CHAPTER 5.3
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 3: Outcomes of Inclusive Education

This theme delves on the outcomes of inclusive environment on children with disabilities. Here I understand and perceive outcomes as achievements which need to be seen and celebrated within the context of the child’s abilities and potential. All the children included in the study had spent at least two years in the inclusive school. Their experiences in the inclusive schools were indicative of their self-development and personality. Thus, when I was categorizing the data under the themes, strong connections with the self-concept began to emerge which I decided to portray as a sub-theme. Self concept enables the children to form healthy relationships, become independent and contribute actively to the society as they mature into adulthood; thus playing a vital role in their development (Harter 1998). Self-concept at school seems to be influenced by the image that other significant persons (teachers, parents, peers) have of the pupil (Burns, 1982 ; Harter, 1986) and by social comparison with others in the same setting (Rogers, Smith, Coleman, 1978).

The outcome indicators for this research were thus the development of the self-concept which was arrived at by the interviews with the children and significant others, and other indicators like enjoyment and achievements education and learning, self-care and life skills and positive contribution, the information on which was largely provided by the mothers and teachers.
5.4.1 Inclusive Environment and Self Concept

Self concept is defined as a person’s view about oneself (Harvey and Greenway 1984). Self concept is based on accumulated perceptions throughout the lifespan and is strongly influenced by the interplay between their own actions, the reactions of others, and one’s perceptions of the events and their surrounding behaviours and outcomes (Byrne 1996; Davis-Kean and Sandler 2001; Marsh et al. 1983). I have aligned our discussions with this understanding of self concept.

A study by Ittyerah and Kumar (2007) focused on four components of the self-concept; body image, life experiences, skills/abilities, and social interaction patterns for children, adolescents and adults with disabilities. The narratives from children (7-13 years) included in the study showed that schools were viewed as “place of reformation” (p.109). Children interviewed in this study had highest mean scores for positive statements on self-concept and adolescents with disabilities in the age group of 14-20 years, had least. Children with disabilities also had the highest mean scores for the negative statements illustrating their tendency to respond in extremes. In inclusive settings self evaluations provides a measure for comparisons with peers without disabilities. Thus, exploring the school experiences of children with disabilities in inclusive schools and the impact of these experiences on self identity becomes relevant.

Out of the ten children we interviewed two of them (Simran and Harshit) were slightly older than the other children and may be considered belonging to the adolescent group. I have not generalised my findings to children with disabilities and have specifically provided their chronological age in the quotes keeping in mind that the self-concept develops with age (Damon & Hart 1982; Papalia & Olds 1992). As indicated in the quotes below, most students
with disability ranked low in their academic performance, which they perceived as a shortcoming.

*I do not understand many things in the class and therefore, I borrow their notebooks. They then tease me and everyone in the class tells me that my brain does not work like theirs* (Soham, 10 years, slow learner).

*I never perform well in my examinations. My teachers, parents and my tutor are always unhappy with me* (Ishita, 9 years, learning disability).

*My disability distinguishes me from the rest of the class. I am not very good at studies but there are others in the class who are also not. But I am known in the school, in the neighbourhood and everywhere else as a ‘special child’* (Nikhil, 11 years, Spina Bifida).

Children with disabilities were found to be conscious of their physical self and develop poor self image. All four girls and one boy were concerned about their physical self and were comparing themselves with other children in the class on standards of physical beauty. Two of the girls who considered themselves ‘pretty’ (others had told them so) were very conscious of their physical self and tried to enhance their appearance by choosing clothes for themselves matching it with appropriate accessories. It appears that the girls were more conscious of their physical self than boys; the data however is insufficient to generalize.

*Sania is very conscious of her physical self. She is pretty and she spends quite a lot of time in front of the mirror. She is fond of dresses, kids’ jewellery and nice shoes. She picks them*
herself in stores and tries them passionately when she reaches home. She spends a lot of time
everyday in choosing what she decides her daily wear. (Sania’s mother)

I have never seen myself, but my parents and friends tell me that I am very pretty. It makes
me happy when people tell me I am pretty and I like this about myself (Simran, 15 years,
visually challenged)

However, children with physical disabilities or physical traits which were not considered as
attributes of physical beauty, like obesity (example Ishita) or a squint (Soham as below) had
low physical self concept.

