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A Comprehensive Analysis of Accessibility on Government Schools' Infrastructure for Students with Disabilities

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Abstract

This descriptive study examines the accessibility of infrastructure for Students with Disabilities (SWDs) in 60 government Urdu-medium primary and secondary schools in Hyderabad District, Telangana. The study focuses on physical infrastructure, support services, and the accessibility of library and computer laboratory facilities. Infrastructure accessibility data were obtained from 28 fully completed questionnaires returned by school principals, while enrolment information was compiled from all 60 sampled schools. The findings reveal substantial disparities in both enrolment patterns and infrastructure accessibility. The paper offers an all-inclusive structure of the improvement of the infrastructure accessibility based on the principles of the Universal Design of learning, the teacher training, and involvement of the community. These results highlight a sense of urgency to close the policy implementation gaps so as to provide equitable education to all students with disabilities.

Keywords: *Students with Disabilities (SWDs), Infrastructure, Accessibility, Inclusive Education and Govt. Schools.*

Introduction

Education is an important tool of social change and social integration, especially to marginalized groups (Kothari, 1966). Students with Disabilities (SWDs) who comprise about 10% of the world population of 80% living in developing nations (United Nations, 2006) have great problems accessing good education. Although the democratic system in India provides the fundamental rights and various provisions in the laws, the distance between policy and practice is still significant. WHO credits the increasing percentage of persons with disabilities (PWDs) to population increase, old age, accidents and medical developments (Ambati, 2012). Even though education policies have highlighted the importance of ensuring that more inclusive education system is established, the lack of physical infrastructure that is accessible to students with disabilities is a major obstacle

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towards educational access. The difference between the progressive policies and their application in the field presents the necessity of the overall analysis of access to the basic facilities in schools.

The present study focuses on the present condition of physical infrastructure that students with disabilities have access to in the government schools in the Telangana state of Hyderabad district. By conducting analytical research on physical infrastructure, support services, and special facilities, the study will outline the existing deficiencies and prescribe unique corrective action to enhance accessibility to education by students with disabilities.

Conceptual Framework of Disability

Defining disability is complex because it encompasses diverse forms and varying degrees of functional limitation. The World Health Organization (1994) defines disability as the disability insofar as the functional abilities of movement, perception, hearing and vision are concerned. To bring out this concept of disability, the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Deprivations (ICIDH-2, 1998) has come up with the term's activity limitation and partaking restriction. In addition, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) classifies disability as a dynamic relationship between the impairment, whether physical or mental, of the person and the environmental restriction that impedes his or her effective and full involvement in society.

According to Gifford-Lindsay (2007), negative attitudes towards disability that are predominant are a significant hindrance to successful implementation of inclusive education. Some of the studies note social perceptions to be influential in determining access to education, employment and social integration (Pandey & Advani (1995)). These results point to the fact that creating an inclusive educational environment requires the awareness and the positive change of attitudes.

Legal Framework for Persons with Disabilities in India

India has come up with a strong legal system that has been used to protect the rights of people with disabilities which include:

- The Mental Health Act (1987): is concerned with treatment and custodial care.
- Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) Act (1992): Governs rehabilitation training and certification of professionals.

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DAJE Volume 02 (1) 2026 [January-June]
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- The Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Act (1995): This law is an educational and employment right.
- The National Trust Act (1999): The NTA assists the disabled to live independently.
- The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act (2016): Adds 21 disabilities to the list of 7 (PWD Act 1995) and provides a free education to the children with benchmark disabilities.

Despite the existence of a comprehensive legal and policy framework of persons with disabilities, Singal (2006) critically looks at disability policies in India and puts forward that despite the purported existence of the disability policies, systemic obstacles towards effective implementation of the policies still exist. The absence of professional training and disability awareness in the teaching staff has become one of the most important challenges of the education system that becomes an obstacle to the promotion of inclusive education (Hoffman, 2013; Srivastava, de Boer, and Pijl, 2017).

Infrastructure Accessibility in Educational Contexts

Efficient access to educational facilities does not just exist in the physical building or facilities available at the school, but also incorporates teaching materials, aids, and services that are to be provided to the students with varying styles of learning. Despite the various policies by the government to encourage inclusive learning, teachers have a number of challenges in addressing the learning needs of students. The principal causes of such challenges are a deficit in professional training of teachers and the absence of educational resources (Taneja-Johansson et al., 2021).

