

Navigating Inclusive Learning in Bihar: Exploring Aspirations and Experiences of Children with Disabilities in the Age of Education 5.0

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ABSTRACT

Every person, after birth, sets some goals in their life. A person tries to fulfill the purpose of life with their full efforts and contributes directly and indirectly to society through it. However, it is not easy for disabled people to achieve their goals or carry out daily life activities compared to healthy people. They are far away from the mainstream of society. However, education is the only tool through which it will be possible to bring people of all classes into the same stream. However, the literacy rate is particularly low in Bihar compared to all the states of India. Disabled people in Bihar get fewer opportunities to develop their full potential. Meanwhile, the National Education Policy 2020 mentions equal rights for all in education and brings all disabled people of all classes into the same stream. This education policy has given special emphasis on inclusive education. According to the report of "Disable persons in India a statistical profile 2016" by SSD (Social Statistics Division), ministry of statistics and program implementation highlights the children with disabilities in the state of Bihar with (12.48%) as the highest share of disabled children (0-6 years) in the disabled population of the state followed by Meghalaya (11.41%). In the context of the above this study aims to examine the educational aspirations and daily life experiences of children with disabilities. Backwardness in terms of education and non-inclusive leaning, hinder the overall development and growth of the children with disabilities. In the age of Education 5.0 and in changing needs of 21st century.

Keywords: *Experiences, Aspiration, Children with disabilities, NEP-2020& Education 5.0*

Education plays a vital role in everyone's life as well as in our society. The process through which individuals can transmit and receive the knowledge that enhances their skills, knowledge, and attitude. According to John Locke, "Plants are developed by cultivation and man by education, Life is education and education is life". According to John Dewey, "Education is life, not a preparation for life". Aristotle says, "Education is a creation of sound mind in a sound body. Education is a lifelong process from conception to death". According to Socrates, "Education means the bringing out of the ideas of universal validity

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which are latent in the mind of everybody". Therefore, education is symbolized as a weapon to change society and uplift the living standards of individuals. In this regard, the National Education Policy- 2020 (*hereafter NEP-2020*), in which Part 1 and Chapter 6 deal with "*Equitable and Inclusive Education: Learning for all*". NEP-2020 emphasizes that full equity and inclusiveness are the cornerstone of all educational decisions to ensure that all students can thrive in the education system, which shows that Children with Disabilities (*hereafter CwDs*) and normal children both are equally important for national development. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (*hereafter UNCRPD*), "children with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis".

The most vulnerable groups are CwDs because they need special attention, care, and interventions. The disability among the students is a matter of serious concern for the government as well as society because it has broader implications on the overall development of the students. Every student is different from the others because of heredity and environmental factors. CwDs are able to participate fully in the regular school environment, just like others, from the foundational stage to the higher education level (CBSE, 2025). NEP 2020 aims to ensure that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of the circumstances of birth or background. Special emphasis will be given to Socially Economically Disadvantaged Groups (*hereafter SEDGs*), including gender, socio-cultural, and geographical identities and disabilities.

As per the UNESCO report 2019, 75% of children with disabilities don't go to school in India due to disabilities and a lack of appropriate measures in early years and support in the critical stage (0-6 years) of life. This further hampers the serious impact on children with disabilities on their schooling and education. According to SSD, the state of Bihar has the highest share of disabled children, which is 21.46% from the age group of 0-6 years, followed by Meghalaya (11.41 %). Children with disabilities are also a part of our society, but they are not able to participate in society because of their physical problems and support from society. They remain left behind from the mainstream education, but they have educational aspirations because they want to become active members of society. Children with Special Needs don't want to become a burden on their families and society. The educational aspiration of students is to clarify the educational inequalities related to their career choices and achievements later in life. Generally, Educational Aspirations refers to their aims and individual plans in an academic setting and experiential learning provide the platform for achieving it. Experiential learning work as catalyst for education of children with disabilities. Experiential learning provides different experience to the learner and it will generate interest with the students (Lin et al., 2025).

Educational Transformation under NEP-2020 for CwDs

After the introduction of NEP-2020, the nomenclature of school education is totally changed. Schooling years are divided into four different stages such as 5+3+3+4 concept. The first 5 years dealing with foundational stage of students, the next 3 years dealing with preparatory stage of the students, the next 3 years deals with Middle stage of the students and the last stage deals with Secondary stage. At all stages of school education from ECCE to Secondary education NEP-2020 emphasis on ensuring the inclusion and equal participation of children with disabilities, it will be highest priority of the Government of India. The policy document not only restricted for retention of children with disabilities but also encourage the full

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participation and inclusion in the classroom. For fully participation within the school, classroom and school equipped with the assistive device such as technology-based tools, language-appropriate teaching-learning materials or textbooks in accessible formats such as large print and Braille etc.