They do not like me because I am not as pretty as other girls like ‘Nirisksha’ (Another girl in
class). I feel sad in school. All the children have fun and they play but I sit alone in the
classroom. If I go with them, they say “See, football is coming with us” and they laugh. So I
do not go out with them. (Ishita, 9 years).

I am a girl having a disability. I look very different from everyone, I use long shoes and
cannot walk and roam around in the school. I am also not as pretty as my friends (Rakhi,13
years, Spina Bifida)

I have a squint eye, so I do not look like other children. I am not as smart as them (Soham, 10
years, Slow Learner).

All the boys and one girl (Sania) seemed to give more importance to athletic competence.
The child’s physical capabilities and performance were fundamental to the formation of
physical self concept (see also Stein 1996). Children with physical disabilities mentioned that
they were unable to perform well in sports and it bothered them. This is consistent with
Appleton et al. (1994) finding that young people with spina bifida in the UK regarded themselves as less socially accepted and less athletically competent than did able-bodied controls.

*I am very different from all the other kids in the classroom. I use a wheelchair. I am not able to run and play like other kids* (Nikhil, 11 years, Spina Bifida)

However, those children who displayed athletic competence were happy about it and it seemed to give them a lot of confidence.

*I love outdoor activities. I am good at Judo, Basketball, Cricket and Athletics. I want to be a sportsperson, someone like Sachin Tendulkar* (Gaurav, 13 years, ADHD).

Two children (Nikhil and Rakhi) who had mobility problems and were unable to join the rest of the class during sports activities felt dejected about it. They usually remained in the classroom or spent time in the library while their classmates were away.

*In school, I am not so active. I usually read books during games period because I cannot do much. All my friends go down and play during lunch hours and games period. At home, I do lot of things like playing computer games, playing board games with my sister and watching television* (Nikhil, 11 years, Spina Bifida)

In most cases (6 among 10 students), children with disabilities perceived problems for social interactions. They expressed that their ‘disability’ caused social isolation. They desired to have more friends and be involved in normal activities with their friends. However they expressed dissatisfaction in their relationships with their non-disabled peers.
I do not have many friends in school. No one likes to be my friend because I cannot perform well in studies or sports. They do not call me to their home for birthday parties and other events. I want to be friends with my classmates. I always call them for my birthday party. I even drop them home in my car. But it seems that they do not reciprocate. (Nikhil, 11 years)

Sania wants to play with other kids in the school but other kids shun her. Because she is not able to speak, other kids make her a scapegoat when they are chided for some mischief (Sania’s mother).

I do not like talking to people in the class. They are not good and they make fun of me (Ishita, 9 years).

All 10 children were openly appreciated for their abilities at home as well as in school, which made them happy. However, two of the children informed that their special talents were ignored or not nurtured by the teachers, peers and families. These children were not as confident about their special abilities as other respondents who received encouragement from their family. Some parents (Aakash and Tanmay) accompany their children to the stadium and special sports training camps in school during vacations as they aspired to provide the necessary support their special talents. This extra effort towards their children’s special abilities was not a common finding as in an inclusive school; parents (particularly mothers) are very involved as care providers. The discussions with resource teachers in schools revealed that mothers were vital actors in inclusive education. Most mothers visit the school daily or at least once a week to keep track of their child’s progress, complete class notes, and help him/her with physical needs (if any). These visits are in addition to their household
responsibilities and helping the child at home. This pressure sometimes results in their inability to groom their children’s abilities by providing the needed support like in the case of Rakhi who had a good voice and wanted to sing but was disappointed that she was not able to take music lessons, or Sania who had special gymnastic talent but did not have the opportunity to develop this.

_I like singing and I want to learn music. I cannot learn music now because my mother will have to take me to the music class and be there with me. We cannot call the music teacher home because they will take too much money. But I will learn music one day and become a singer_ (Rakhi, 13 years).