The 2011 Census of India recorded a very low literacy rate of persons with a disability at 55% which shows that there is a profound disparity in the educational equity. In other research studies, it has been demonstrated that participation of children with disabilities in mainstream education is hampered by several major barriers which include: inaccessibility of education buildings, lack of assistive devices, and extreme shortage of specially trained teachers (Mukhopadhyay and Mani, 2002; Soni, 2001). Although some important schemes, such as the Samagar Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the Scheme for Implementation of Persons with Disabilities Act (SIPDA), and the Deen Dayal Disabilities Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS), have been implemented by the government to provide financial assistance and basic facilities, practical shortcomings in the effective implementation of these schemes

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undermine their effectiveness (Srivastava et al., 2017). Furthermore, research consistently highlights that although policies related to inclusive education are well-designed on paper, attitudinal biases and systemic weaknesses at the practical level constitute major obstacles to the actual implementation of these policies (Alliston, 2010; Algbau, 2008). Although previous studies have examined inclusive education, disability policies, and accessibility in Indian schools, relatively little empirical research has focused specifically on the infrastructure accessibility of government Urdu-medium schools in Hyderabad District, Telangana. Most existing studies have concentrated on policy implementation, teacher preparedness, or general inclusive education practices, while limited attention has been given to the combined assessment of physical infrastructure, library and computer laboratory accessibility, support services, and enrolment patterns of Students with Disabilities (SWDs). Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of infrastructure accessibility and school-level support available for SWDs in government Urdu-medium schools, thereby contributing evidence to strengthen inclusive educational planning and policy implementation.

Research questions of the Study

1. What is the current enrolment status of Students with Disabilities in government Urdu-medium schools in Hyderabad District?
2. What is the level of accessibility of physical infrastructure, library/computer laboratory services, and support services in these schools?
3. What measures are being implemented by schools to accommodate the educational requirements of Students with Disabilities?

Objectives of the Study

The study is carried out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To know the current status of students with disabilities in Schools.
2. To find out the various measures taken by schools to accommodate disabled students' requirements in school.

Delimitations of the Study

- Limited to Telangana State, focusing on Hyderabad District.

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- Covers government primary and secondary Urdu medium schools focuses on students with visual, hearing, and orthopaedic disabilities.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design to analyze the current status of infrastructural accessibility for Students with Disabilities (SWDs) in government Primary and Secondary Urdu Medium schools. The descriptive approach was considered most appropriate for achieving the research objectives, which include assessing the present condition of students with disabilities within schools and examining the various measures undertaken by school's Principals and teachers to address the specific needs of these students.

Population and Sample

The population for this study comprised all Students with Disabilities (SWDs) enrolled in government Urdu-medium primary and secondary schools, along with the principals of these schools in Hyderabad District, Telangana. A list of government Urdu-medium schools was obtained from the District Educational Officer (DEO), Hyderabad. Based on this list, 60 government schools (40 primary and 20 secondary) were selected through simple random sampling using the lottery method. Students with visual impairments, hearing impairments, and orthopaedic disabilities studying in Classes I to X were selected through purposive sampling. The Infrastructure Accessibility Questionnaire was administered to the principals of all 60 sampled schools during field visits. However, only 28 principals returned fully completed questionnaires. Consequently, the infrastructure accessibility analysis presented in this study (Tables 4–7) is based on the 28 completed questionnaires, whereas the enrolment status of Students with Disabilities (SWDs) was compiled from records collected across all 60 sampled schools.

Data Collection Tools

Two data collection tools were formulated:

1. Performa to Evaluate Existing Situation among SWDs in Schools: This instrument gathered information about all the registered SWDs, such as the class complication, gender, and type of disability.
2. Accessible Infrastructure Questionnaire: This instrument evaluated three major dimensions:
    i. School infrastructure (11 items)

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ii. Availability of library and computer laboratory services (3 items)
iii. The services offered to SWDs (8 items) as support.