Short term modules and different skill developments courses also taught within the schools which provide a wide list for subject selection. Flexibility in the selection of subject leads to increases the interest among the students. Multi-disciplinary, Experiential learning with specialized subjects and subject teachers, Gender inclusion fund for girls provides the better learning environment for each student.

Understanding the Educational Aspirations and Experiences of CwDs

The aims of the students are subjective in nature, and to achieve their goals, students undergo different processes, and their experiences are also different. Educational aspirations are the keys that give direction to a student's thinking and motivate them to study. It is very important for children with disabilities to have educational aspirations, as this will reduce their dropout from school and make it easier for them to achieve their educational aspirations. Ball (2005) describes the aspirations of children as "A reflection of what they wish to become and subsequently guide a number of factors that impact what they will eventually do in life." Sherwood (1989) explains the aspiration as "invest time, effort, or money to attain a goal". Educational Aspiration of the CwDs is most important for the nation's development because aspiration directly influences the level of involvement in education. If CwDs are supported by family members, society, teachers, or peer groups, then they gain confidence, which helps them achieve their educational goals.

The term "experiences" refers to knowledge gained from experiences and choices. In other words, lived experiences are defined as directly connected with the subjective experience, which is an individual's subjective experience of the same things. The factors for subjective experience are emotions, perceptions, preferences, goals, etc., that are relevant to the student's private world. Educationalists like Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, John Dewey, and Paulo Freire also advocate that every child comes to school with different experiences. The believer of constructive approach emphasis on the "*experiential learning*". The knowledge may be subjective because everyone has other opinions or experiences in the same situation or condition. It is not about reflecting on an on-going experience. Lived Experience is all about a more recollected approach, where an experience is shared and reflected upon after it has passed. Experiential learning always promotes learning by doing. It will develop the skills and children can experience the learning in better way.

Rationale of the Study

Children are the source of inspiration and a natural creation of the society. Every member of society and a family member want to raise their child in an atmosphere of love and care, in peace and harmony. Every society wishes to bring up its children in an atmosphere of love and care, in peace and harmony. Disability is one of the social problems of society. The dynamic of the family changes with the addition of a child, and the addition of a child with disability often affects the family members beyond the basics and is frequently overlooked. So that children with disabilities remain left behind in the mainstream education, but they have educational aspirations. In Bihar, around 1.24% of all children in the 0-6 age group are facing some kind of disabilities, so the government needs to integrate the children with disabilities into mainstream education so that India can achieve the target of Viksit Bharat

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2047. For integrating the diversity of India, NEP-2020 is based on Accessibility, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability; these are the five pillars, which directly indicate that every individual can get quality education irrespective of any diversity. That's why the researcher is trying to understand the educational aspirations and lived experiences of children with disabilities in Bihar.

Objectives of the Study

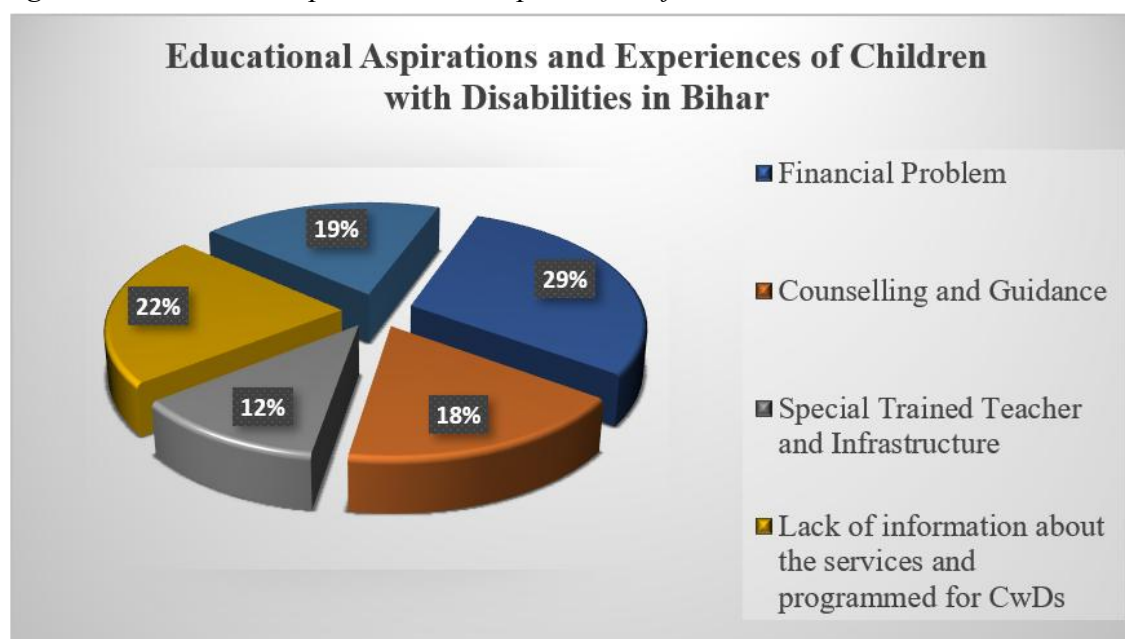
1. To examine the determinants of educational aspirations of children with disabilities
2. To analyse the experiences of children with disabilities in relation to
 - Family/Socio-emotional aspects
 - Society
 - Educational Institutions

