

An Investigation into the Educational Problems of Autistic Children of District Faridabad

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Abstract

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopment condition that affects communication, social interaction, emotional regulation, sensory integration, and adaptive functioning among children. The increasing prevalence of autism across the world has intensified the need for inclusive educational systems capable of supporting diverse learners. In India, despite growing awareness and policy initiatives promoting inclusive education, implementation remains inconsistent, especially in tier-II cities where specialized educational services and trained professionals are limited.

The present study investigates the educational problems faced by autistic children in District Faridabad, Haryana, India. **Faridabad was selected as the study area because of its rapidly growing educational infrastructure, increasing urbanization, expanding population, and limited localized research on autism-related educational challenges. As part of the National Capital Region (NCR), Faridabad represents a blend of urban and semi-urban educational realities where schools are increasingly expected to accommodate learners with diverse developmental needs. However, the availability of inclusive educational support, trained educators, and autism-specific intervention systems remains insufficient.**

The study employed a descriptive survey research design using purposive and criterion-based sampling techniques. Twenty-five participants, including teachers and parents of autistic children, were selected from mainstream schools, inclusive schools, therapy centres, and educational support institutions in Faridabad. Data were collected using structured interview schedules consisting of both open-ended and close-ended questions. To reduce subjectivity and improve reliability, triangulation was ensured through cross-verification of teacher responses, parental narratives, observational notes, and recurring thematic patterns.

The findings revealed that autistic children face significant educational barriers related to communication difficulties, sensory sensitivities, behavioural rigidity, classroom participation, peer interaction, and adaptation to conventional teaching methods. Teachers highlighted inadequate professional training and lack of inclusive infrastructure, while parents emphasized delayed diagnosis, financial burden, social stigma, and emotional stress. The study underscores the importance of teacher training, individualized educational planning, early intervention, sensory-friendly classrooms, collaborative home-school partnerships, and effective policy implementation. The research contributes to the growing body of educational literature advocating inclusive educational reforms and equitable learning opportunities for autistic learners in Indian schools.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Inclusive Education, Educational Challenges, Teacher Training, Special Education, Parental Support, Faridabad

Introduction

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has emerged as one of the most significant developmental conditions affecting children worldwide. Autism is characterized by impairments in communication, social interaction, sensory processing, behavioural flexibility, and emotional regulation. Since autism exists on a spectrum,

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the educational experiences and developmental needs of autistic learners vary considerably depending on cognitive abilities, language development, environmental support, and intervention access.

Over the last two decades, awareness regarding autism has increased substantially across the world. According to the World Health Organization (2022), approximately one in every hundred children worldwide is diagnosed with autism. Similarly, reports by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggest increasing identification rates of Autism Spectrum Disorder among children globally. In India, although awareness and diagnosis have improved, educational inclusion and intervention support remain inconsistent across regions.

The increasing prevalence of autism has created significant challenges for educational institutions. Inclusive education policies require schools to provide equitable educational opportunities to all learners regardless of developmental differences. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) and the National Education Policy (2020) strongly emphasize inclusive educational practices, learner diversity, and equitable access to education. However, despite these policy frameworks, implementation remains inadequate due to lack of trained educators, insufficient infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, limited awareness, and absence of coordinated intervention systems.

Faridabad was selected as the focus of the present study because it represents one of Haryana's rapidly urbanizing educational districts. Located within the National Capital Region (NCR), Faridabad has witnessed considerable population growth, expansion of private educational institutions, and increased demand for inclusive schooling over the last decade. The district includes urban, semi-urban, industrial, and developing residential areas that reflect the realities faced by many Indian families seeking inclusive educational opportunities for children with developmental disorders.

The selection of Faridabad as the study site was also based on the limited availability of region-specific educational research on autism within tier-II Indian cities. Most Indian autism studies have concentrated on metropolitan areas such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chennai, whereas districts like Faridabad remain underrepresented in educational research. Despite the presence of schools, therapy centres, and educational institutions, autism-specific educational support services remain inadequate. Schools frequently struggle with inclusive classroom practices, individualized educational planning, and professional preparation for teachers working with autistic learners.

Another important factor contributing to the significance of this study is the growing parental concern regarding educational inclusion and accessibility for autistic children in Faridabad. Families increasingly seek mainstream educational opportunities for their children; however, many encounter barriers related to admission policies, teacher preparedness, peer acceptance, and lack of individualized support systems.

