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India's Right to Education Act: Parents' perceptions on involvement in private schools and school responsiveness

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Abstract

India enacted the *Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009* (RTE Act) (Government of India, 2009) for elementary education, reserving 25% of seats in private schools for socially and economically disadvantaged groups starting from grade 1 or pre-primary depending on the school setting. However, some studies show it may not be implemented and there is exclusion among students (Kaushal, 2012; Mehendale, Mukhopadhyay, & Namala, 2015; Noronha & Srivastava, 2013; Srivastava & Noronha, 2016). Furthermore, there is little research on how parents' involvement in the school milieu plays a role in their children's education, and whether private schools are responsive to parental concerns in view of the RTE Act.

This study analyzes a data bank of 43 semi-structured interviews that were conducted with Dalit parents in one catchment area in Delhi in 2017 under a larger research program. The interviews were conducted following a household survey in 2015 with households that were successful in securing a 'free' private school seat under the Act. The analysis here is meant to direct fuller analysis in the larger research program. The main research question explored in this study is: How were parents involved in monitoring their child's academic progress? This analysis applies the following dimensions, a supportive home learning environment, direct school contact, and inhibited involvement (McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen & Sekino, 2004), to examine the parental involvement in this study. The analysis finds that parents were involved in the private schools they accessed through various ways. There were uneven experiences and reported school responses.

Keywords

Private Schooling; Education Access; Inclusion; Exclusion; School Responsiveness; Parental Involvement; India.

Summary for Lay Audience

Many children in India continue to face education exclusion due to various factors, such as religion, caste, language barriers, and lack of parental education (Alcott & Rose, 2016; Borooah 2017; Nambissan 2009). India enacted the *Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009* (RTE Act) (Government of India, 2009) for elementary education. The Act reserves 25% of seats in private schools for free for socially and economically disadvantaged groups beginning in pre-primary or Grade 1. Parental involvement and school responsiveness play an integral role in children's education, especially if they belong to marginalized communities. There is a gap in current literature as it does not explore in-depth regarding marginalized parents' perceptions on their involvement in schools and how schools are responsive to their and their children's needs.

This study analyzes 43 semi-structured interviews that were conducted with Dalit parents in one catchment area in Delhi in 2017 as part of a larger research program. This is an historically marginalized group. These households were part of an earlier survey in 2015, and had been successful in receiving at least one 'free' private school seat at that time. The analysis found that majority of the parents were involved in their children's education. While some reported language barriers in speaking English, the majority stated that schools would accommodate them and speak in Hindi. However, there were uneven experiences regarding parents' perceptions on how they felt about the quality of education in private schools.

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List of Acronyms

CDC	Comprehensive daycare
CORD	Collaborative Research and Dissemination
DG	Disadvantaged group
EWS	Economically Weaker Section
FIQ	Family Involvement Questionnaire
LFP	Low-fee Private
NSSO	National Sample Survey Organization
PTM	Parent Teacher Meeting
RTE Act	Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009
SC	Scheduled Caste
SES	Socio-economic Status
SMC	School Management Committee
ST	Scheduled Tribe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1   Purpose and Research Aims

Parental involvement in children's school plays an important role in their education. It is also important that schools are responsive to parents' concerns and to enabling parental involvement. According to Bauch and Goldring (1995):

> school responsiveness, or activities and responsibilities on the part of the school that facilitate the home-school relationship, are identified by five variables measuring the extent to which the school: (a) provides information to parents about courses and academic help, (b) contacts parents about how the child is doing, (c) communicates effectively with parents, (d) seeks advice from parents, and (e) requires parents to perform volunteer activities at or for the school. (p. 8).

The variables help to explain the important components of school responsiveness. In order for schools to be responsive towards parents they need to ensure that information regarding children's academics is being communicated; contacting parents regularly about their child's progress; interacting with parents and respecting parents' suggestions and recommendations and involving them to take part in volunteer related activities at school. Schools should take into consideration how to be responsive to all parents and pay closer attention to parents facing various barriers, so they may be actively involved and be able to seek support from the school.