The questionnaire was based on three-point scale (Yes = 3, No = 2, Can't Say = 1) and five open-ended questions to obtain qualitative data.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity of the Accessible Infrastructure Questionnaire was established through expert review by six specialists in education and special education. Their feedback was used to refine the wording, relevance, and clarity of the items. Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.76, indicating acceptable internal consistency of the instrument.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze quantitative data, percentages and means were calculated and analyzed in SPSS. Thematic content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data collected by using open-ended questions. Since the present investigation employed a descriptive research design aimed at describing the existing status of infrastructure accessibility rather than examining cause-and-effect relationships, descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means) were considered adequate and appropriate for addressing the research questions.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, official permission to conduct the study was obtained from the District Educational Officer (DEO), Hyderabad, along with the list of government Urdu-medium primary and secondary schools in the district. Based on this list, the sampled schools were visited for data collection. Permission was subsequently obtained from the respective school principals before administering the research instruments. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and confidentiality and anonymity of the schools and respondents were strictly maintained. The data collected were used solely for academic and research purposes.

Findings and Discussion

Current Status of SWDs Enrollment

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Enrolment trends among the SWDs in the various grades depict huge differences and gaps in the process of education inclusion. Of the 60 sampled schools, 8 students with disabilities were enrolled though this was greatly disproportionate among the grade levels. Class III registered highest number of 3 students whereas some critical grades (IV, V, VI, VII and IX) registered zero enrolment.

Table 1: Current Status of Enrolment of Students with Disabilities at Grades 1-10

S. No.	Class	Enrolled SWD	Boys	Girls	Type
1	I	1	0	1	1- HI
2	II	2	2	0	1- OH, 1- VI
3	III	3	3	0	1- OH
4	IV	0	0	0	-
5	V	0	0	0	-
6	VI	0	0	0	-
7	VII	0	0	0	-
8	VIII	1	1	0	1- OH
9	IX	0	0	0	-
10	X	1	1	0	1- OH

The disability-wise distribution reveals a significant concentration of certain disability types. Orthopedically Handicapped (OH) students dominate the enrollment, comprising 6 out of 8 students (75%), while Visually Impaired (VI) and Hearing Impaired (HI) students are minimally represented with only one student each.

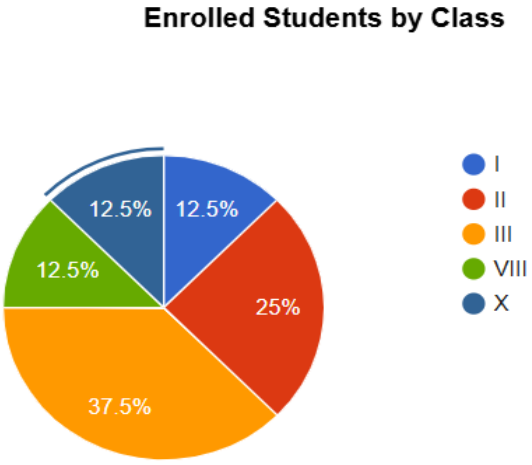


Figure 1 Current Status of Enrolment of Students with Disabilities

Table 2: Enrolment of SWDs by Disability Type

Disability			Total
VI	HI	OH	**08**
01	01	06	

The gender distribution presents a stark and concerning imbalance. Out of the 8 students enrolled, 7 are male (87.5%), while only 1 student is female (12.5%). This gender disparity suggests significant barriers to access for female students with disabilities, reflecting deeply rooted sociocultural factors that affect girls' education more severely.

