

Growth and development of the Differently Abled Children: A study of DISHA of Cachar district

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Abstract

Disability is an impairment that may be cognitive, physical, sensory, developmental, intellectual or some combination of all these. It substantially affects a person's normal life activities and may be present from birth or may occur during a person's lifetime. The constructs around disability are very narrow in the Indian social structure where individuals with disability, especially in rural areas are not given chances of potential learning, growth, development or employability. However, the civil societies play a major role on working with individuals with disabilities as well as the families that have a disabled person at home through various services, awareness and by providing resources. The context of disability has undergone radical changes to bring into focus the special needs of the individuals with certain disability, the scope for normalization of the life of the person with disability as well as the potential for empowerment. Civil Societies have been instrumental in reaching the semi-urban and rural populations for working with people with disabilities; making resources accessible to them and working on a need based approach for the people with disabilities. This study focused on one such organization, DISHA that works with children with disabilities in Cachar District of Assam. The study tries to analyze how civil society in semi-urban areas function and how it create impacts the lives of the children with disabilities and their families.

Key Words: *Growth, development, Differently abled, children, Disha.*

Introduction

Disability can be understood from the multiple perspectives such as social, anthropological, medical, and psychological but disability is broadly defined by two perspectives- one is medical model perspective which is based on bodily impairment reason for disability is having diseases. Secondly, social model emerged as a critique of medical model explained that disability is created by the society by restricting impaired persons from accessing resources. Social causes such as culture, norms and values, caste and class, religion and region are responsible for creating barriers. Anthropologists argue that there are multiple meanings of disability depending on the understanding of any society thereby; lack of one is global definition of disability. In any society people provide various meaning to disability based on their cultural construction and in this way they define ability or disability. The proponent of social model,

Oliver defines disability as "the disadvantages or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization, which takes no or little account of people who have impairment and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities" (Oliver 1996:22). In Thomas's understanding "disability is a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered undermining of their psycho- emotional well-being" (Thomas 1999). Disability is not a homogenous category. It varies across age, gender, and race, type of disability, caste, class, and region. As Erb and Harriss-White (2004:352) have explained, "Globally, the prevalence of moderate to severe disability increases from 2 percent in infancy to 22 percent in the over-80 age group. Small children below six years are more vulnerable to malnutrition and other concerned diseases which might cause disability at an early age. Genders wise

division of disability illustrates that male are having more disabilities than female. But discrimination and exploitation on the basis of disability has been faced by disabled female than their disabled male counterpart. People from lower caste are more vulnerable to disability than the people belonging to higher caste. Disability census of India 2011 shows schedule caste people are having highest percentage of disability with 2.45 percent. Type of work and work conditions have an important role in acquiring disability.

DISHA is a special school and a day care centre for the mentally and physically challenged children located at Ramnagar, Silchar, Assam. The agency was established in the year 2003 with 4 students. The agency works in collaboration with the parents association and the Deshabandhu club of Cachar District.

Review of Literature

Mori (1980), concluded on the basis of secondary data on 'Career Education for the Learning Disabled: Where Are We Now?' that meeting the unique career education needs of the learning disabled require appropriate, systematic models for career education development. Currently, few such programs are available because of the reluctance of secondary learning disabilities teachers to abandon the remedial academic model. Author suggested that career education should lead to the development of appropriate self-awareness regarding one's interests and abilities, the development of positive personal, social and work attitudes, and the development of entry-level skills in a selected area of specialization. Poplin (1981), concluded on the basis of secondary data on the severely learning disabled: Neglected or forgotten that learning disabilities have been ignoring the severely handicapped in the zealous attempts to deal with "all school problems". Author suggested that the development of appropriate research methods, services, and curriculum alternatives for all subgroups of the severely learning disabled and bringing the field of learning disabilities back into perspective. White (1985), concluded on the basis of primary data on Perspectives on the

Education and Training of Learning Disabled Adults that adults with learning disabilities often face significant obstacles in their efforts toward leading satisfying lives. In spite of increasing attention toward the education and training of this population of handicapped individuals, little information is available about model training programs and characteristics of research. The author suggested that the provision of career and vocational education to school-aged LD children and youth is essential to ensure successful adult adjustment. Vocational interest and skill instruments must be modified to accommodate LD individuals.