This study explored the involvement of Dalit parents, in private schools and parental perceptions of private school responsiveness in New Delhi, India. Dalit communities are, an historically socio-economically marginalized group in India. The study analyzes data gathered in a larger research program from parents of children who obtained 'free' private school seats in elementary education under India's *Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act,*

2009 (RTE Act) (Government of India, 2009) in 2015, and were still attending the same private schools via the free seats in 2017.

1.2 Education System in India

Education in India is decentralized. In most states and union territories, elementary education is separated in two sections. Primary education usually comprises grades 1-5, and upper primary, grades 6-8 (Anderson & Lightfoot, 2019). The age group for primary school consists of children between 6-11 years old and in upper primary school it consists of children between 11-14 years old. The RTE Act covers a full cycle of elementary education (grades 1 through 8), and mandates free and compulsory education for every child aged between 6 and 14.

The Act states children should be taught in a safe environment without fear, trauma, or corporal punishment (Section 3(1); Section 17, Government of India, 2009). Furthermore, Section 3(1) states that "… no child shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing the elementary education" (Government of India, 2009). Section 12(1)(c) states that, private unaided schools:[1]

> shall admit in class I, to the extent of at least twenty-five percent, of the strength of that class, children belonging to weaker section and disadvantaged group in the neighbourhood and provide free and compulsory education till its completion (Government of India, 2009).

Students who were considered eligible after fulfilling the criteria for free seat admission to a private school, could get access through what is known as a 'freeship'. 'Weaker section'

[1] Section 2(*n*) states this is applicable to (*iv*) an unaided school not receiving any kind of aid or grants to meet its expenses from the appropriate Government or the local authority" (Government of India, 2009).

A private unaided school is an independent school that is privately managed and owned and not financed by the government.

refers to economically weaker sections (EWS). In Delhi at the time of this study, this meant children coming from families with an annual income of a maximum of Rs. 100,000. Scheduled caste (SC) groups, comprising Dalits, were identified as among disadvantaged groups.

There is research on how factors including religion, caste, and poverty relate to children's learning outcomes in schools in India (Borooah 2017; Nambissan 2009) and access to school depends largely on parents' socio-economic status (SES). Children with a wealthier background tend to be in schools more often than those who belong to a family with lower income (Huisman, Rani & Smits, 2010). Students who face exclusion due to their gender, caste, and SES have higher dropout and absentee rates (Das, 2011; Das, 2016).

Within the Indian context, SC and scheduled tribes (ST) are two constitutionally-defined categories of groups that have been historically marginalized. In 1950, a constitutional provision known as *The Constitution Order for SCs and STs* came into force (Legislative Department, 1976). Later, in 1956, the *SCs and STs Orders (Amendment) Act, 1956* was passed. This Act was modified in 1976, which states that it is "an Act to provide for the inclusion in, and the exclusion from, the lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, of certain castes and tribes, for the re-adjustment of representation of parliamentary and assembly constituencies" (Legislative Department, 1976, p. 1371). Article 46 of The Constitution of India states that "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the SC and ST, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation" (Government of India, 2018, p. 34).

The goals of the analysis here were to examine how Dalit parents whose children were successful in accessing freeship seats in private schools in Delhi perceived how the schools

responded; and how these parents were involved in their children's schooling. The research questions explored in this study are:

1. What were the parents' perceptions on the quality of education provided to their children?

2. What were the parents' perceptions on their children's experiences of social inclusion or exclusion in school?

3. What were the parents' perceptions on the responsiveness of the freeship private school regarding their child's academic needs?

4. How were parents involved in monitoring their child's academic progress?

5. Did parents face barriers when communicating with teachers or other parents?

1.3   The RTE Act and Freeship Seat Provision

Section 8(c) of the Act states that the "obligation of the appropriate Government is to ensure that the child belonging to weaker section and the child belonging to disadvantaged group are not discriminated against and prevented from pursuing and completing elementary education on any grounds" (Government of India, 2009). This explains that every child in India has the right to free education without facing any kind of mistreatment. For this to be achieved, parents must not face any barriers when accessing freeship seats for their children, and schools should be responsive.