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Considering the nature and demand of the study, the researcher used exploratory research designs. An exploratory study is an umbrella for methodology, so that researchers use in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore the matter related to educational aspiration and the lived experiences of children with disabilities. In the present study, the researcher used the non-probability sampling technique, in which purposive sampling was used to draw the sample from the population. Primary data are collected from different schools in East Champaran, Bihar.

Data Interpretation of the Study

Figure 1 Educational aspirations and experiences of CwDs



(Source: Self-Complied)

Figure 1 describes the educational aspirations and lived experience of children with disabilities, especially in the context of Bihar. 29 % of the children with disabilities said that financial problems are one of the key problems that their family members encounter, which results in a decline in their educational aspirations day by day, and their family income is also

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a significant concern for their educational journey. 22% of the children with disabilities said that they don't have any ideas regarding government services and programs through which their lives can be changed, such as 3% job reservation for persons with Disabilities, reservation also available in taking admission in schools or colleges, but other eminent schemes and programs they are unable to know. 19% of the respondents say that an awareness program should be run to eliminate discrimination so that children with disabilities feel included at the family level, society level, and educational body level. Parents face challenges at home because they need extra care, which is the need for CwDs. 18% of the respondent, said that educational guidance and counselling are required to boost their educational aspiration, they can easily find their way in the 21st century and contribute to the country. 12 % of the children with disabilities said that special and trained teachers are required for quality education in the school. Special trained teachers within the schools create a better learning atmosphere so that CwDs can receive better education, indirectly preventing school dropout.

Findings of the Study

Children with Disabilities have a different view on educational aspiration and experience in the context of Bihar. The study highlighted;

1. The CwDs are facing financial and economic problems, whereas broadly seven schemes are being run under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Government of Bihar). Most of the schemes deal with providing financial assistance to CwDs, which shows the lack of awareness regarding services and programmes run by the Government of Bihar.
2. The school does not provide counselling and guidance facilities for children with disabilities, as well as other students who face difficulties in finding educational aspirations or ways to achieve their academic aspirations. Children studying in government schools mainly belong to lower-income families and socio economically disadvantaged groups, and most come to school as the first-generation learners from their household, due to which their family members are also not able to provide proper guidance.
3. To a greater extent, there is a shortage of inclusive educators in school causing difficulties for CwDs. Inclusive educator contributes to creating an inclusive setup in the school so that quality education can be provided to all the students.
4. NEP-2020 provides flexibility in the selection of subject which creates opportunities among the students. Due to the lack of infrastructure in the school implementation of the multidisciplinary papers in the light of NEP-2020 is a serious concern of the school authorities.

CONCLUSION

The majority of guardians indicated that they have challenges with CwDs at home because they are failing to cope with the nature of the disability, and these children demand a lot of extra care from their guardians. Sometimes, family members of children with disabilities face financial problems, due to which they cannot go to the hospital. If they can get some financial assistance, then some of the children with disabilities can be totally added to the mainstream. Diversity in education plays a vital role in fostering inclusive and equitable educational environments. Most of the time, negative experiences by children with disabilities directly or indirectly affect their academic aspirations. Sometimes, they can't express themselves freely in the masses; they can't actively participate in social activities, and most of the masses socially construct that functional loss means physical, mental, and emotional loss. Based on

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this study, it is concluded that the overall educational aspiration of children with disabilities is below average with respect inclusive learning. The reason behind the below-average performance is due to their disability and lack of inclusive learning environment, which makes them a little frustrated. It is suggested that more schools should adopt inclusive teaching learning practices in their classrooms and teachers be accessible for students with special needs. This study gives a view of the educational aspirations of children with disabilities. Teachers need to provide more congenial and welcoming environment, psychological and emotional support to develop aspirations in these children. Children with disabilities need to be supported by each and every member of the society, including the institutions in the community. Some programme should be developed for the parents who can help them to be better and make them able to cope with their children's disabilities at home. Parents and teachers should work together hand in hand to provide the education of the child and embracing their diversities. The integration of technology brought many significant changes and enabling environment for the access of education and employment opportunities for children with disabilities in the age of Education 5.0, however navigating inclusive learning environment in the classroom will enable the children with disabilities in their educational aspirations and imaging better learning experiences in their transition of learning from school education to higher studies.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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