Okolo and Sitlington (1986), concluded on the basis of secondary data on the role secondary special education should play in the transition process for the learning disabled that secondary special education programs should provide six types of vocationally relevant activities: (a) occupational awareness, exploration, and basic work experience; (b) in depth career/vocational assessment; (c) instruction in job-related academic skills; (d) instruction in job-related interpersonal skills; (e) support services to other disciplines involved in vocational programming; and (f) post-school placement and follow-up. Hosain, Atkinson and Underwood (2002), concluded on the basis of primary data on the impact of disability on the quality of life of disabled people in rural Bangladesh that that disability had a devastating effect on the quality of life of the disabled people with a particularly negative effect on their marriage, educational attainment, employment, and emotional state. Disability also jeopardized their personal, family and social life. More than half of the disabled people were looked at negatively by society. Disabled women and girl children suffered more from negative attitudes than their male counterparts, resulting in critical adverse effects on their psychological and social health. Author suggested that a combination of educational, economic and intensive rehabilitative measures should be implemented urgently to make them self-reliant. Collaborative communication between professionals and parents, behavioral

counselling, formation of a self-help group, and comprehensive support to families will reduce their suffering. Peek and Stough.M (2010), concluded on the basis of secondary resources on Children With Disabilities in the Context of Disaster: A Social Vulnerability Perspective that suggests that various factors may contribute to the physical, psychological, and educational vulnerability of children with disabilities in disaster, including higher poverty rates, elevated risk exposure, greater vulnerability to traumatic loss or separation from caregivers, more *strain on parents, and poor post disaster outcomes, unless medical, familial, social, and educational protections are in place and vital social networks are quickly reestablished. Author suggests that it is important to understand not only what makes these children vulnerable to disaster but also what can make them more resilient to disaster. Children with disabilities should have equal access to disaster-related services as do their non-disabled peers, and in a just world, disability should not make them differentially at risk for injury, death, or Psychological impairment following disaster. Singh (2014), concluded on the basis of secondary data on economic inequalities faced by person with disabilities in India and how these affect their lives. Since, women actively contribute to economy thereby; it also explored how disabled women negotiate with un-equal spaces. The paper is divided into two sections; first explores the concept and socio-historical aspects of disability in India, and nature of relationship between economic inequalities and lives of persons with disabilities. Author suggested that future research it would also be epistemologically stimulating to see how persons with disabilities are making their contribution in economy inspite of having so much constrains of affordability, availability and accessibility of resources. Hebbeler and Spiker (2016), concluded on the basis of primary data on Supporting Young Children with Disabilities that flying children with delays and disabilities to receive specialized services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act poses several challenges. Author suggested that an effective

educational practices from preschool through third grade are essential to the full participation of children with disabilities - now and in the future. The inclusion of young children with disabilities in regular education classrooms can also help.

Various studies have been carried out to understand the pattern, causes, and implications of disability phenomenon faced by person with disability at various level in India. However, no such specific studies have been carried out to show regional condition of children with disability in Cachar district. Further, no such type of study has been undertaken for the Non Governmental Organizations working with disable children in this background.

Objectives Of The Study

1. To know the socio economic condition of the students enrolled under DISHA
2. To understand and analyze the impact and quality of services provided by DISHA.
3. To understand the views of the parents about regarding functions of the agency.
4. To identify the scope of social work intervention with regards to development of person with disabilities.

Research Questions

1. What are the impacts of the services provided by the agency in the lives of the person with disability?
2. What are the various areas of intervention for the person with disabilities?

Scope and Importance

As the organization is located near Ramnagar, Silchar, the special school covers the entire Silchar town and it includes the urban and semi urban Silchar town and also the rural interiors nearby the Silchar town. Silchar is the second largest city in Assam after Guwahati, it is the headquarter of the Cachar district, it includes a total geographical area of 257.5km square and has a total population of 6,87,324 as per the 2011 census report. Many such researches have been conducted in the several parts on disability except in the Cachar District of Barak Valley, Assam. The area is prone to such problems because of ill health of mothers during pregnancy, orthodox nature, conservativeness and illiteracy. The study is an empirical study conducted in

Silchar with regard to Children with Disability.