However, a report by the Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion (2015) states that in Delhi in 2015-2016, "according to the provision of RTE, 1186 private unaided schools in Delhi were mandated to reserve a total of 25945 seats; the schools only allocated 22616 seats and finally only 15169 seats were admitted" (Centre for Social Equity & Inclusion, p. 1). Srivastava and Noronha (2016) conducted a study that examined the "relative household costs and

experiences of accessing private and government schooling under the RTE Act in the early implementation phase" (p. 561). Data for that study included a survey, which consisted of total 290 households, and 40 semi-structured interviews. Households that had access to freeship seats reported that during the process of getting admission, they faced barriers related to costs and "some interviewees lamented that government education initiatives were often launched but parents were not properly informed; others, that the Department of Education's powers were limited; and some, that corruption would inhibit proper implementation " (Srivastava & Noronha, 2016, p. 572). They found, as a result, that the "overwhelming majority were not aware of the provision" and how to access freeship admission for their children (Srivastava & Noronha, 2016, p. 572). This raises a question about how the Government can ensure that the Act is being implemented appropriately in all schools if parents are not aware of the RTE Act.

Despite the widespread impact of the Act, there is not much substantial research on this topic. This was one of the few early studies that looked at the issue from parental awareness in the early phases. That study also analyzed the RTE Act in terms of how it was applied and implemented by government officials, and local implementers in Delhi; how households accessed schooling and understood the provision; the manner it was understood by the schools that were involved in implementing the Act (Srivastava & Noronha, 2014). The findings showed that principals reported being aware of the Act, however, there was a gap in how it was implemented in practice. Other early research has found similar results (Mehendale et al., 2015; Sarangapani, Mehendale, Mukhopadhyay and Namala, 2014). Mehendale et al. (2015) conclude that "Education departments should streamline the admission process so that there is transparency, fairness and simplicity in the procedures. The forms should be standardized and accessible in the regional languages used in the state" (p. 50).

Language is a major barrier that underprivileged parents also face when they are getting their children freeship admission and approaching schools to communicate about their child's academics (Mehendale et al., 2015). For instance, if teachers in the school communicate with parents in English, it can be difficult for parents who are not fluent. Ojha's (2013) study discusses the way the RTE Act is being applied in rural schools and its awareness among the stakeholders, which are parents, principals and teachers. This is due to very limited or no communication between parents and the school, which can affect the professional relationship between parents and the staff.

1.4   School Management Committee (SMC)

Section 21(*1*) of the RTE Act states that "a school, other than a school specified in sub-clause (*iv*) of clause (*n*) of section 2, shall constitute a School Management Committee [SMC] consisting of the elected representatives of the local authority, parents or guardians of children admitted in such school and teachers" (Government of India, 2009). According to the RTE Act, 75% of the SMC members should consist of parents (Section 21(l), Government of India, 2009).[2] The SMC structure applies to all government aided and schools that are "owned and run by the government" in India (Trivedi & Gopalkrishnan, 2017, p. 4).[3] However, under the RTE Act, private unaided schools, the focus of this analysis, are not required to have SMCs. This is a gap

[2] Section 21. (*1*) "Provided that at least three-fourth of members of such Committee shall be parents or guardians; provided further that proportionate representation shall be given to the parents or guardians of children belonging to disadvantaged group and weaker section" (Government of India, 2009).

[3] "Section 2(*iv*) an unaided school not receiving any kind of aid or grants to meet its expenses from the appropriate Government or the local authority" (Government of India, 2009).

because they could assist parents to build networks with teachers and take part in their schools. This could be useful for marginalized groups in particular.

SMCs can play an important role in creating partnerships between parents and teachers. The SMC's responsibility is to ensure the "enrollment, retention and sustaining quality in the schools" (Trivedi & Gopalkrishnan, 2017, p. 5). However, a study conducted in Haryana consisted of seven government schools in which parents were interviewed based on SMC (Thapa, 2012). The results showed that none of the 20 parents interviewed were aware of the term 'SMC', and only six parents were able to communicate about their child's education in school. This study explains that there is lack of encouragement to participate among parents in government school (Thapa, 2012). A study conducted by Sethi and Muddgal (2017) in primary schools in Delhi explored the role that SMC members played in implementing the RTE Act. The Act mandates that the meeting should be held every month, but SMC members in the study reported having met every two months: "62% of the SMC members do not attend any function in the school and 8% of SMC members have gone through training related to SMC and its functions" (Sethi & Muddgal, 2017, p. 43). The results showed various factors that led to parents not being able to participate in school. SMC members were not aware of how SMC relates to the RTE Act.