The present research therefore aims to investigate the educational problems faced by autistic children in District Faridabad while exploring teacher perspectives, parental concerns, institutional barriers, and inclusive educational practices. The study seeks to contribute to the growing body of educational literature on autism and provide recommendations for strengthening inclusive educational systems in Indian schools.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the educational challenges faced by autistic children in District Faridabad.
2. To examine teacher perspectives regarding inclusive classroom practices and institutional support.
3. To analyze parental concerns related to educational experiences of autistic children.
4. To investigate barriers affecting implementation of inclusive education in schools.
5. To suggest educational interventions and policy recommendations for improving educational outcomes among autistic learners.

Need and Significance of the Study

The increasing prevalence of autism and the global emphasis on inclusive education have created an urgent need for educational research focusing on autistic learners. While metropolitan cities may offer relatively better access to intervention services and specialized educational institutions, children residing in semi-urban districts often experience limited educational support and inadequate access to inclusive infrastructure.

The present study is significant because it highlights the practical educational challenges experienced by autistic children and their families within Faridabad. The findings provide insight into the realities faced by teachers, parents, and schools attempting to implement inclusive educational practices. The study also contributes to Indian educational research on autism, particularly within tier-II and semi-urban contexts where inclusive educational systems are still evolving.

The research is further important because inclusive education is not merely a policy requirement but also a social and ethical responsibility. Schools must ensure equitable participation, emotional safety, and meaningful learning opportunities for all children regardless of developmental differences. The findings of the study may therefore help educators, policymakers, school leaders, therapists, and parents develop more effective strategies for supporting autistic learners.

Review of Related Literature

Baron-Cohen (1995) explained the concept of “mindblindness” and emphasized how deficits in social cognition influence communication and learning among autistic individuals. The study highlighted that autistic learners frequently experience difficulty understanding emotions, social cues, and perspectives of others, thereby affecting classroom interaction and peer relationships.

National Research Council (2001) stressed that evidence-based interventions, individualized educational planning, and family participation are essential for improving educational outcomes among autistic children. Structured teaching methods and behavioral interventions were found to significantly enhance communication and adaptive functioning.

Daley (2002) emphasized the importance of culturally sensitive autism research in developing countries. The study suggested that social awareness, cultural beliefs, economic conditions, and educational accessibility strongly influence the experiences of autistic learners and their families.

Pathappili (2011) examined parental stress and coping mechanisms among families of autistic children in India. Emotional strain, social isolation, financial burden, and limited institutional support were identified as major challenges affecting parental well-being.

Sharma and Deppeler (2018) highlighted the difficulties faced by teachers implementing inclusive education in Indian schools. Their research revealed that teachers often feel inadequately prepared because of limited professional training and insufficient institutional support.

Gargiulo and Bouck (2020) emphasized that successful inclusion requires collaboration among teachers, parents, counselors, therapists, and school administrators. The study highlighted the importance of differentiated instruction, sensory-friendly classrooms, individualized learning supports, and social-emotional learning strategies.

UNESCO (2020) emphasized that inclusive education requires transformation of educational systems rather than simple placement of children with disabilities within mainstream classrooms. Schools must ensure meaningful participation, equitable access, and supportive learning environments for all learners.

Recent educational research also highlights the importance of assistive technologies, visual learning strategies, peer-mediated instruction, and sensory-sensitive educational practices in supporting autistic learners effectively. These studies collectively indicate that while awareness regarding autism is increasing, substantial gaps remain in teacher preparation, infrastructure, policy implementation, and institutional support systems.

Methodology

The present study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate the educational problems faced by autistic children in District Faridabad. The descriptive approach was considered appropriate because it enabled systematic examination of educational experiences, classroom challenges, institutional barriers, and parental concerns associated with autism.

Sampling Procedure and Selection of Participants

The sampling process was purposive and criterion-based rather than convenience-based. Participants were selected according to predefined criteria to ensure relevance and reliability of responses.

The following participant selection criteria were adopted:

- Teachers selected for the study had direct teaching experience with autistic learners in mainstream or inclusive classrooms.
- Parents selected for participation had children formally diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and enrolled in schools or intervention programs in Faridabad.

- Schools and educational institutions were selected based on availability of inclusive practices, enrollment of autistic learners, and willingness to participate in the study.

