Acknowledgment

The emotions towards the people who contributed to make this dissertation are much beyond than I could express in words. My first thoughts while writing these lines of ‘big thank you’ are about all the students of all the four schools, where I did the fieldwork to collect data that stands alive from the first to last line of this dissertation. My special thanks goes to my eleven participants who have not only contributed data to this study, but also provided lessons for my life. Let me also thank all the parents, and siblings of my participants who had showed concern and co-operation in my work, without any reluctance.

This study would not have been accomplished without expert guidance from my supervisor, Dr. T. Sasidharan at the Department of Psychology, University of Calicut. By providing sufficient freedom for methodological innovation and providing constant support, he has guided me through out this exercise. He has been a patient listener, mature teacher and above all, a source of inspiration to tread the paths those are seldom travelled in the discipline of psychology. Let me express my deep most gratitude to him.

Sincere thanks due to, Dr. C. Jayan, the head of the department of Psychology, University of Calicut, for his support and co-operation through the period that I have been a student.

Professor John Baby has been extremely helpful throughout my student life at the Department of Psychology, University of Calicut. Let me acknowledge him at this stage.

Professor Anitha Ravindran, at the Department of Psychology, University of Calicut has been very helpful with her timely advice and support during this study. Let me record my appreciation for her help.

I express my gratitude to Dr. Asha, Professor at the Department of Psychology, University of Calicut, for her support and co-operation throughout my student life. Thank you Dr. Asha.

I thank, Dr. Sari for her support in the study.

My gratitude goes to all the non- teaching staff of the department of Psychology, University of Calicut, for their co-operation and timely help throughout the study.
I am indebted to the staff and management of MV Shetty Trust Colleges, Mangalore, where I taught while doing the fieldwork of this dissertation. They have been accommodating and helping me to flexibly carry on my doctoral work while teaching the students there.

I thank all the principals of all the four schools for the support in my study. My special thanks goes to Indu Prasad, the Principal, the teachers, carers and other staffs of Chethana Special School, Mangalore, for their co-operation and immense help in my field work.

Let me pen my gratefulness to the library staff at various libraries of Calicut and Oxford University, NIMHANS Bangalore, IISH Mysore and many others facilitating my reference work.

Many professionals such as clinical psychologists (especially Aneeta Mary Nicholas, Medical Trust, Ernakulam), physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, and social workers have provided expert opinions on my work and enhanced my limited knowledge at various stages of the study. Let me record my gratitude to them all.

I must thank the staff at Mencap Oxford, UK who provided exposure to the issues and management of children with mental retardation in UK.

Many thanks are also due to Christina Silver, University of Surrey, UK for providing training on qualitative software (Nvivo).

Often dissertation work is a lonely journey. Friends had been immense source of strength to carry on this journey. Let me thank all of them profusely. Many thanks are due to Shanthi, Lisa, Shabana, Teresa, and George for their support and cooperation during this work. My sincere thanks also goes to my parents, brother, and sisters who have supported me throughout my work, especially during the weekends when I decided to forget all about my dissertation, spending time with them.

Finally, my gratitude goes to my loving husband, who joined me at the final stages of this study, which I think, made a big difference.

Department of Psychology
University of Calicut,

Leemamol Mathew