1.5   Importance of Parental Involvement

A study conducted by Sreekanth (2010) at one school in New Delhi explored parental involvement in their children's education. Results reported that "there were very few positive responses of parents on a higher level of involvement" (Sreekanth, 2010, p. 38). In this study,

higher level of parental involvement is related to the well-being of the children (Sreekanth, 2010). Parents' perceptions on their involvement in school is essential to the learning outcomes of their children (Muchuchuti, 2015). A qualitative case study was conducted in primary and secondary schools in Zimbabwe to interview school heads and teachers. The results showed that parents whose children were enrolled in private primary schools were more involved and supported their children's education than parents whose children were in rural and urban public primary schools (Muchuchuti, 2015). This study did not specify whether parents who were more involved in school was due to higher SES factors.

SES plays a crucial role in parental involvement in school and it should be considered when comparing patterns of involvement in private primary and public primary schools. Another study in Edo State, Nigeria looked at how parental involvement influenced children's academic performance in primary schools (Fajoju, Aluede & Ojugo, 2016). The data showed that increase in parental involvement resulted in "significantly influencing pupils' academic achievements in English, mathematics, and integrated science" (p. 33). The gaps in the current research is that it does not examine how parents are involved in their child's school and in what ways they are supporting their children in the RTE context. This study explores this issue and examines from the view of marginalized parents, and also how they felt the schools responded to children with freeship admission.

1.6   Structure of Thesis

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 discusses the relevant concepts and current literature in the field and their relevance to the research questions. McWayne et al.'s (2004) conceptual framework of parental involvement is described with definitions of three dimensions and how they relate to the study. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research design and data

collection procedure. The inductive approach is mentioned with the rationale explaining why it was selected. Chapter 4 presents the data and analysis, to show evidence and how it helps to answer the research questions. Chapter 5 is on the discussion and is written to describe the relationship between the literature, conceptual framework and results. Lastly, Chapter 6 presents conclusions and provides a summary of all chapters and how they are relevant to study school responsiveness and parents' perceptions on their involvement in the context of the RTE Act. Policy recommendations are also discussed in detail.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

In this chapter, the literature review includes various research studies on comparing the literature examining parental perceptions of quality in government and private schools. Issues regarding social exclusion are discussed to help understand what factors result in children facing social exclusion at school. Literature on school responsiveness details how schools may support children in helping them succeed academically, and how teachers and principals can initiate the participation of all parents. Literature on parental involvement is presented in three different categories and research studies are discussed in detail. Studies also discuss parents' perceptions on their involvement to gain awareness about their child's school and academics and whether they are provided adequate support and resources. Lastly, literature on barriers to accessing schools describes factors that result in parents facing various challenges approaching schools when seeking assistance and communicating about their children's academics.

2.1 Parental Involvement in Private and Government Schools

Johnson and Bowles (2010) conducted a case study with four private and five government schools in two different villages located in Madhya Pradesh, India. It investigated how the "four privately-funded schools affected the socio-economic composition of students, the quality of teaching, the involvement of parents and caregivers and the performance and accountability of private school teachers and administrators" (p. 485). Parents of the children in private schools were more involved in their child's schooling and stated that teachers in the classroom helped their children to learn and develop. One of the main findings in this study revealed that families of children who attended government schools in both villages were offered

social assistance; however, they had access to minimal resources in order to take part in the activities in school.

These families were from lower SES and SC groups. Hence, lower SES and social class backgrounds are barriers that parents continue to face. Another finding from this study showed that parents felt discipline to be important in school. They also felt students in private schools were better prepared for their board exams. Parents also thought that paying high fees to enroll their child in private sector was their duty, even though this was economically very difficult.