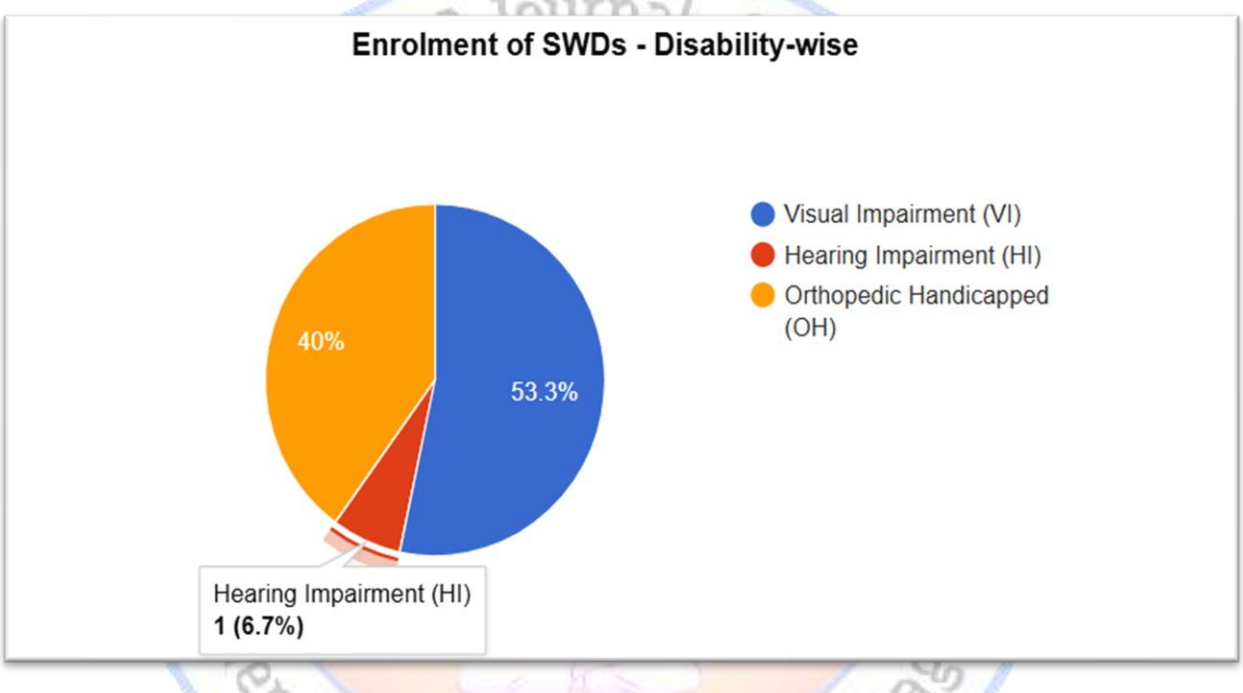


Figure 2: Current Status of Enrolment of Students with Disabilities- Disability Wise

Table 3: Gender-wise Enrollment of SWDs

Boys	Girls	Total
07	01	08

As table 3 shows the gender distribution of Students with Disabilities presents a stark and concerning imbalance. Out of the 8 students enrolled, 7 are male, representing 87.5% of the total, while only 1 student is female, constituting a mere 12.5% of the enrolment.

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DAJE Volume 02 (1) 2026 [January-June]
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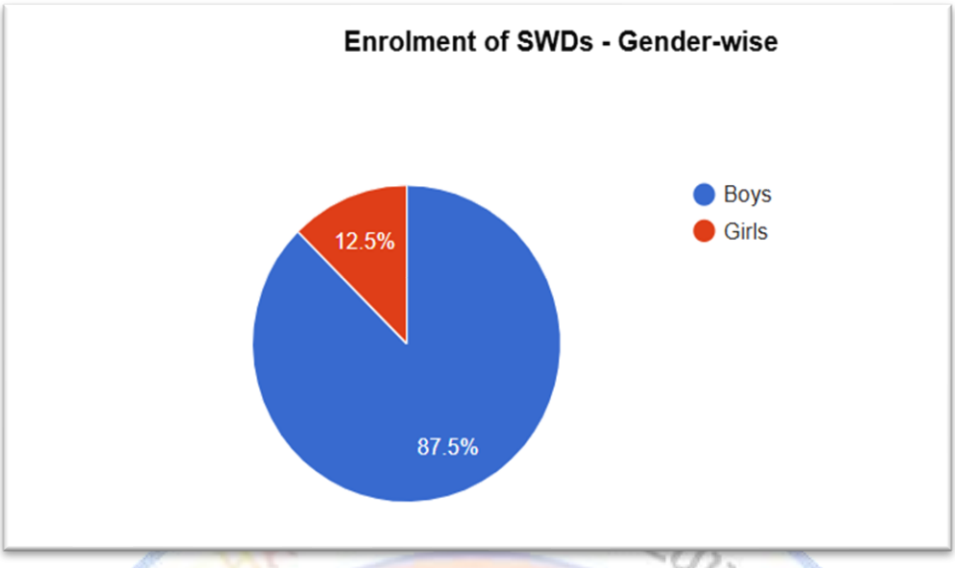


Figure 3: Current Status of Enrolment of Students with Disabilities- Gender Wise

Infrastructure Accessibility in Schools

The study assessed infrastructure accessibility across three dimensions: physical infrastructure, library and computer lab services, and support services for SWDs.

