



## Parental Attitudes towards the Education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children (EIDC) in West Bengal

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**Abstract:** *This study examined parents' attitudes towards the education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children (EIDC) in West Bengal using a mixed-method research design. Quantitative data were collected from 321 parents and analysed through descriptive statistics, Levene's test, and independent-samples t-tests. Qualitative responses from 35 parents were analysed using content analysis to explain attitudinal differences and similarities. The findings revealed no statistically significant difference between male and female parents, suggesting comparable levels of concern, involvement, and support for EIDC education. However, significant differences were observed in parents' education level, locale, and type of special school. Parents with higher-secondary education, urban parents, and parents of children enrolled in non-government special schools demonstrated more favourable attitudes than their respective counterparts. Qualitative findings indicated that parental attitudes were shaped by emotional responses, future aspirations, parenting challenges, instructional support needs, awareness of educational services, and expectations of institutional and financial assistance. The study highlights the importance of strengthening parental awareness, counselling, and training, particularly among rural and less-educated parents. It also underscores the need for more responsive school-parent collaboration to improve educational participation and outcomes for EIDC.*

**Keywords:** *Parental Attitude; Educable Intellectually Disabled Children; Special Education; Mixed-Method Research; West Bengal.*

**1. Introduction:** Education plays a central role in the cognitive, social, emotional, and adaptive development of children with intellectual disabilities. For Educable Intellectually Disabled Children (EIDC), education is not limited to academic learning; it also includes the development of communication, self-care, social adjustment, functional literacy, vocational readiness, and independent living skills. The success of such education depends not only on institutional facilities and professional support, but also on parents' active participation and attitude. Parents are the first and most continuous agents of support in a child's life, and their beliefs, expectations, and involvement strongly influence the child's educational access, motivation, attendance, and progress.

Parental attitude towards the education of children with intellectual disabilities is shaped by several personal, social, and institutional factors. Positive parental attitudes may encourage school participation, support home-based learning, foster cooperation with teachers, and foster acceptance of the child's potential. Conversely, negative or uncertain attitudes may arise from social stigma, lack of awareness, financial

limitations, inadequate guidance, and anxiety about the child's future. Studies have shown that parents often value educational opportunities for children with disabilities but remain concerned about school quality, trained teachers, peer acceptance, inclusive practices, and long-term independence (De Boer et al., 2010; Leyser & Kirk, 2004).

In the Indian context, parental attitude assumes special significance because disability is often associated with dependency, social exclusion, and limited future opportunities. Parents of children with intellectual disabilities may experience emotional stress, uncertainty, and social pressure, while also hoping for their child's progress, employability, and dignity. Mukhopadhyay and Mani (2002) emphasised that education for children with special needs must be supported through family involvement, appropriate services, and social awareness. Similarly, Mukherjee et al. (2013) observed that parents' perceptions are important in understanding the acceptance and effectiveness of educational provisions for children with special needs.

Parental education level, place of residence, and type of school may further influence attitudes towards EIDC education. Educated parents are generally more aware of disability rights, teaching and learning materials, individualised support, and professional services. Leyser and Kirk (2004) noted that parental perspectives are shaped by knowledge, experience, and perceived benefits of education. Rural parents may face greater challenges due to limited access to special schools, counselling, transportation, and awareness programmes, whereas urban parents often have better exposure to institutional and professional support. Subrata and Upadhyay (2019) indicated that awareness and accessibility play important roles in shaping parental attitudes towards inclusion and special education.

The type of school may also affect parental perceptions. Parents associated with non-government special schools may experience more frequent communication, counselling, and individualized attention, which can strengthen their confidence in the educational process. Puliykkadi et al. (2021) highlighted that parental involvement and institutional support are closely related to attitudes towards children with intellectual disabilities. Therefore, understanding parental attitude requires both statistical comparison and qualitative exploration.

**2. Objectives of the Study:** To study and compare the attitude of Parents towards the Education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children under different categorical variables like Gender, Education level, Locale, and Special Schools.

### 2.1. Hypotheses:

**H<sub>0</sub>1:** There are no significant differences between the attitude of Male and Female Parents towards the Education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children.

**H<sub>0</sub>2:** There are no significant differences between the attitudes of Secondary and Higher-Secondary Parents towards the Education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children.

**H<sub>0</sub>3:** There are no significant differences between the attitudes of Rural and Urban Parents towards the Education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children.