A two-cohort study was conducted in Andhra Pradesh as part of the longitudinal Oxford *Young Lives* study exploring the impact of private schools. It was reported that "increased private school participation in Andhra Pradesh is amplifying social stratification related to location, poverty, caste, ethnicity, parent education levels, aspirations and gender" (Woodhead, Frost, and James, 2013, p. 71). Even though, parents from lower SES may be able to access private schooling, they still faced barriers. In another work based on the *Young Lives* study, James and Woodhead (2014) found the "largest proportion of children (49.7%) move from government to private sector, with 38.2% of girl movers and 59.1% of boy movers making this type of shift" (p. 80). In one of the cases in this study, family was satisfied with resources offered at private school, but the major concern was being able to afford admission fees.

Also based on the *Young Lives* study, Morrow and Wilson (2014) found in Andhra Pradesh that parents were not satisfied with government schools due to teacher absenteeism, and large class size, which leads to children not getting care and attention they deserve. This study reported that parents from lower SES "in rural areas seemed much likely to say they could hold teachers to account than parents in the (more affluent) urban site" (Morrow & Wilson, 2014, p.

22). This study discussed that if parents experienced difficulties in accessing particular information because they had limited education themselves, they would seek help from families or neighbours (Morrow & Wilson, 2014, p. 22). This study helps to explain the perceptions of parents in rural and urban areas and how they engaged in school especially when they have lack of knowledge about the education system.

One study in Uttar Pradesh, India examined "whether or not low-fee private (LFP) schooling in rural India is pro-poor and equitable, and finds that these schools are unaffordable to the bottom two wealth quintiles of families" (Härmä, 2011, p. 350). Of parents in that sample, 94.4% stated that private school as preferred type of school, but 60% of children in the sample did not have access to these schools due to poverty. These parents are not able to have voice in the school system as well. It is important to note that with the increase in private sector, relatively wealthier families can enroll their children in private schools. The government sector is the only viable option for most parents from lower SES backgrounds to enroll their children.

2.2 Social Inclusion and Social Exclusion in the Context of the RTE Act

Studies on children from SC groups in school have reported that they faced exclusion and discrimination in the classroom (Kumar, 2017; Nambissan, 2009). Govinda and Bandyopadhyay (2010) discussed that social exclusion takes place when children from different background are not provided with equal education opportunities. They state:

> In the context of education, exclusion must be understood as a process, not just an event. Many preceding events shape the life of the individual child who is excluded from the educational system. Some of these events are located in the family, some in the community and the peer group, and many in the school where the child is supposed to be studying (Govinda & Bandyopadhyay, 2010, p. 341).

A study by Kumar (2017) in slums in Hyderabad, India found that "43 out of 150 parents responded that their children faced discrimination in school due to their social group and 34.9%

of parents stated children from upper-class used caste names to address their children" (p. 17). This study concludes that children who face exclusion in schools due to various factors may drop out. Even if they do not drop out, children can be excluded from taking part in extra-curricular activities, sports, and facilities such as textbooks, technology, peer help with course material, and support from teachers, regardless of school type.

Tamim and Tariq (2015) conducted a qualitative and multiple-case study to investigate social exclusion in relation to caste in rural Punjab, India. The data for this study was collected from government schools in villages through and based on the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, from 2007-2008 (Tamim & Tariq, 2015, p. 54). Questionnaires and structured interviews were used to collect data from households. Children in these households were attending government schools while this study was being conducted. Exclusion due to caste was shown among households from two different villages. One father from a lower-caste household reported that school calendars were organized to meet the needs of the high-caste families, and excluded them. Children from lower-caste households were not able to access education due to unaffordability. It is also important to note that parents from high-caste households reported meeting teachers often. However, parents from low-caste households reported not being able to communicate with teachers in schools.

Regarding the RTE Act and inclusion, an exploratory study conducted by Sarangapani et al. (2014) in 2012-13 in Delhi and Bengaluru examined the implications of the RTE Act when applied in practice and how children from marginalized backgrounds were included in schools. The data for this study were collected from 367 private unaided schools in Bengaluru South and North, which covered schools in two education districts and 16 private schools in Delhi. The

second aim of this study was to examine the government and administrative structures and processes for the implementation of the free seats provision.