Research Methodology

Universe Of The Study

The study is conducted in Silchar, Cachar in which total 21 students with disabilities who are enrolled in DISHA a Non-Governmental Organization based in Silchar and their families are also interviewed.

Sampling Design

For the selection of the sample respondents, the researcher approached DISHA under Silchar town and there are 21 disabled students and selected all 21 disabled students and their family members are also selected for this study.

Methods and Tolls Of Data Collection

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative method was applied. The structured Interview

schedule was used as base tool for data collection. Using the structured interview schedule, the primary data were collected from the disable children and their family members with regard to their regularity in DISHA. Besides this all relevant secondary data were collected from literature, books, journals, articles, and websites in concerned field.

Data Processing And Interpretation

The collected data was processed through MS Excel. Findings of the study has been presented through the use of different graphs, chart and tables.

Presentation and Discusson Of Findings

Age: It has been observed that majority of the children are from 11 to 20 years.

Age group (In Years)	Respondents	Percentage
0-10	04	19.04%
11-20	13	61.09%
21-30	04	19.04%
Total	21	100%

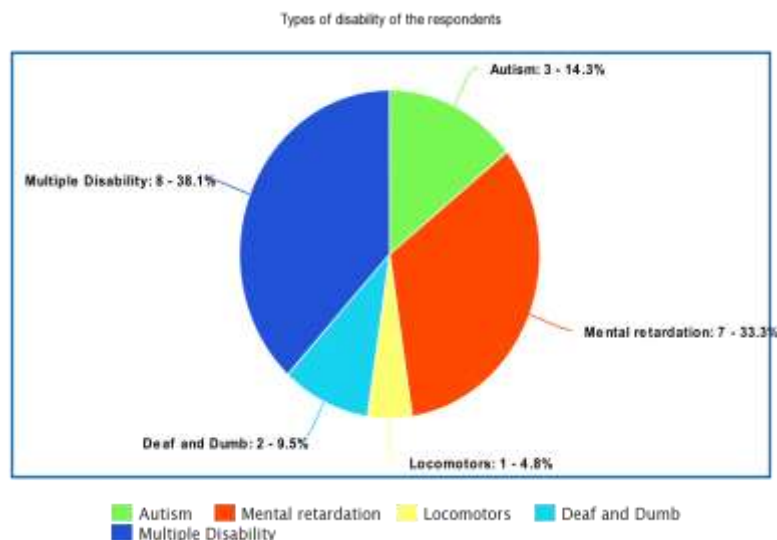
Table 1: Age of the respondents

It could be seen from above Table that, 4(19.04%) belongs to age group of 0 to 10 years, 13(61.09%) are in the age group of 11 to 20 years and 4 (19.04%) belongs to the age group of 21 to 30 years.

Types Of Disability: There are various kinds of disabilities were found among the children

Disability	Respondents	Percentage
Autism	03	17.04%
Mental retardation	07	36.09%
Locomotors	01	4.76%
Deaf and Dumb	02	5.02%
Multiple Disability	08	38.09%
Total	21	100%

Table 2: Types of disability



Diagram/chart 1.1: Types of disability

In the above mentioned table, Multiple Disability 8 (38.09%) accounted for the majority among the students, 7(36.09%) students suffering from Mental Retardation followed by Autism 3(19.04%), Deaf and Dumb 2(13%) and Locomotors 1(4.76%). But the problem is Multiple Disability which

reveals that it needs to be prevented with preventable measures.

Occupation of The Parent: Occupation plays a direct role in one’s livelihood and it affects the socio-economic conditions of the people. In the table mentioned below has been distributed the occupation of the parents of children with disability.

Occupation	Respondents	Percentage
Government Service	02	9.52%
Private/Business sector	17	80.95%
Doctor	01	4.76%
Teacher	01	4.76%
Total	21	100%

Table 3: occupation of the parent

It is been observed from the above table, 17(80.95%) of the students’ parents are engaged in private sector or in business, 2(9.52%) are engaged in the Government

Services, 1(4.76%) is a doctor and 1(4.76%) is a teacher.