**H<sub>0</sub>4:** There are no significant differences between the attitudes of Government and Non-government Parents towards the Education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children.

### 2.2. Research Questions:

**RQ<sub>1</sub>:** What are the causes behind the differences or indifferences in the attitude of Male and Female Parents towards the Education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children?

**RQ<sub>2</sub>:** What are the causes behind the differences or indifferences in the attitude of Secondary and Higher-Secondary Parents towards the Education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children?

**RQ<sub>3</sub>:** What are the causes behind the differences or indifferences in the attitude of Rural and Urban Parents towards the Education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children?

**RQ<sub>4</sub>:** What are the causes behind the differences or indifferences in the attitude of Government and Non-government Parents towards the Education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children?

### 3. Methodology:

The study followed a mixed-method research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component was used to compare parental attitude scores across different categorical variables. The qualitative component was used to interpret the reasons behind the observed differences or similarities in parental attitudes. This integration helped in developing a broader and deeper understanding of parental attitude towards the education of EIDC.

Aspect	Details
Research design	Mixed-method design using quantitative and qualitative approaches
Participants	321 parents for Quantitative and 3 parents for Qualitative data of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children (EIDC) in West Bengal
Major variable	Parental attitude towards the education of EIDC
Categorical variables	Gender, education level, locale, and type of special school
Variable groups	Male/Female; Secondary/Higher-secondary; Rural/Urban; Government/Non-government
Quantitative data	Parental attitude scores
Qualitative data	Parental responses
Quantitative analysis	Mean, SD, standard error mean, Levene's test, and independent-samples <i>t</i> -test
Qualitative analysis	Content analysis
Software used	Microsoft Excel 2007 and IBM SPSS Version 22.0

### 4. Findings:

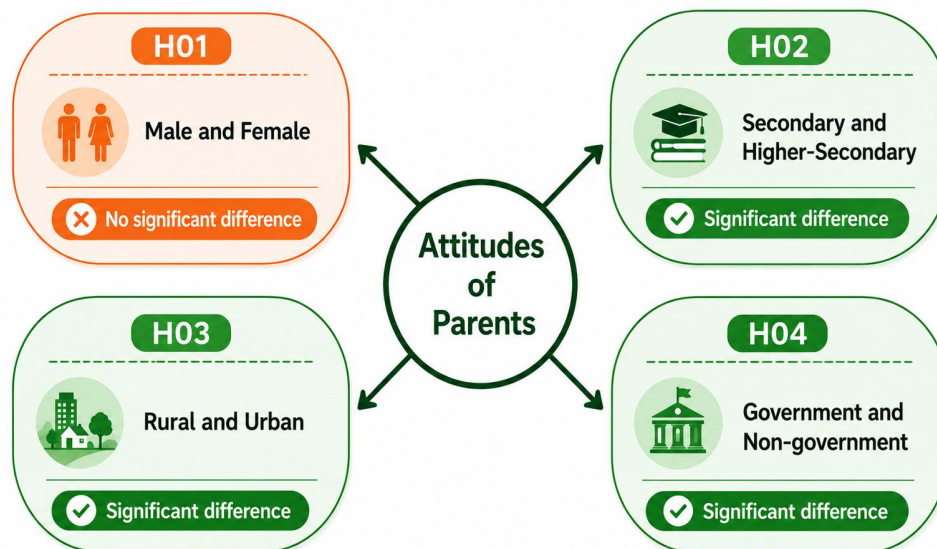
Based on the quantitative and qualitative data, the hypothesis and research questions are analysed one by one.

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>	Interpretation
Gender	Male	72	98.833	7.706				

	Female	249	97.554	7.941	1.212	319	.227	Not significant
Education level	Secondary	168	94.899	7.411	7.590	319	.000	Significant
	Higher-secondary	153	101.071	7.129				
Locale	Rural	153	96.183	7.562	3.660	319	.000	Significant
	Urban	168	99.351	7.912				
Schools	Government	193	96.912	7.938	2.613	319	.009	Significant
	Non-government	128	99.242	7.649				

**4.1. Interpretation of Quantitative Findings on Parental Attitude:** The quantitative analysis examined (Figure 4.1) differences in parents' attitudes towards the education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children (EIDC) across four categorical variables: gender, education level, locale, and type of special school.