_I do not get time to play with Sania (7 years) or take her to special gymnastics classes. I know she can do very well in sports but I struggle with finding the time to manage everything. Her father too does not have time for her_ (Sania’s mother)

It was observed that some children with physical disabilities like Nikhil and Harshit had accepted their disability and appeared resilient but 6 out of 10 children lamented about their disability.

_I am not as capable as other kids when it comes to studies and sports. But I feel I am mentally stronger than them. I go through tough times every day. I have a severe disability, and the other kids can never understand what I go through, I am happy with whatever I am able to do under the circumstances_ (Nikhil, 11 years).
Though I know that things are not going to change for me and I have to spend my whole life with this disability, I do not lose hope and try my best to make myself strong to face the challenges (Harshit, 15 years)

I never understand anything in the school. All children make fun of me. I cry at home every day. (Soham, 10 years)

My friends ask me how I can live such a difficult life. I tell them that I was born like this so I have to live this life. Now I have got used to it. But truly speaking, I have lot of pain. I do not know why God has not made me like my friends (Rakhi, 13 years).

Some studies have shown that children with disabilities want to be seen as ‘normal’ (Priestly et al. 1999), stay healthy, to have friends and interests, to be part of the local community, to acquire social and self-care skills and future independence, to feel confident and respected by others, and to experience success and achievement (Beresford et al. 2007). Burchard’s (2005) research shows that disabled young people in UK have high ambitions and display desires for education, to gain qualifications, get high-status jobs and earn a good wage. For many children feeling ‘normal’ was important and was linked to being accepted by their peer group. ‘Looking good’, wearing similar clothes to others and being able to use attractive equipment (boots, wheelchair etc.) contributed to how they felt about themselves. Parents wanted services to be more sensitive to the child’s identity and social integration when issuing with equipment, making sure that it is attractive whilst still offering appropriate support. They also stressed the importance of the child experiencing success, and having their achievements recognised.
The study also shows that the children with disabilities aspire to be like their non-disabled peers. These children too expressed ambitions for doing well in their academic work, in sports and they also wanted to look attractive. Therefore it is important that children with disabilities be provided with opportunities to perform and develop their skills to the best of their abilities.

5.4.2 Outcomes from the ‘other’ perspective

In most cases mothers provided this perspective, however in some cases there were opinions from the teachers as well. In some sense, they were the most convincing explanations as they were also analyzing their decision to have chosen inclusive over special schools. Most mothers were happy about their decision on inclusive placement as their children were getting experiences of the “real and normal” world. Tanmay’s mother excitingly noted that his ten years of being in a regular school has learnt to communicate with his hearing friends. The mother feels ecstatic to see him play with children in the neighbourhood. The mother informed that he has confidence to face the hearing world now. Sania’s mother however had apprehensions about her being in an inclusive school. Sania mother informed, “She is getting to see the mean side of her friends most of the time”. However, she has few friends in the class and the mother feels that she will anyway has to face this in the outside world. She has to learn to communicate and find her way out. Anderson and Anotak (1992) reported that if the person who has a disability had problems with communication, they are seen in a negative light and rejected by their non-disabled peers. Johnson Jr. (1998) found that “students with disabilities often suffer rejection in the regular classroom” (p. 40).

For children who had problems with communication, being able to communicate was seen as fundamental to meeting desired outcomes in other areas of life for all groups. The parents highlighted the importance of other people who had regular contact with the child (including
parents and siblings, teachers, carers and peers) having the knowledge and skills to understand the child’s means of communication. Apart from giving the child a ‘voice’, having the ability to communicate was seen as opening doors to more opportunities, such as socializing, being active and becoming more independent, which in turn help promote a child’s feeling of security and self-esteem.