Family Income: It plays an important role for providing treatment facilities for a disable child

Monthly Income (In Rupees)	Respondents	Percentage
1000-15000	08	38.09%
15000-30000	06	37.89%
30000-45000	05	18.07%
45000-60000	02	5.01%
Total	21	100%

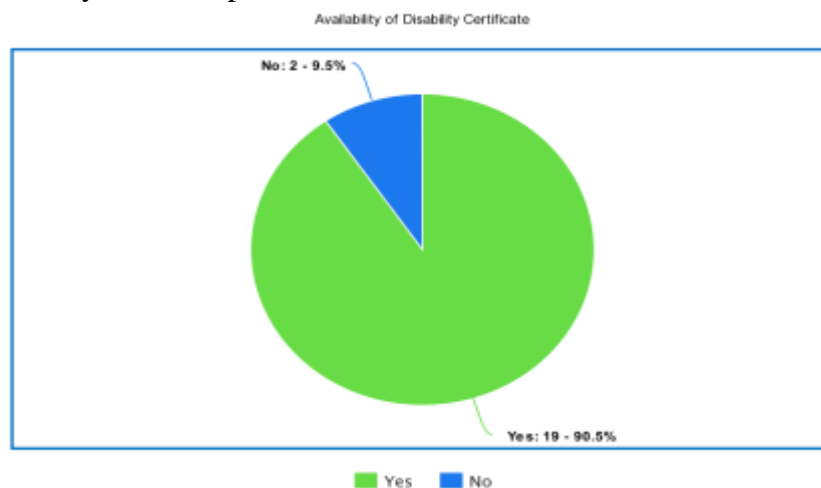
Table 4: Family income of the respondents

It is seen from the above mentioned table, majority of the family’s income i.e 8(38.09%) ranges from 1000 to 15000 and it has showed that majority of the families belong from poor socio-economic background. Secondly,

6(37.89%) of family’s income is from 15000 to 30000 rupees which is quite average, 5(18.07%) are from 30,000 to 45,000 and 2(5.01%) are monthly income ranges from 45,000 to 60,000.

Availability of Disability Certificate:
 Disability certificate is very much important

to get facilities from Government.



Diagram/chart 1.2: Availability of disability certificate

It is seen from the above chart that 19(90.47%) students have Person with Disability (PWD) certificate and remaining 2(9.52%) students do not have the PWD certificate.

Reason Behind The Enrollment In Disha:
 Education is a basic right for every citizen. Being disable person they are not allowed to go to normal school so they choose to go to DISHA.

Reason	Respondents	Percentage
Recommended by Doctor	02	9.52%
Recommended by Special Educator	02	9.52%
keep the child busy and learn something	17	80.95%
Total	21	100%

Table 5: Reason behind the enrollment in DISHA

It is been observed from above table, 17(80.95%) of parents that is the majority of them conveyed that the reason behind their children enrollment at Disha was to keep the child busy and learn something, 2(9.52%) are recommended by Doctor and few

recommended by Special Educator which accounted for 2(9.52%)

Target Area For Improvement: Each and every parents expect of making their child literate like other normal children.

Target Area	Respondents	Percentage
Reading and Writing	08	38%
Body Movement	03	14.28%
Behavior modification	06	28.57%
Cognitive Capacity	04	19.04%
Total	21	100%