Overall Infrastructure Accessibility

Table 4: Overall Infrastructure Accessibility

S. No.	Levels	Frequency	Percentage
1	Good	12	42.86
2	Basic	12	42.86
3	Poor	04	14.28
Total		**28**	**100**

Note: Infrastructure accessibility analysis was restricted to the 28 schools in which SWDs were enrolled.

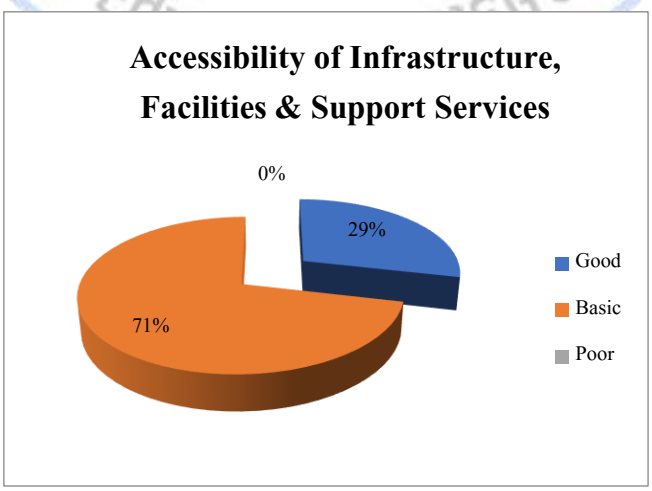


Figure 4: Accessibility of Infrastructure, Facilities and Support Services of Schools

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The overall assessment of infrastructure accessibility revealed that among the 28 schools surveyed, 42.86% had good accessibility, another 42.86% had basic accessibility, and 14.28% had poor accessibility. This distribution suggests that while nearly half of the schools have made significant progress in creating accessible environments, over half still require substantial improvements.

Physical Infrastructure Accessibility

The assessment of physical infrastructure revealed that 28.6% of schools had good accessibility, while 71.4% had basic accessibility. Notably, none of the schools were rated as having poor physical accessibility, indicating that all surveyed schools provide at least some level of accessible infrastructure.

Table 5: Physical Infrastructure Accessibility

S. No.	Levels	Frequency	Percentage
1	Good	08	28.6
2	Basic	20	71.4
3	Poor	00	00
Total		**28**	**100**

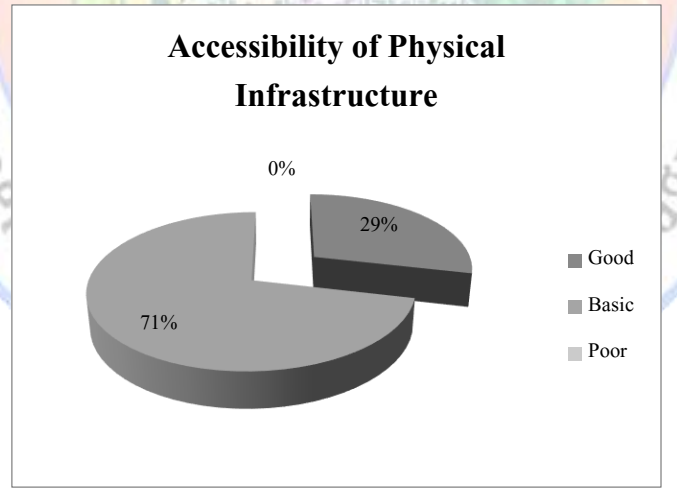


Figure 5: Accessibility of Physical Infrastructure in Schools

This finding suggests that while most schools have implemented basic physical accessibility features like ramps, more comprehensive accommodations may still be lacking.