The outcomes in terms of **enjoying and achievements** in inclusive schools were also interesting to note. As we observed even while building the subtheme on ‘self concept’ that children nurtured a desire of having more friends. Even the parents were apprehensive and worried about the social circle of their children. They also wanted them to have more friends so that they enjoy their time in school. The lack of contact with school friends out of school was seen as a barrier to achieving friendship across all groups, and was a source of considerable frustration for some children especially Nikhil and Sania. All the parents irrespective of the differential abilities of their children expressed that it is vital that the children enjoy with their friends because it was a factor which motivated them to come to school. For some like Simran, Ishita, Harshit the classmates did render their support to them but they could not be called ‘friends’. Harshit reported that the classmates were sensitive to him, would talk to him and helped him with his work if required but they all had different set of friends. Even Weiserbs and Gottlieb (2000) concluded that non-disabled children favor helping individuals with disabilities more than forming friendships with individuals who have disabilities.

Achievements were both academic and extra-curricular in nature. For some students who did not lack in intellectual abilities for instance, Harshit who scored had performed well even in academics. However, many of the children had low academic performance and were ranked
low in the class. We would dwell on some cases to discuss the academic and non-academic achievements for children with disabilities.

**Box 5.4.3.1 Case-wise information on participation indicators**

*Nikhil’s* teacher ranked him as an average student who manages to pass most of his examinations with the help of a writer. He does fairly well in language but is not very good with computer studies, mathematics and social studies especially geography. In his last final exams he secured 58% marks which made him rank 19th in the class of 24 students. His presentations are good and he has good vocabulary. He participates in story writing, elocution, drama but his performance is average. He is a sensitive and introvert kid who is well behaved in class. He likes to be independent and does most of the things like taking out his notebooks, writing his homework diary on his own. His handwriting is not very legible, but he manages to understand his own handwriting and could read from his notebooks.

*Aakash* stood 20th in a class of 28 students and scored 62% marks. Vikas scored 86% and stood 5th. Aakash like participating in quiz and his team has won a prize a couple of times. The school has helped Aakash to a great extent. The Resource teacher in the school has regular sessions with the child and according to the parents it has helped to some extent Aakash is allowed to continue in the school due to efforts of the parents, Principal and Resource teacher. The parents are always scared that their child might face expulsion at a later stage if he does not improve his social skills, but they are worried that if he is sent to a special school then he would be labeled as a special child in the community. The parents feel that it might spoil his future and he might develop an inferiority complex. Till now they feel that he does not feel he is different from others.
Gaurav has been an average student. He scored 65% marks in his last examination and was ranked 18th in class of 28 students. Of late, he has started having problems in Mathematics. The teacher says that he has started having problems with his concentration. Gaurav is very good in outdoor activities, he takes active interest in sports. He performs very well in athletics and has represented school in inter-school competitions as well. He does not have many friends in the class. He indulges in quarrels and fights in classroom. He is articulate and expresses his feelings well.

Rakhi has a learning disability as well. The teachers informed that she cannot write but she tries her best to understand. According to the teachers she is a shy and introvert girl. She secured 48% marks in her last annual examination and was ranked 26th in a class of 28 students. She is good at hindi language and history. Rakhi sings well and has won many prizes in singing at the school level.

Soham scored 55% in his last final examinations and ranked 20th in a class of 22. He displays problems with his comprehension. He is good at remembering things but if the problem is twisted he does not understand. According to many of the teachers in the school, he is a lovable sweet child who is well behaved in class. The resource teachers had reported a marked improvement in his performance since he had started taking remedial lessons (2 years ago). He is a talkative child and tries to draw attention of the teacher by trying to answer their questions. Though his answers are wrong most of the time, he does not give up.

Sania remained at the bottom of her class always but I feel that she understands a lot of things now. She follows simple instructions at home and school. She is improving. She
attempts to communicate using few words. She is doing very well in sports and painting and we make every effort to encourage her.

**Harshit** had average intelligence and he manages well in his classroom. He needs a writer for his examination and the school has made this provision for him. He scored 63% marks in his final examination and stood 18th in a class of 30 students. According to his teacher, he is a sensible child and never disturbs the class. He is attentive in class and sometimes ask questions. He does not have many friends and mostly remains quiet.