The sample consisted of twenty-five participants:

- 12 teachers from mainstream and inclusive schools
- 13 parents of autistic children

Participants were selected from schools, therapy centers, and educational support institutions located across different regions of District Faridabad to ensure diversity of educational experiences and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Research Tools

Two structured interview schedules were developed by the researcher:

1. Teacher Interview Schedule
2. Parent Interview Schedule

The interview schedules consisted of both open-ended and close-ended questions focusing on:

- Communication and learning difficulties
- Classroom participation and behavioral challenges
- Teacher preparedness and inclusive practices
- Emotional and financial challenges experienced by parents
- Institutional support systems and intervention services
- Availability of inclusive infrastructure and therapeutic support

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted over a four-week period through face-to-face and telephonic interviews. Participants were informed about the objectives of the research, and confidentiality was assured throughout the study. Detailed observational notes were also maintained during interviews to support thematic analysis.

Educational Challenges

The study revealed that autistic children face communication barriers, sensory sensitivities, social interaction challenges, behavioral rigidity, and classroom participation difficulties.

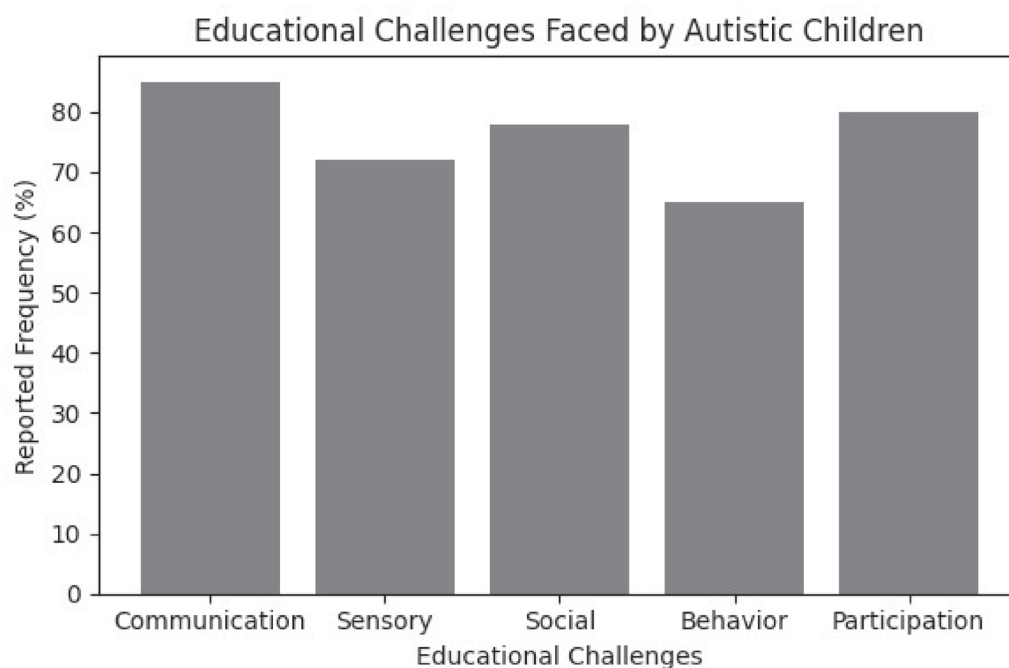


Figure 1: Educational Challenges Faced by Autistic Children

Teacher Perspectives

Teachers highlighted inadequate training in inclusive education, lack of support staff, and insufficient inclusive resources.

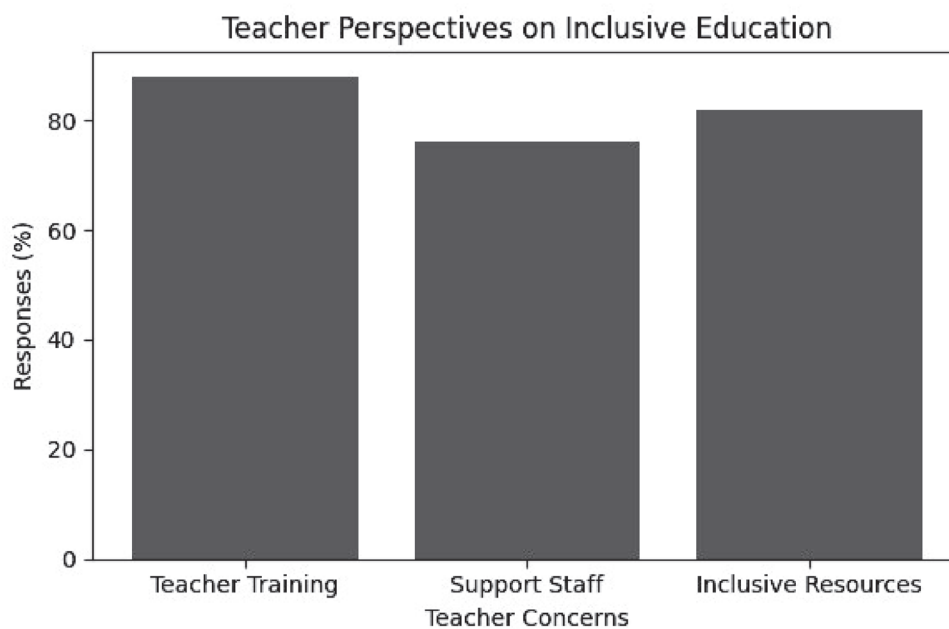


Figure 2: Teacher Perspectives on Inclusive Education

Parental Concerns

Parents reported emotional stress, financial burden, delayed diagnosis, and social stigma.