**Figure 4.1 Statistical Results of Parents' Attitudes**



**H<sub>01</sub>:** There are no significant differences between the attitude of Male and Female Parents towards the Education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children.

#### Findings of H<sub>01</sub>:

Regarding **gender**, the mean attitude score for male parents was slightly higher ( $M = 98.833$ ) than that for female parents ( $M = 97.554$ ). However, the obtained  $t$ -value of 1.212 was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis H<sub>01</sub> was not rejected. This finding indicates that male and female parents did not differ significantly in their attitudes towards EIDC education. Both groups appeared to hold broadly similar views, concerns, and expectations regarding their children's educational development.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There are no significant differences between the attitudes of Secondary and Higher-Secondary Parents towards the Education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children.

#### Findings of H<sub>02</sub>

Regarding **education level**, a clear difference was observed between parents with secondary education and those with higher secondary education. Parents with secondary education had a mean score of 94.899, whereas those with higher secondary education had a higher mean score of 101.071. The calculated *t*-value of 7.590 was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Hence, the null hypothesis H<sub>02</sub> was rejected. This result suggests that parents with higher secondary education demonstrated a significantly more favourable attitude towards EIDC education than those with secondary education. The finding indicates that a higher level of parental education may contribute to greater awareness, understanding, and acceptance of the educational needs of children with intellectual disabilities.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There are no significant differences between the attitudes of Rural and Urban Parents towards the Education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children.

**Findings of H<sub>03</sub>:**

Regarding **locale**, urban parents had a higher mean attitude score (*M* = 99.351) than rural parents (*M* = 96.183). The obtained *t*-value of 3.660 was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, leading to the rejection of H<sub>03</sub>. This finding reveals that urban parents had significantly more positive attitudes towards EIDC education than rural parents. The result may be linked to greater exposure to educational services, awareness programmes, professional guidance, and special education facilities in urban areas.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** There are no significant differences between the attitudes of Government and Non-government Parents towards the Education of Educable Intellectually Disabled Children.

**Findings of H<sub>04</sub>:**

Regarding **type of special school**, parents of children studying in non-government special schools obtained a higher mean attitude score (*M* = 99.242) than parents of children studying in government special schools (*M* = 96.912). The calculated *t*-value of 2.613 was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, H<sub>04</sub> was rejected. This finding indicates that parents associated with non-government special schools had significantly more favourable attitudes towards the education of EIDC compared to parents associated with government special schools. This difference may reflect variations in school parent communication, institutional support, parental involvement, and perceived quality of educational services.

**4.2. Qualitative Findings:** The qualitative analysis generated nine major categories (Figure 4.2. and Table 4.2) related to parental attitude.

**Figure 4.2 Categories on Parental Attitude**



**4.2.1. Emotional Response:** Parents expressed mixed emotions about their children's education. Codes such as *pride in effort, future anxiety, frustration, pride in children's education, mixed emotions, and focused attention* reflected the emotional depth of parental involvement. Mixed emotions and future anxiety were especially prominent among rural and government-school parents, while pride in effort and focused attention were more visible among urban, higher-secondary educated, and non-government-school parents.

**4.2.2. Parental Role:** The parental role category included *instruction hesitation, avoiding comparisons, acceptance of destiny, appreciation of success, responsible parenting, being helpful, and time constraints*. Many parents showed empathy and realism by avoiding comparisons with other children and by supporting their child's educational progress. Higher-secondary, urban, and non-government-school parents showed more structured involvement, although some also reported hesitation in giving instruction.

**4.2.3. Parenting Challenges:** Parents reported challenges such as *losing patience, increased domestic workload, struggles with parenting, child disobedience, and concerns about employability*. These responses show that parental attitudes are shaped not only by beliefs about *education* but also by *daily caregiving stress*. Rural and secondary-educated parents expressed stronger concerns about struggling with parenting and future employability.

**4.2.4. Future Aspirations:** Parents showed strong aspirations for their children's independence, progress, and future success. Codes such as *value of education, belief in independence, education for progress, hope for succession, chances of earning, and happiness in progress* reflected parents' long-term hopes. Rural, secondary-educated, and government-school parents were particularly focused on *succession, employability, and emotional satisfaction* from their child's progress.