Library and Computer Lab Accessibility

The accessibility of library and computer lab services presented a concerning picture. Among the 28 respondents, 71.4% rated the accessibility as basic, while 28.6% rated it as

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poor. Significantly, none of the schools were found to have good accessibility in these crucial learning resources.

Table 6: Library and Computer Lab Accessibility

S. No.	Levels	Frequency	Percentage
1	Good	00	00
2	Basic	20	71.4
3	Poor	08	28.6
Total		**28**	**100**

This finding highlights a critical gap in educational resource accessibility, potentially limiting SWDs' access to information and technology-enabled learning opportunities.

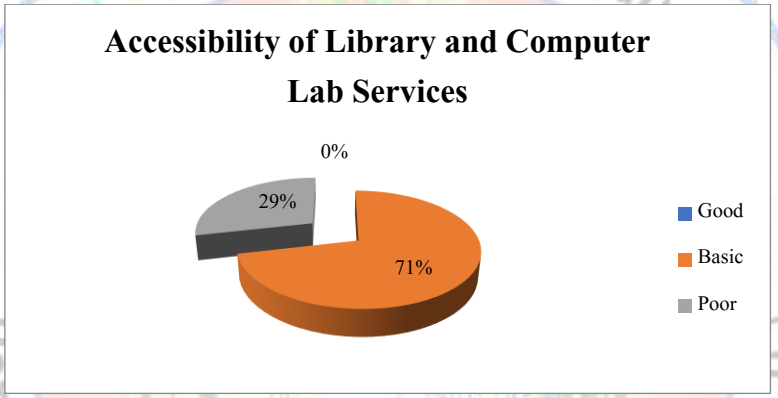


Figure 6: Accessibility of Library and Computer Lab Services in Schools

Support Services for SWDs

The assessment of support services revealed a more positive picture, with 50% of schools rated as having good support services and the remaining 50% having basic support services. None of the schools were rated as having poor support services.

Table 7: Support Services for SWDs

S. N.	Levels	Frequency	Percentage
1	Good	14	50
2	Basic	14	50
3	Poor	00	00
Total		**28**	**100**

This finding suggests that schools have made relatively more progress in providing support services compared to other accessibility dimensions, though half of the schools still need to enhance their support services.

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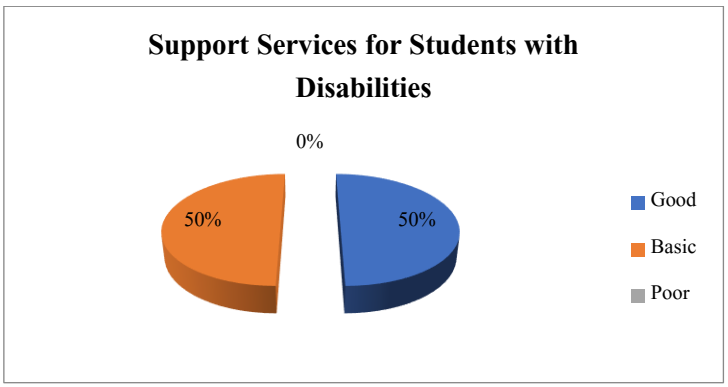


Figure 7: Support services for Students with Disabilities

Qualitative Insights on School Measures

Qualitative responses revealed several measures adopted by schools to support Students with Disabilities.

The thematic analysis of qualitative answers revealed that the Urdu medium government schools have taken a number of great actions to accommodate the student with disabilities (SWDs):

- **Flexibility of Admission:** The schools have not stated any limitation or special specifications of the admission of SWDs. Schools are accepting admissions any time and grade depending on the age.
- **Physical Accessibility:** Most of the respondents stated that all buildings in their school such as classrooms, libraries and computer labs are accessible to all SWDs with the most commonly cited attribute which is ramps.
- **Individual Support:** Schools have indicated offering some individual support to students depending on the needs of a student; however, no description of what and how much was provided.
- **Financial Assistance:** A number of school principals and teachers said that their school provides financial help to SWDs by providing them books, stationeries and clothing.
- **Teacher Training:** It was found that in some schools, school teachers often receive training in the fields of inclusive teaching techniques and assistive technologies. They however did not specify the frequency and depth of such training.