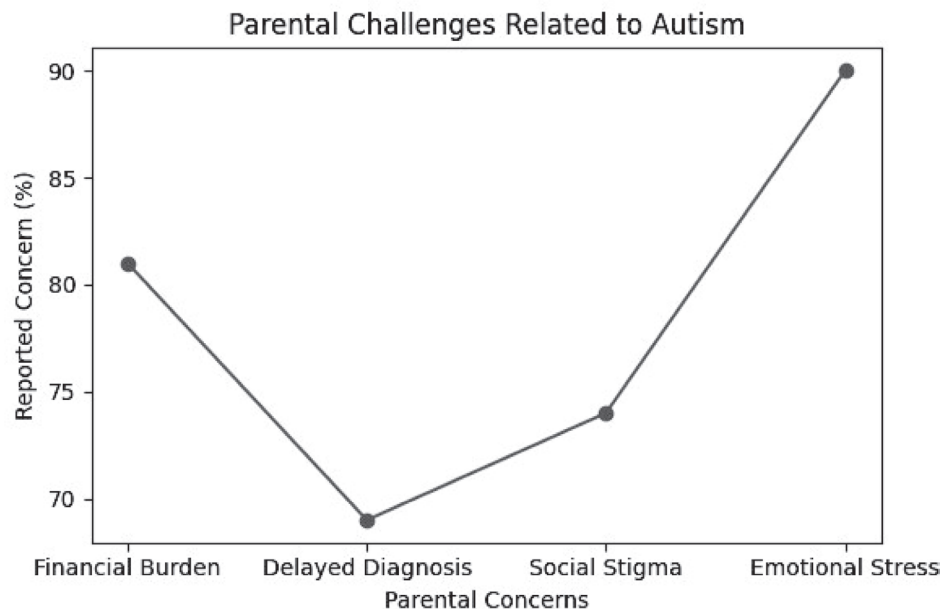


Figure 3: Parental Challenges Related to Autism

Triangulation and Reduction of Bias

To reduce subjectivity and strengthen reliability, triangulation methods were employed during data analysis. Triangulation was ensured through:

- Comparison of teacher responses with parental narratives
- Cross-verification of recurring themes across participants
- Inclusion of observational notes recorded during interviews
- Selection of participants from different educational settings
- Comparison of perspectives across schools, parents, and intervention centers

The triangulation process helped identify consistent patterns and reduced the possibility of individual bias influencing interpretation of findings.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. Names of participants and institutions were not disclosed to ensure ethical compliance and privacy.

Results and Discussion

The findings revealed that autistic children experience multiple educational barriers affecting academic participation, social inclusion, emotional well-being, and adaptive functioning. Communication difficulties emerged as one of the most significant challenges identified by both teachers and parents. Many autistic learners struggled with verbal expression, comprehension, following classroom instructions, and participating in peer interaction.

Teachers also reported sensory sensitivities, repetitive behaviors, emotional dysregulation, and difficulty adapting to conventional classroom environments. Several teachers admitted that they lacked specialized training in autism and inclusive education. They expressed uncertainty regarding differentiated instruction, individualized educational planning, and classroom behavior management strategies.

The study further revealed that many schools lacked inclusive infrastructure such as sensory-friendly learning spaces, visual learning aids, and trained special educators. Overcrowded classrooms and academic pressure often limited individualized attention for autistic learners. Teachers emphasized the need for continuous professional development programs focusing on autism awareness, behavior intervention, and inclusive pedagogy.

Parents reported delayed diagnosis and limited awareness regarding autism during the early developmental years of their children. Several parents initially misunderstood autistic behaviors because of societal misconceptions and lack of professional guidance. Emotional stress and social isolation emerged as major concerns among families of autistic children.

Financial burden was another major challenge identified during the study. Therapy sessions, transportation, medical consultations, assistive resources, and specialized educational services created substantial economic pressure on families. Parents also highlighted difficulties related to school admissions, peer acceptance, and societal stigma.