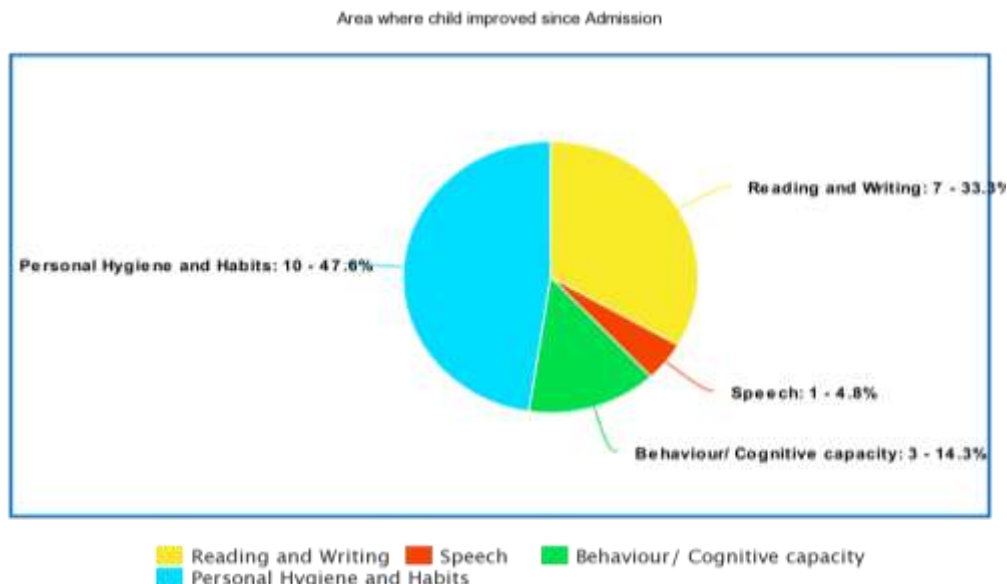
Table 6: Target area for improvement

It is seen from the table that each and every parent's expectation are about making their child literate like other normal children. So majority of them 8(38%) of them accounted for reading and writing as the main target area followed by 6(28.57%) having target area on behavior modification, 4(19.04%) wants their

children changes on cognitive capacity and 3(14.28%) for body movements.

Area Where Child Improved Since Admission: Every parents want to see some changes from their children after sending to special school especially those who need special attention and care. Depending upon

their problems some of the areas where some development changes as per the views of parents.



Diagram/chart 1.3: Area where child improved since admission

It has been observed from above table, despite of the inadequate services by the well-trained professionals, majority of the children have improved a lot in multiple areas and the targeted areas were specially improved according to the information. Thus, majority of the children have improved in multiple areas which accounted for 10(47.60%)

followed by improvement in reading and writing to be 7(33.30%), cognitive capacity 03(14.28%) and speech 1(4.76%).

Hobbies of The Differentlt Abled Students: Recreational activities promotes inclusion, minimizes deconditioning, optimizes physical functioning, and improves motor skills and so on.

Activities	Respondents	Percentage
Sports and Games	09	42.85%
Music and Dance	04	19.04%
Drawing and Craft	01	4.76%
Story telling/Poem recitation	01	4.76%
Multiple	06	28.57%
Total	21	100%

Table 7: Whether interested in recreational activities

It has been observed from above table that 9(42.85%) students are interested in games and sports whereas 6(28.57%) students have more than one interest followed by 4(19.04%) students are having interests in music and dance and 1(4.76%) students have interest in drawing/craft and 1(4.76%) have interest in story telling or story or poem recitation.

Whether Suffers From Financial Problem In Paying Monthly School Fees: Expenses associated with raising children is the prime concern in poverty-stricken families especially for the families having specially-abled child. Those children often experience less cognitive stimulation

Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	12	57.14%
No	09	42.85%
Total	21	100%

Table 8: Whether suffers from financial problem in paying monthly school fees

In the above mentioned table 12(57.145) that is majority of them suffers from financial problem in paying fees and remaining 9(42.85%) of them are paying fees on monthly basis

Scholarship Received	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	06	28.57%
No	15	71.42%
Total	21	100%

Whether Received Scholarship From Government: Scholarships Under The various Government schemes and policies are meant to provide financial as well as moral aid to the differently-abled beneficiaries.

Table 9: Whether received scholarship from government

The above mentioned table reflects only few children with disability have received the scholarship amounting to 6000 Indian Rupees by the Social Welfare Department which is 6(28.57%) while despite having economic and social disparities 15(71.42%) have not received any scholarship.

Monetary/ non-monetary Assistance or device Received from Government	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	04	19.04%
No	17	80.95%
Total	21	100%

Whether Received Any Monetary Assistance Or Device From Government: There are various Government schemes to provide the necessary monetary assistance device to the differently-abled children for the procurement of scientific and sophisticated equipment & other standard aid in order to promote & support their mental and physical well-being.

Table 10: Whether received and monetary assistance device from government

It has been observed that only 4(19.04%) of the children with disability have received some monetary devices which includes rickshaw cycle, wheel chair etc. and other non-monetary help includes books, copies, clothes, blankets etc. But unfortunately, 17(80.95%) of the children lacked.