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- **Parental Involvement:** Since the schools reported that they have a form of contact with the parents on a monthly basis in the form of a monthly meeting (PTM).
- **Gender-Specific Support:** Several responses to this question mentioned special scholarships of disabled girls to be able to continue studying, but there were no far-reaching actions aimed at resolving the gender discomfort.
- **Future Direction:** Other schools said that they were aligned to the vision of NEP 2020 which will include the application of the principles of universal design (UDL) in classrooms to make the teaching and curriculum accessible to various learners.

Discussion

Enrolment Patterns and Educational Access

The extremely low enrolment of Students with Disabilities (only eight students across sixty government Urdu-medium schools) raises serious concerns regarding equitable access to education. The lack of SWDs in five grade levels (IV, V, VI, VII, and IX) is an indication of a great difficulty in the continuity of education or high rates of dropouts. This conclusion is consistent with other studies conducted by Taneja-Johansson et al. (2021), who pointed out the uniformity in the application of inclusive education. It is also noted that orthopaedic disability students (75) were more than the students with visual impairment or hearing impairment, which shows that the school might be better prepared to accommodate physical disabilities but not the sensory impairment. The latter biased selection is indicative of Srivastava et al. (2017) who have found several disabilities to be disproportionately represented in the inclusive education system. The distinct gender disparity in the figure of girls (12.5) and boys (87.5) reveal the prevalent issues that girls with disabilities encounter, as they have gender-related educational issues on top of the disability-related issues. This result is in line with the larger patterns of gender disparities in education especially to the vulnerable populations (Singh, 2006).

Infrastructure Accessibility Gaps

The quality of the infrastructure accessibility evaluation creates a subtler image of evolution and ongoing issues:

- **Physical Infrastructure:** There is basic physical accessibility in all schools, but only in 71.4% of schools is the basic level of accessibility provided; improved

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accessibility facilities are provided in 28.6% of schools. All the qualitative responses on this show that such accessibility is usually in the form of ramps, whereas more extensive and all-inclusive facilities remain scarce. The present findings indicate that while all surveyed schools provide at least basic physical accessibility, advanced accessibility features remain limited. Similar observations were reported by Mukhopadhyay and Mani (2002), who found that Indian schools often focus on minimum physical access requirements rather than comprehensive inclusive infrastructure. This similarity suggests that, despite policy initiatives promoting inclusive education, many schools continue to implement only the minimum accessibility standards required for physical access.

- **Educational Resources:** The total lack of ratings that are good concerning library and computer lab access shows that there is a wide disparity on educational learning resources access. Such shortcoming can also enhance educational disparities since students with disabilities (SWD) may be physically available in school, yet they will be unable to access educational materials fully. Likewise, the absence of schools with "good" ratings for library and computer laboratory accessibility is consistent with the findings of Soni (2001), who identified inadequate access to specialized educational materials and assistive technologies as a major barrier to inclusive education. This finding indicates that, although physical access has improved to some extent, the provision of accessible learning resources remains a significant challenge for achieving meaningful inclusion.
- **Support Services:** Most of the responses obtained on support services offered in the learning institutions (50% good, 50% basic) shows that schools have made some improvements in this field which might be attributed to the effects of various interventions by the government including the Comprehensive Education Campaign and SIPDA. Nevertheless, specific qualitative feedbacks exposed that such services are usually confined to simple financial aids, but extensive and extensive educational support service provision is missing.

Policy-Practice Gap

There exists an enormous disparity between the robust legal framework of disability rights in India and the little kin to education and training of persons with disabilities at the grassroot

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level. In spite of the existence of contemporary legislation and policies like the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD) 2016 and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, their action is not successful. The real working of these laws is yet to be complete and integrated. Some of the factors that have contributed to this gap are systemic factors, which comprise insufficient resources, insufficient training of teachers and ineffective monitoring systems. As it has already been mentioned, Singal (2006) and Hoffman (2013) have indicated that these problems are some of the impediments to a realistic change in the sphere of disability rights and education.