**Tanmay** scored 42% marks in his last annual examination and was the lowest scorer in a class of 35. Though his academic achievement has substantially declined as he reached the higher grades, yet his improved social skills are encouraging for the parents and school. He enjoys the company of his friends during the lunch hours and ‘zero’ hours. The peers were seen extending their full support to Tanmay. The peers were aware of Tanmay’s limitations and make an effort to communicate in a manner which everyone in the group including Tanmay follows. The mother saw it as a preparation to lead a normal adult life because he is improving with time and she is hopeful that he would manage quite well.

**Simran** scored 65% marks in her last final examination and she was ranked 21st in class of 35 students. The teachers describe her a vivacious girl with lot of aspirations. she is a talkative girl with a lot of friends. She is good at reciting poems. She has good memorizing skills and follows the sessions well. She is inquisitive and asks lot of explanatory questions. Sometimes, the teacher even volunteers to answer them outside class when it starts disrupting the ongoing session.
Ishita did not perform well in her last annual exams. She failed in most subjects and ranked last in the class of 34 students. She is good at painting but the talent is not getting nurtured at home or school.

Another indicator of ‘outcomes’ as emerged from this research was activities and experiences. Having interests and being able to participate in activities was something all parents wanted for their child. Many were concerned that their child’s ‘world’ was restricted to home and school and they wanted their child to have greater variety and opportunities. Most parents expressed the desire for their children to participate in mainstream activities in their local community. The exception were some parents of children with impairments who reported their children were not able to cope with such situations like Nikhil’s mother was always afraid sending her child to the playground with the domestic help. She observed that he always returned depressed from there or any other place where he would find other children playing with their friends. Similarly, Rakhi’s mother also feared situations like these when she would feel disheartened due to her ‘disability’.

Many children also expressed a desire to be ‘doing more’. The lack of accessible or appropriate facilities and/or the lack of support to assist the child meant that taking part in mainstream activities was often very difficult. Rakhi wanted to join regular singing class, Sania’s mother was unable to make her join the gymnastics class and Nikhil would have enjoyed a special computer class where he could learn more about it. Nikhil complained that in school, the computer teacher spent more time teaching study material than giving them time to explore things which he liked to do on the computer. He likes to play activity games and try out new ways in various programmes like Microsoft Word or MS Paint and Powerpoint.
**Education and learning** Parents’ aspirations for their child’s education varied according to the severity of the condition and associated learning difficulties. All parents wanted their child to fulfil their learning potential. For those with limited cognitive abilities, acquiring self-care and living skills and enjoying a stimulating environment was often prioritised over academic achievements as in case of Nikhil and Rakhi. However, for children with greater cognitive abilities, parents wanted their child to at least achieve basic skills such as reading, writing and number skills. Children with complex health conditions did not want their schoolwork to be affected by having time off due to ill-health or for treatments. Rakhi’s mother noted the need for educational goals to be appropriate and responsive to her child’s abilities. The box 5.3.4.1 which contains qualitative performance statements for all children depicts that most students rank low in academic performance, however most of them pass their examinations. This is also reflective of the school criteria of eligibility. The school prefers admission of those who could manage to pass examinations with the available resources. The students with intellectual impairments were declined admission.

**Self-care and life skills** While for non-disabled children independence is often seen as the child being able to do something without help, for many disabled children, this is not achievable in certain areas of their live. Managing self-care tasks as independently as possible, with or without support, was a key priority among some children and parents. Two children out of the ten had urologic difficulties and this was a major concern with the parents.

*I normally discourage Rakhi to visit her friends’ places as the environment may not be friendly and encouraging. I have had tough time to manage her when I took her for a birthday party to a friend’s place. Many of the children were staring at Rakhi and I was the odd one out as the party was only for the kids (Rakhi’s mother).*
Some parents were concerned about learning in the area of life skills. Independence was seen in terms of children reaching their potential in carrying out daily tasks or without support. The life skills children wanted to acquire included being able to make snacks, go out alone, handle money and manage unforeseen circumstances when out and about. In Sania’s case the mother wished that she acquires basic communication skills to manage her life circumstances.

