ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have inspired, encouraged and supported me in conducting this study. Though very few names have been penned up, a great many people have helped me with the thesis work.

With a grateful heart, I humbly bow before the God Almighty for enabling me to complete this work.

I am highly indebted to Dr. B. Rajashekhar, Dean, School of Allied Health Sciences, MAHE, Manipal and express my sincere gratitude for his invaluable support, timely advice and constant encouragement during the study period.

I am exceedingly grateful to my guide, Dr. Parikshit Gogate, Assistant Professor, D. Y. Patil Medical College, Pimpri, Pune and Visiting Faculty, African Research Institute, Durban, South Africa for his constant support, professional guidance, personal attention, motivation and encouragement throughout the study period. He had facilitated the smooth functioning despite his hectic schedules and cumbersome work, which was a driving force for my endeavours.

My sincere acknowledgements to my co-guide, Dr. B. Rajashekhar, Dean and Professor, School of Allied Health Sciences, Manipal for his valuable advice, constant supervision, recommendations and inspiration throughout the study. A word of gratitude to the Head of the Department, Optometry, SOAHS, Dr Ramesh. S.Ve for the support extended during the study period.

I am extremely thankful to Dr Asha Kamath, Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, KMC, Manipal for her invaluable support, suggestions and guidance throughout the study and being a member
of the Doctoral Advisory Committee. I remain grateful to Dr Arun Maiya and Dr Ramesh S.Ve for being a part of the Doctoral Advisory Committee and giving their valuable inputs during the course period.

I gratefully acknowledge the support rendered by the Department of Ophthalmology for carrying out the study. I would like to thank the former head of the department Dr Lavanya Rao and the current HOD Dr Krishna Rao, for permitting me to do the data gathering in the Out Patient Department of Ophthalmology, KMC, Manipal.

I am indebted to all the wonderful children and their parents for the cooperation extended during the data collection. My study would not have been possible without them.

I am grateful to all my faculty colleagues Mr Premjit, Mr Avik, Mr Nijil, Mr Chandan, Ms Preethi, Ms Judy, Ms Radhika, Mr Avinash, Ms Krithica and Mr Nagaraj for the help, co-operation and unstinting support at different stages of my study. My thanks are due to all the students who helped me either directly or indirectly during the data collection.

I gratefully acknowledge the help, support and words of wisdom I received from other teaching and non-teaching staff members of SOAHS. I am also thankful to all the teaching and non-teaching fraternity of the Ophthalmology department for the backing in the smooth conduct of the study.

I acknowledge India Vision Institute and JSW Foundation for partly funding my study.

I gratefully remember our parents for their prayers, inspiration, relentless support and guidance. I am thankful to my husband, Dr George P. Jacob, Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, KMC, Manipal, for his advice, relentless support and encouragement. Without his
succor, this thesis would not have materialized. I also have a bouquet of appreciation for my children, Jeff and Gia for co-operating and bearing with me during the entire duration of the study.

I also acknowledge the support of Mr. Suresh N in the formatting and the printing of the thesis work.

A big thank you to each and every one who have contributed in the different aspects during the study period.

Once again thank you to all

Jyothi Thomas...