The study found that in Bengaluru, four teachers stated that children did not receive adequate support from their home. One teacher mentioned that she had lower expectations from these children because of their family background. It is interesting to note that "while parents of the general category were not even aware or not concerned about this provision, a couple of schools (which catered to higher socio-economic profile) reported parents getting worried about the lack of hygiene and bad language used by the 'RTE children'" (Sarangapani et al., 2014, p. 26). Therefore, schools took part in having meetings with parents to ensure that they do not have any concerns. These findings explain that if schools offer support and resources to both children and parents from EWS, it can help with home support. Nonetheless, the school and teachers are accountable to providing adequate support to all children regardless of family circumstances because under the RTE Act, every child has the right to good quality education.

A mixed methods study was conducted in private unaided schools in Bengaluru to explore awareness of the RTE Act in the school system (Mehendale et al., 2015). This study found that "teachers and schools were not supported to foster inclusion. Most schools considered their mandate was complete once admissions were given and hence they were not working towards bringing fundamental changes in attitudes or pedagogies that could foster inclusion" (Mehendale et al., 2015, p. 48).

Sucharita and Sujatha (2019) state: "as per the Delhi State RTE rules, to foster social inclusion, the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) and Disadvantaged Group (DG) children should not be segregated from other children in the classrooms nor should their classes be held at

places and timings different from the classes held for the other children" (p. 320). This should also include providing equal access from disadvantaged groups in terms of school uniforms, books, information regarding the technology being used in the classroom, and encouragement to participate in after-school activities. Sucharita and Sujatha (2019) conducted a case study in two private schools in Delhi to examine how the schools facilitated social inclusion and the perceptions of principals, teachers, parents, and children. A total of 52 participants were selected to conduct interviews and the respondents included the headmistress, teachers, parents, and children of ages 3 to 6. Principals were also interviewed regarding how social inclusion was promoted and implemented considering the free seats provision.

The findings showed that in both schools EWS and children from DG were given equal access to all facilities and infrastructure as non-EWS children. Furthermore, "EWS children were applauded in the morning assembly in front of everyone so that others too drew inspiration from them. This encouraged the motivational levels of EWS and DG children greatly and gave them a feeling that they can be a role model for others" (Sucharita & Sujatha, 2019, p. 320). However, an earlier mixed-method study in 2011-2012 in Delhi found that freeship children were segregated in some private schools and were taught in separate shifts by different teachers (Srivastava & Noronha, 2014). This is against the RTE Act.

A micro-study of freeship and non-freeship children in Delhi was conducted contributing to the *Insights into Education* research program. Participatory methods were used to explore children's "lived experiences at private schools" (Lafleur & Srivastava, 2019, p. 2). Participants were 16 children between the age of 8 and 10 years old who were attending six different private schools. These children belong to marginalized backgrounds. The findings by participants reported that teachers and peers labeled children as "'naughty' and/or academically 'weak' or

'incapable' by teachers and classmates, resulting in those students being stigmatized" (Lafleur & Srivastava, 2019, p. 19). These results show that children's experiences are important in understanding the implementation of the RTE Act, and potential exclusion issues in school.

2.3 Parental Perceptions of Quality

Quality of education is important to consider in private and public schools. As stated by Sarangapani (2018) "quality is best understood as a multidimensional, composite concept having the dimensions of educational aims, provisioning, curriculum, standards and learning outcomes, and pedagogic practice, and the sixth related dimension of accountability and efficiency" (p. 162). All of these dimensions play a crucial role in children's education. Bazaz (2016) conducted an analytical and comparative study using the "literature, secondary data, empirical studies, and government reports to analyze the role of private and public schools in providing basic education to marginalized groups" (p. 40). The results showed that parents in several studies mentioned that they believe that the quality of education is better in private school than public school (Bazaz, 2016).

Härmä's (2009) study in Uttar Pradesh, India collected data from 26 private and government schools in rural areas. A total of 250 households from 13 different villages were selected to conduct interviews and questionnaires. The findings showed that LFP enrollment was based on family income. Parents in this study felt that quality of education in LFP schools was better than government schools, but also felt that the LFP schools are not to be trusted as the "school owners could decide to close down at any time" (Härmä, 2009, p. 163). About 45% of the sample in this study reported the issues of unaffordability of LFP schools. This could result in parents only having the option of government school to choose for their children's education.