*I cannot accompany her everywhere, nor can I help her in all life circumstances. She needs to learn to defend herself when she is made a scapegoat or bullied. This learning I only expect in a regular school and I am working towards it with the resource teacher. She will learn soon (Sania’s mother).*

**Being part of the local community** Having the same access to opportunities and activities as non-disabled children and being part of the local community was important to many children and parents. Many of the parents felt that sending their child to a regular school has in some way helped. The children learn to face the world and take initiatives to be a part of the ‘normal’ world. Mothers of Nikhil and Rakhi reported that it was difficult for the children to gain acceptance amongst others because of the severity of the disability. Though in the school they have gained confidence and feel that they are like other kids, they feel saddened with the attitudes of children in the neighbourhood. The school’s decision to enroll them has helped them to understand that they were more similar than different from the other children.

**Feeling involved and having the opportunity to exercise choices** Being involved in decisions that affect their lives was important for many children and their parents. This
ranged from choices about what to wear, how and where they spent their time, planning for the future and decisions about their care and treatments. Many parents observed that their children were keen on making their decisions and talking about things which affect them. Though the parents were not sure whether this was a consequence of regular schooling but they believed so. They thought that their increased participation in things could have been due to social learning. When they observed the other children talking about the decisions they make like choosing their own clothes, making plans for vacation etc., they are also encouraged to think that way. They are thus able to break that ‘dependence shell’ (Sania’s mother).

*Preparation for Adult Life* All the parents were worried about the future. Every mother was concerned about their children having a job and earning money in adulthood. Firstly, it was important for the children to get accustomed to the normal worldly life. This was the biggest outcome of the regular education they were looking forward to. Secondly many parents were apprehensive about them being able to find ‘normal’ partners. They were concerned about the expression of their sexuality in years to come. Thus many parents felt that this was one area where the school must initiate programmes for awareness and training. They recommended that the schools must nurture the talents or inculcate skills in the students which might prove helpful when the children grow up.

*Feeling loved, valued and respected* the schools have helped the children to feel that they were loved and that what they wanted mattered. The parents mentioned the Principals and the resource teachers as being instrumental players in this. Treating the child as an individual, involving the child in making decisions about his/her life, and respecting the child’s privacy
(in a way appropriate to their age) were among things said to make children feel valued. Some of the children shared these experiences and felt extremely good about them.

*Today the Principal called me on the stage and said that she was proud to have me in school. She said that we all must learn patience and perseverance from Tanmay (reported by Tanmay to his mother)*

*Ma’am always asks me what I want to do each day. She wants to know what I like (Rakhi about the Resource teacher)*

**5.4.3 Conclusion**

It is not possible to generalize the subjective experiences of the children with disabilities and their parents in inclusive schools. However, I am attempting to present some common experiences through the figure 5.4.3.1; on one side of the balance are the negative experiences of the children and on the other positive. This analysis is based on the reporting by the majority because for some students the ‘outcome placement’ could be reversed. For instance, for Sania and Simran who were physically attractive, had developed a positive concept about their physical self. However, in many of the discussed areas of self concept; physical, academic, social and active self mostly the children had developed negative self image. In a regular school all the children were leading a ‘comparative existence’. The parents reported that the children were in constant comparison with the peers and would often debate on certain issues which the parents avoid, like many of them would question why they cannot be sent to their friends’ home, why do other children behave in certain ‘unwanted’ ways etc.
On the other hand, almost all parents were satisfied that they child was admitted and continuing in a regular school. This to them was “the beginning of normal existence” (Tanmay’s mother). All the parents felt that this prepared the children to face the ‘normal’ world. Some of the parents reported that it has helped in their increased participation in the ‘normal daily’ activities which could have been restricted in a segregated setting. This would also help them to exercise their rights as equal human beings. The parents had noticed greater involvement of their children in making decisions regarding their lives. Some children like Nikhil, would even participate in the medical decisions about visiting the doctor, asking questions to the doctor etc.

![Diagram of outcomes]

**Figure 5.3.4.1 Weighing outcomes**

There were outcomes which were achieved while some were expected through the process of inclusive education. For each child the experience of the ‘inclusive school’ was different and so were the outcomes. It was dependent on the nature and severity of the disability, support mechanisms in inclusive schools, and environment and culture of inclusive culture.