher\\_relationships\\_for\\_students\\_with\\_autism\\_spectrum\\_disorders](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311521511_Family_involvement_and_parent-teacher_relationships_for_students_with_autism_spectrum_disorders)

27. Norheim, O. F., Baltussen, R., Johri, M., Chisholm, D., Nord, E., Brock, D., Carlsson, P., Cookson, R., Daniels, N., Danis, M., Fleurbaey, M., Johansson, K. A., Kapiriri, L., Littlejohns, P., Mbeeli, T., Rao, K. D., Edejer, T. T.-T., & Wikler, D. (2014). Guidance on priority setting in health care (GPS-Health): the inclusion of equity criteria not captured by cost-effectiveness analysis. *Cost Effectiveness and Resource Allocation*, 12(1), 18. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1186/1478-7547-12-18>
28. Sansosti, J. M., & Sansosti, F. J. (2012, December). *Inclusion for Students with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders: Definitions and Decision Making*. ResearchGate; Wiley. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259889310\\_Inclusion\\_for\\_Students\\_with\\_High-Functioning\\_Autism\\_Spectrum\\_Disorders\\_Definitions\\_and\\_Decision\\_Making](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259889310_Inclusion_for_Students_with_High-Functioning_Autism_Spectrum_Disorders_Definitions_and_Decision_Making)
29. Simpson, K., & Roberts, J. (2016). *Roberts, J., & Simpson, K. (2016). Stakeholders perspectives on inclusion of students with autism in...* ResearchGate; Taylor & Francis (Routledge). Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/294736851\\_Roberts\\_J\\_Simpson\\_K\\_2016\\_Stakeholders\\_perspectives\\_on\\_inclusion\\_of\\_students\\_with\\_autism\\_in\\_mainstream\\_schools\\_International\\_Journal\\_of\\_Inclusive\\_Education\\_doi\\_1010801360311620161145267](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/294736851_Roberts_J_Simpson_K_2016_Stakeholders_perspectives_on_inclusion_of_students_with_autism_in_mainstream_schools_International_Journal_of_Inclusive_Education_doi_1010801360311620161145267)
30. Lindsay, S., Proulx, M., Scott, H., & Thomson, N. (2013). *Exploring teachers' strategies for including children with autism spectrum disorder in mainstream classrooms*. ResearchGate; Taylor & Francis (Routledge). Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260201432\\_Exploring\\_teachers'\\_strategies\\_for\\_including\\_children\\_with\\_autism\\_spectrum\\_disorder\\_in\\_mainstream\\_classrooms](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260201432_Exploring_teachers'_strategies_for_including_children_with_autism_spectrum_disorder_in_mainstream_classrooms)
31. Hwang, B., & Hughes, C. (2000). *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 30(4), 331–343. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1005579317085>
32. Munyon, K. (2016). *Affects of extracurricular activities on youth in the ASD population*. Undefined; Retrieved from <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Affects-of-extracurricular-activities-on-youth-in-Munyon/df1453479e7429a33900eb46106ba710441ac68c>
33. Stiliadis, K., & Wiener, J. (1989, December). *Relationship Between Social Perception and Peer Status in Children with Learning Disabilities*. ResearchGate; SAGE Publications. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/20563081\\_Relationship\\_Between\\_Social\\_Perception\\_and\\_Peer\\_Status\\_in\\_Children\\_with\\_Learning\\_Disabilities](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/20563081_Relationship_Between_Social_Perception_and_Peer_Status_in_Children_with_Learning_Disabilities)

34. Laugeson, E. A., Frankel, F., Gantman, A., Dillon, A. R., & Mogil, C. (2011). Evidence-Based Social Skills Training for Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders: The UCLA PEERS Program. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 42(6), 1025–1036. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-011-1339-1>
35. Lane, J. D., Gast, D. L., Ledford, J., & Shepley, C. (2017, May). *Increasing Social Behaviors in Young Children with Social-Communication Delays in a Group Arrangement in...* ResearchGate; Johns Hopkins University Press. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318044821\\_Increasing\\_Social\\_Behaviors\\_in\\_Young\\_Children\\_with\\_Social-Communication\\_Delays\\_in\\_a\\_Group\\_Arrangement\\_in\\_Preschool](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318044821_Increasing_Social_Behaviors_in_Young_Children_with_Social-Communication_Delays_in_a_Group_Arrangement_in_Preschool)
36. The discovery of autism: Indian parents' experiences of caring for their child with an autism spectrum disorder By Miraj U. Desai, Gauri Divan, Frederick J. Wertz, Vikram Patel Container: *Transcultural Psychiatry* Year: 2012 Volume: 49 Issue: 3-4 DOI: 10.1177/1363461512447139 URL: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3472559/>
37. Parental perspectives on inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in Greece By Mavropalias Tryfon, Alevriadou Anastasia, Rachanioti Eleni Container: *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities* Year: 2019 Volume: 67 Issue: 6 DOI: 10.1080/20473869.2019.1675429 URL: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8676702/>
38. Differences in attitudes towards inclusion between parents of children with and without disabilities By O. Bopota, A. Loukovitis, V. Barkoukis, H. Tsorbatzoudis Container: *European Review of Applied Psychology* Year: 2020 Volume: 70 Issue: 4 DOI: 10.1016/j.erap.2020.100556 URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1162908820300529>
39. Koller, D., Pouesard, M. L., & Rummens, J. A. (2017). Defining Social Inclusion for Children with Disabilities: A Critical Literature Review. *Children & Society*, 32(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12223>
40. Narayan J, Chakravarti SN, David J, Kanniappan M. Analysis of educational support systems for children with mental retardation and autism spectrum disorders. *Int J Rehabil Res*. 2005 Dec;28(4):365-8. doi: 10.1097/00004356-200512000-00011. PMID: 16319564.
41. Bhatnagar, N., & Das, A. (2014) Attitudes of Secondary Regular School Teachers Toward Inclusive Education in New Delhi, India: A Qualitative Study. *Exceptionality Education International*, 24, 17-30
42. Aravamudhan, S., & Awasthi, S. (2019). Inclusion in Home, Social, and Educational Settings for Children with Autism in India—Enablers and Challenges. *Inclusion, Equity and Access for Individuals with Disabilities*, 497–523. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-5962-0\\_25](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-5962-0_25)