Thus, the quality of the government schools should be improved because not all parents from marginalized backgrounds can afford to enroll their children in private schools (Härmä, 2009). This study helps to understand the need to improve the quality of education in government schools so parents from lower SES and those facing poverty can afford to send their children to school to attain better education.

Chatterjee, Li and Robitaille's (2018) study was focused on reviewing the "progress of India's primary schools over the period 2005–2011 as public educational undertaking shifted more from the Centre to the states" (p. 99). In this study, Chatterjee et al. (2018) used the Indian Human Development Survey conducted in 2005 and 2011 to report results on factors, including: school infrastructure, teacher's quality, the costs of education, enrolment, and learning (pp. 102-107). The findings showed that in 2011, almost all government schools had access to electricity, and 80% of primary schools had separate washrooms for boys and girls. However, "25% of the washrooms are locked, 20% of them do not have access to water" and 19% were not sanitized (Chatterjee et al., 2018, p. 102).

However, in government primary schools regarding teacher's quality, 96% of parents reported that their child's teacher treated students equally. In contrast, 10% of teachers were "reported to be biased towards certain communities and *jatis* (castes)" (Chatterjee et al., 2018, p. 103). These results were reported by parents of children enrolled in primary schools. These findings show that even though there were improvements in primary schools to ensure all children are included, but further changes needed to be made.

Parents in Srivastava and Noronha's (2014) study in the early implementation period of the RTE Act (2011-2012) in Delhi, reported that the teacher-student ratio in government schools was very high. They felt that children were passing because of automatic promotion in spite of lack of attentiveness to teaching. Households whose children were attending private schools appreciated the quality of teaching as teachers were attentive towards children but reported that if a child had incomplete work, they would be threatened by the teachers. However, many parents reported being satisfied with freeship schools due to a safe school milieu, perceived better quality of teaching, and English-medium instruction. It is important to note that parents' perceptions were not based on an objective assessment of the quality provided in the private schools or comparisons with local government schools.

Gurney (2018) conducted a study on "how non-quality factors intertwine with the perceptions to produce eventual schooling decisions" (p. 261). Participants in this study were parents from underprivileged community in South and East Delhi. A total of 58 semi-structured interviews were conducted between 2014 and 2015 (Gurney, 2018). The majority of the participants reported that the decision regarding to choose high-quality school for their children was based on their financial status. Some parents reported that they would not consider sending their children to private schools where they thought quality is better because they are unable to afford the expenses. Gurney also mentioned that "very few parents expressed satisfaction with the school that their children were attending currently, and even fewer described having exercised either voice or exit in response to quality concerns within a specific school (as opposed to the decision to reject the government sector entirely)" (p. 278).

A study conducted by Singh and Sarkar (2015) in Andhra Pradesh, as part of the *Young Lives* research program, found 53% of the parents chose public schools due to being close to home and only 6% of parents chose due to good quality of education. On the contrary, 63% of parents who sent their children to private schools reported as choosing the school for its good-quality of education, whereas, 22% selected due to being convenient to home. The majority of private schools were located in urban areas and parents who enroll their children in these schools have higher family income, and 86% of the schools offered English-medium instruction (Singh & Sarkar, 2015, p. 158). Interpersonal relationships between the student and the teacher were found to be very important as it influences students' overall learning in school. Students need to feel that teachers care about them and treat them equally.

2.3 Literature on School Responsiveness

A study by Alderman, Orazem, and Paterno (2001) conducted in Pakistan, found decreasing the fees in private schools could contribute to higher enrollment rates among children who were either enrolled in government school or were not attending school. However, they did not mention in depth about how parents perceived the responsiveness of the school system. This highlights the need for further research to study the issue of school responsiveness and parental involvement in private schools in a context with government support to access them, like in India. This will help to gain a better understanding of how parents describe the school responses and their experience of involvement and communication in the school.

Sharma (2018) conducted an ethnographic study in five government and 17 private schools in Delhi. The objective of this study was to explore "the relationship between families and schools and the children's agency" (p. 245). The findings showed that principals labelled parents of children from lower SES as illiterate, even though some parents were well educated.