Received Financial Help	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	02	9.52%
No	19	90.47%
Total	21	100%

Whether Received Any Financial Assistance From Any Organisations Or Individual: It is worth to highlight that majority of the respondents belong to the economically weaker section of the society. Therefore, financial assistance is a sustainable support from the local level individuals & bodies alongside with several non-financial aids.

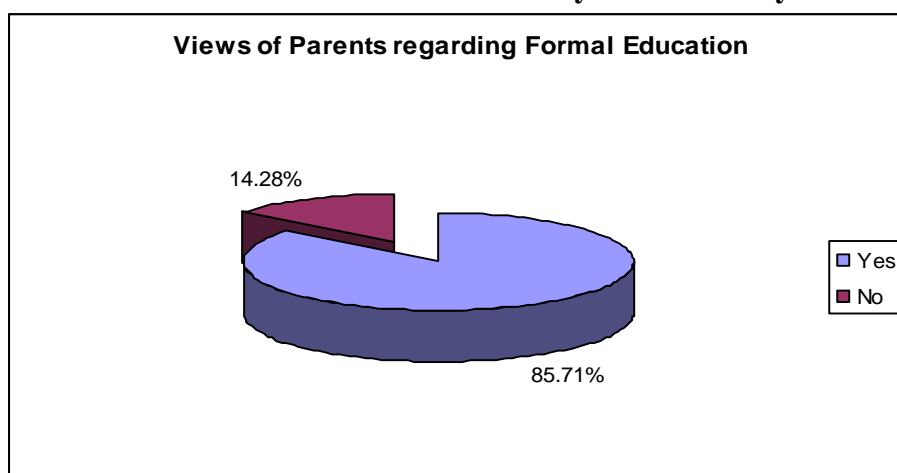
Table 11: Whether received any financial assistance from any organizations or individual

It has been observed that only some of the few children with disability specially belonging to economically poor background received the financial or non-financial assistance from some local resource person, MPs, MLAs etc. which consists of 2(9.52%) students and the remaining 19(90.47%) have not received and kind of help.

views of parents regarding formal education: The importance of formal education is an inherent Fundamental Right of the differently-abled children like any other person. It helps to shape their personal attributes, help to remove disability stigma and uplifts low self-esteem issues.

Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	18	85.71%
No	03	14.28%
Total	21	100%

Table 12: Whether formal education is necessary for differently-abled children



Diagram/chart 1.4: Views of parents regarding formal education

According to the data collected, many parents seem to be very concerned about education and want the inclusion of their child in formal schools but due to lack of permission they are lacking their confidence, so majority of the parents want formal education for their child which is 18(85.71%) and remaining 3(14.28%) of they don't have any opinion

because of the high level of disability of their children.

Whether Vocational Training Is Important: The requirement for Vocational training for skill-up gradation, creating self-sufficiency and independency among the differently-abled with order to ensure their readiness for income generating activities by virtue of their own interests & skills.

Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	21	100%
No	0	0
Total	21	100%

Table 13: Whether vocational training is important

It has been observed that 21(100%) wants their child to be self-sufficient and independent being differently-abled. So, everyone wanted that the agency must come up with some skill development or vocational training, so that the children can earn at least minimum for their necessities.

Whether There Is A Need Of Certain Alterations In The Services Rendered By The Agency: It is important to address the needs and continually improve the services of the Agency by implementing certain alterations as per the necessities from time to time.