Recommendations

The findings of this study give an opportunity to make the following recommendations to enhance the access to infrastructure by persons with disabilities in government schools:

Improvement of Comprehensive Infrastructure

- **Application of Universal Design (UDL):** Adopt Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to all new buildings and also the renovation of the old buildings, so as to make sure that physical environment is fully accessible to the students with disabilities.
- **More accessibility of Resources:** Design special areas within the library, where accessible materials will be available, like Braille, large print books, audio books. Moreover, assistive technologies should be provided in the computer labs, to overcome the high disparity in the access to educational resources.
- **Sensory-based Accommodations:** Special sensory-friendly provision ought to be implemented in order to encourage the incorporation of sensory-impaired students into the educational process like visual and auditory cue systems, tactile pathways and sound therapy to ensure that such students are not left behind in the education process.

Educational and Support Services Enhancement

- **Hiring of specialized Personnel:** Special teachers, therapists, and counsellors are to be hired to make sure the adequate facilities are available to individuals with disabilities, especially the sensory (deaf or blind) and intellectual ones. These persons

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will offer instructions, facilitation and educational aid to the students with disabilities and in a personalized manner with reference to the students' needs.

- **Assistive Technology Incorporation:** Invest in new technology and equipment in order to address the learning needs of the disabled learners. This involves specially designed instructional resources, individualized learning resources, and digital resources that are available. Application of such technologies will enhance learning abilities of the disabled students and make them more educated.
- **Gender-sensitive Initiatives:** Gender-based obstacles to the educational progress of girls with disabilities should be dealt with by using special measures. In this aspect, scholarships, transportation facilities, and social awareness programs are to be launched in order to make disabled girls and their families realize the significance of an education. Such are the measures that will foster gender equality and inclusion in education.

Systemic Reforms

- **Monitoring Systems:** Have in place an elaborate monitoring system to check on the enrolment and retention of students and their academic performance with special regard to the differences in the women and various forms of disabilities. This will aid the realization of the issues that students with disabilities go through in the course of their education and they can take some action to rectify the situation.
- **Improve Teacher Training:** Develop and institute continuous professional development in teachers in terms of inclusive teaching methods, disability awareness, and the application of assistive technology. This shall increase the abilities of the teachers and allow them to use more efficient teaching strategies with students with disabilities.
- **Community Engagement:** encourage the community organizations addressing the disability rights, advocacy groups and parents to provide a conducive environment that supports students with disabilities not only within the school setting but also outside of school. It will enhance awareness and advocate of students with disabilities in the community.

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DAJE Volume 02 (1) 2026 [January-June]
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- **Responsibility in Policy Enforcement:** Intensify accountability procedures to make sure that there is good conformity to the legal requirements of access and inclusion at the school level. This will aid in checking whether the policies are being implemented in the right way, in order to ensure that the rights of the disabled students are not infringed.

These should be in place in order to enhance the learning condition of students with disabilities and also afford them an equal learning opportunity.

Study Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited to government Urdu-medium schools in Hyderabad District, Telangana, and therefore the findings may not be generalized to all school types or regions. The study focused primarily on physical, library/computer laboratory, and support service accessibility and did not assess academic achievement or long-term educational outcomes of Students with Disabilities. Future research may include larger multi-district samples, comparative studies across different school management types, and advanced statistical analyses examining the relationship between infrastructure accessibility and educational participation of Students with Disabilities.

Conclusion

This examination of the issue provides an in-depth perspective of the difficulty and achievement of infrastructure accessibility to students with disabilities (SWDs) in government schools. Though the physical access is offered in the majority of schools, the gap in access to educational resources and gender equity remains significant. There is a much low enrolment of students with disabilities, particularly in girls, and students with sensory disability, which indicates that there is need to take immediate action to address the problem. The research results obtained indicate that there is a serious policy-practice gap, and the relevant legislation has not been applied successfully. A holistic approach is required to handle this gap that involves enhancement of physical infrastructure, educational resources, comprehensive support services and realignment of monitoring and accountability systems. The results have some important implications to policymakers, educational administrators, and practitioners to proceed with the vision of inclusive education in accordance with NEP 2020 in India. With the suggested measures put in place, the actual equal access and

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significant learning opportunities in government schools will be available to all students with disabilities irrespective of the gender, form of disability or socio-economic status.

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