**4.2.5. Motivation Strategies:** Parents used motivation strategies such as *encouraging learning, encouraging expression, and using teaching-learning materials*. Urban, non-government-school, and higher-secondary educated parents showed *greater awareness of structured motivational techniques*. Rural parents, however, relied more on *emotional encouragement*.

**4.2.6. Instructional Strategy:** Parents recognised the need for *teaching-learning materials, patience in teaching, play-way learning, and consultation with experts*. Rural and government-school parents emphasised *simple, resource-based, and play-based strategies*, while urban parents showed a greater inclination towards expert consultation.

**4.2.7. Awareness and Support:** This category included *parental involvement, learning from experts, and willingness for training*. The findings suggest that parents were increasingly aware of the need to actively participate in their child's education. Higher-secondary-educated and non-government-school parents showed a *stronger willingness to learn from experts and participate in training*.

**4.2.8. Pedagogical Need:** Parents expressed the need for *guidance, individualised methods, strategy-based instruction, and awareness of entitlements*. Rural and secondary-educated parents strongly emphasised the need for customised *educational support and institutional guidance*. Awareness of entitlements reflected their expectation that schools and government agencies should provide appropriate support.

**4.2.9. Government Support Awareness:** The *need for financial support* emerged as an important concern. Although this category appeared less frequently than others, it indicated that *economic constraints* continue to influence parental attitudes towards special education. Parents recognised that educational support for EIDC requires not only *emotional involvement* but also *financial sustainability*.

<b>Table 4.2. Parental Attitudes Based on Generated Categories</b>
Categories of Attitude of Parents
Emotional Response, Parental Role, Parenting Challenges, Future Aspirations, Motivation Strategies, Instructional Strategy, Awareness and Support, Pedagogical Need, Government Support Awareness

**5. Discussion:** The findings reveal that parental attitude towards the education of EIDC in West Bengal is multidimensional and shaped by social, educational, institutional, and emotional factors. The absence of a significant gender difference suggests that both male and female parents share similar attitudes towards their children’s education. This may indicate a gradual shift towards shared parental responsibility, especially for children with special educational needs. The qualitative findings support this result, as both male and female parents expressed common emotions, including pride, frustration, anxiety, helpfulness, and hope.

The significant difference by education level shows that higher-secondary-educated parents have a more favourable attitude than secondary-educated parents. This may be because higher educational exposure increases awareness of disability rights, teaching-learning materials, expert guidance, and the importance of structured educational intervention. The qualitative findings confirmed that higher-secondary-educated parents more frequently referred to focused attention, use of teaching-learning materials, and consultation with experts. This supports the view that education improves parents’ confidence and ability to participate meaningfully in their child’s educational development.

The differences between rural and urban areas were also significant. Urban parents showed more favourable attitudes than rural parents. This may be due to better access to special schools, media exposure, counselling services, professional guidance, and awareness programmes in urban areas. Rural parents, on the other hand, expressed stronger emotional concerns, future anxiety, and dependence on institutional support. The findings indicate that rural parents are not indifferent to education; rather, they may be constrained by limited resources, lack of awareness, transportation difficulties, and social stigma.

The significant difference by school type indicates that parents of children attending non-government special schools had more positive attitudes than those of parents of children attending government special schools. This may be related to better communication, individualised attention, counselling, and parental involvement in non-government schools. Parents of government-school children expressed greater future anxiety and reliance on entitlements, while non-government-school parents showed stronger involvement in learning processes and willingness for training.

The mixed-method design helped to explain not only whether differences existed but also why they existed. Quantitative results showed significant differences across education level, locale, and school type, while qualitative findings explained these differences through emotional, pedagogical, motivational, and institutional categories. Thus, the study demonstrates that parental attitude is not a single psychological response but a complex combination of awareness, hope, anxiety, educational exposure, institutional experience, and perceived support.

**6. Conclusion:** The study concludes that parental attitude towards the education of Educable Intellectual Disabled Children in West Bengal is influenced by education level, locale, and type of special school, but not significantly by gender. Higher-secondary-educated parents, urban parents, and parents of children attending non-government special schools showed more favourable attitudes. Qualitative findings revealed that parental attitudes are shaped by emotional involvement, future aspirations, parenting challenges, awareness of support systems, instructional needs, and expectations for financial and institutional assistance. The

findings highlight the need for parent education, rural awareness, stronger government-school support, and family-centred special education practices. Strengthening parental attitude is essential for improving the educational participation, progress, and future independence of EIDC.

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