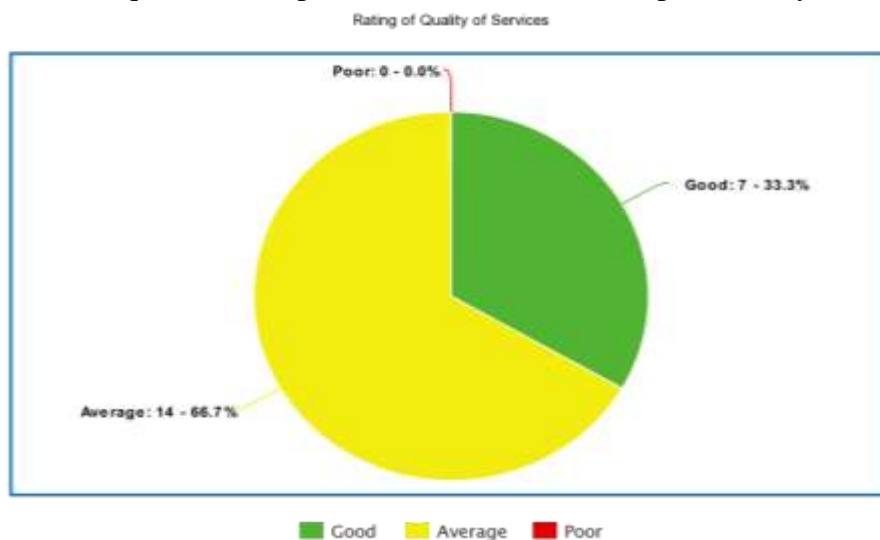
Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	17	80.95%
No	04	19.04%
Total	21	100%

Table 14: Need of certain alterations in the services rendered by the agency.

It has been observed that, 17(80.95%) of the respondents wanted some alterations in the agency which includes formal education, vocational training, physiotherapy, barrier

free school, speech therapy etc. while the remaining 4(19.04%) are satisfied with the services already being provided.
Rating Of Quality Of Services Provided:

The ratings reflect the qualitative aspects of the services provided by DISHA.



Diagram/Chart no 1.5: Rating of quality of services provided

From the above diagram/chart, it is visible that DISHA is an organization in Cachar district of Barak valley providing services like extracurricular activities, outdoor & indoor games, informal education, etc. to the differently abled. So, 07(33.33%) have rated

DISHA as Good and remaining 14(66.66%) percent have rated DISHA as Average.

Opinion Of Child Regarding Disha: The opinion of the differently-able children enumerates their perception as well as their understanding of the ease & quality of assistance provided to them.

Opinions	Respondents	Percentage
Positive	16	76.19%
Negative	02	9.525
Mixed	03	14.28%
Total	21	100%

Table 15: Opinion of child regarding DISHA

From the above table, it can be understood that most of the children i.e., 16(76.19%) gave positive opinions because they receive companionship, care and gets a good vibe where they do not feel discarded or cornered. While 3(14.28%) of them gave mixed opinion & 2(9.525%) of them gave negative opinions

due lack of stimulating activities & therapeutic interventions.

Opinion Of Parents Regarding Disha: The opinion of the parents of differently-able children highlights their extent of acknowledgement and agreement towards the adequacy of the services provided by DISHA

Opinions	Respondents	Percentage
Positive	13	61.90%
Negative	02	9.52%
Mixed	06	28.57%
Total	21	100%

Table 16: Opinion of parents regarding DISHA

The above mentioned tabulation shows the ratings of the parents of children with disability regarding the functions of the agency i.e., DISHA It can be observed that most of the parents i.e., 13(61.90%) gave positive response because most of them are Wage-workers who are engaged throughout

the day so they feel grateful for the shelter and companionship their children receive at DISHA. While, 6(28.57%) of them gave Mixed response and 2(9.52%) gave negative response due to the unavailability of adequate vocational training and formal education provisions.

Suggestions:

There are some suggestion from the Social Work perspective to develop the growth and development for the students under the organization.

1. To provide vocational and skill development training that help in employability.
2. To conduct more activities focusing on recreation and sports.
3. To arrange/employ a special educator in the school who has technical and professional knowledge.
4. To indulge in more fund raising related activities.
5. To conduct awareness camp and programmes for more exploration.
6. To employ a counselor, physiotherapist, speech therapists for the specialized knowledge and services.
7. To provide continuous training to the staff in the agency for better services to the differently abled children.

Conclusion

The research was conducted to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the services and its impacts on the welfare and development of the students with disability under DISHA as we know that persons with disability are under vulnerable groups in the society and they require special care and attention as compared to the other persons. The major objectives of the research includes deeper understanding about the concept of disability, understanding and to analyze the impacts of the agency in the growth and development of the students, their parent's feedbacks and reviews about the agency and their services made the research a fruitful contribution for the society.

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