Triangulated findings indicated that children receiving early intervention, structured routines, visual supports, and collaborative home-school communication demonstrated comparatively better adaptive functioning and classroom participation. Teachers and parents both emphasized the importance of empathetic teaching approaches, peer awareness, and collaborative partnerships in improving educational outcomes.

The findings of the present study align with earlier research emphasizing the importance of teacher preparedness, institutional support, inclusive infrastructure, and coordinated intervention systems for autistic learners.

Major Findings

1. Autistic children face significant challenges related to communication, sensory processing, social interaction, and classroom participation.
2. Teachers require greater professional preparation in inclusive education, differentiated instruction, and classroom behavior management.
3. Parents experience emotional stress, financial burden, and social stigma associated with autism.

4. Delayed diagnosis negatively affects educational intervention and developmental progress.
5. Schools frequently lack inclusive infrastructure, sensory-friendly classrooms, and trained support staff.
6. Early intervention and collaborative home–school partnerships positively influence educational outcomes.
7. Lack of awareness regarding autism contributes to misunderstanding and exclusion within educational settings.
8. Institutional barriers such as overcrowded classrooms and insufficient individualized support negatively affect inclusive education practices.

Educational Implications

The implications of the study are directly connected to the findings obtained from teachers and parents in Faridabad. Since teachers reported inadequate preparation for inclusive classrooms, teacher education institutions and schools should introduce specialized professional development programs focusing on autism awareness, differentiated instruction, sensory regulation, and classroom behavior management.

Schools participating in the study frequently lacked sensory-friendly learning environments and individualized educational planning systems. Therefore, educational institutions should establish structured classrooms with visual schedules, predictable routines, low-sensory zones, assistive learning aids, and individualized support systems for autistic learners.

Parents highlighted delayed diagnosis and limited awareness regarding autism within communities. Consequently, schools and local educational authorities should organize awareness campaigns, early screening initiatives, and parent counseling workshops to encourage timely intervention and reduce stigma associated with developmental disorders.

The study also revealed the importance of collaborative partnerships between schools and families. Schools should therefore develop regular communication systems involving teachers, parents, counselors, therapists, and administrators to ensure coordinated educational planning and intervention support for autistic learners.

Since financial burden emerged as a major parental concern, policymakers and educational authorities should strengthen support systems by providing subsidized intervention programs, access to trained professionals, inclusive educational infrastructure, and specialized educational services within mainstream schools.

The findings also suggest that educational policies promoting inclusion should be supported by practical implementation strategies including teacher recruitment, resource allocation, inclusive curriculum planning, and continuous monitoring of educational support systems for children with developmental disabilities.

Suggestions and Recommendations

1. Schools should establish autism-friendly and sensory-sensitive classrooms.
2. Teacher education programs must include compulsory modules on autism and inclusive education.

3. Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) should be developed for autistic learners.
4. Collaboration between teachers, parents, therapists, and counselors should be strengthened.
5. Awareness campaigns should be conducted to reduce stigma and improve understanding regarding autism.
6. Early screening and intervention programs should be promoted at school and community levels.
7. Educational authorities should allocate funding for inclusive infrastructure and professional development.
8. Schools should provide emotional support programs and counseling services for parents and caregivers.
9. Research related to autism and inclusive education should be encouraged within Indian educational contexts.
10. Educational institutions should integrate assistive technologies and visual learning supports to improve participation among autistic learners.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the educational challenges faced by autistic children are deeply interconnected with institutional, social, emotional, and pedagogical factors. Communication difficulties, sensory sensitivities, behavioral rigidity, and social interaction barriers significantly affect classroom participation and learning experiences. Simultaneously, inadequate teacher preparation, limited inclusive infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient institutional support further intensify these challenges.

The findings emphasize the urgent need for inclusive educational reforms prioritizing teacher training, individualized instruction, collaborative partnerships, sensory-sensitive educational environments, and early intervention systems. Inclusive education should not merely be viewed as policy compliance but as a commitment to equity, dignity, participation, and educational justice for every learner.

The study contributes to the growing body of Indian educational research on autism and highlights the importance of localized investigations within semi-urban educational contexts such as Faridabad. Future research may involve larger sample sizes, comparative regional analysis, longitudinal examination of educational outcomes, and evaluation of inclusive educational interventions among autistic learners.

Strengthening inclusive educational systems will not only improve academic outcomes but also enhance emotional well-being, social acceptance, adaptive functioning, and long-term quality of life for autistic children and their families.

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