As mentioned by Sharma (2018) "factors like education level, land ownership, being shopkeepers or traders, being factory workers with graduation, government jobs and political affiliations seemed to be factors that entered into the calculations and influenced the way the principals treated parents and their children" (p. 249). However, principals were responsive to these parents and assisted them in helping their children in return for favours. For example, one principal agreed to waive the child's monthly fee of "350 Rupees in exchange for the family ironing their clothes for free" (Sharma 2018, p. 251). Thus, "parents were viewed not only as customers but also as owners of resources that were useful to the school" (Sharma, 2018, p. 251).

Moreover, parents from lower SES were told by principals that they cannot support their children as they lack knowledge and do not have sufficient money. Therefore, they should listen to principals' parenting guidelines. Principals and parents had several meetings on parenting skills such as healthy meals and educational TV channels. The findings from this study indicate that this type of school responsiveness is not enough. Parents and children should be treated as important stakeholders so they can be involved in school similar to parents from higher SES.

2.4 Parental Involvement

Some studies explore the relationship between parental involvement and children's learning outcomes in schools in various countries (Muchuchuti, 2015; Park & Holloway, 2017; Sreekanth, 2010). There were total of 60 participants in Muchuchuti's study in Zimbabwe who were selected from private, public, and rural schools. There was a communication gap between teachers and parents, which resulted in students not doing well academically. Results also showed that some teachers were less concerned about students who had weaker academic performance. However, parents whose children attended private school reported having more communication and involvement with teachers. It is vital to note that parents with higher levels

of involvement resulted in students scoring high. Private schools offered resources including computers and information technology, which was lacking in rural schools due to having no access to electricity and computers. Therefore, unlike in private schools where teachers were able to share their contact number with parents, this was a challenge in rural schools.

Parents who showed less interaction and communication resulted in children scoring low. It was reported that students who performed low was due to parents' SES. Private and public primary schools had higher rate of parental involvement, but rural schools had lower "parental involvement, poor parental commitment, and poor teacher-parent relationship," which resulted in children scoring low in academics (Muchuchuti, 2015, p. 31). Factors such as poverty, parents' educational level, and distance of school from home played a key role in involvement in school. This explains that there is a lack of teacher strategies in rural schools to ensure that parents feel welcomed and accepted, so they could communicate with teachers and build strong relationships. Schools should work on improving the structure in terms of educating all parents about the significance of parental involvement in their children's education.

Mushtaq, Zafar, Choudhary, and Malik's (2012) study in Pakistan, also mentioned that parents were satisfied with how they were encouraged to take part in school activities and attend meetings to help enhance their children's academics. This study was conducted using convenience sampling and a questionnaire was used to collect data. A total of 76 participants were selected and they were parents of students enrolled in grade 9 and 10 in private school. It is a descriptive study and the results showed that the school environment helped children to flourish. Parents reported that they were encouraged to take part in their children's school and that "average parents prefer to attend meetings arranged at school" and majority of them were notified about children's school related activities (Mushtaq et al., 2012, p. 456). The study allows

to understand the key factors in successful parent-teacher relationship and its effects on children. These studies relate to the question about parental involvement as it looks at parents' perceptions on how they were involved in their child's school and with whom they communicated when they wanted to discuss their child's academic performance (Muchuchuti, 2015; Mushtaq et al., 2012; Park & Holloway, 2017). The findings showed that parents with higher qualifications attended school meetings.

There are different frameworks on parental involvement. Park and Holloway (2017) define three different categories of parental involvement: private-good, public-good, and parent-networking. Table 1 shows the difference between each category with information on the format it is used, operationalization, and expected benefits. Private-good is described as parents taking part in their children's school related activities in order to provide support to their children's learning at home. For instance, in the Indian context, if parents are regularly attending 'parent teacher meetings' (PTMs), which are meant to be held in school once a month or every two months, they can discuss their children's progress and raise questions and concerns. This can also help them to learn new strategies and skills to help their children with their academics.

According to Park and Holloway's framework, public-good can be understood as getting involved in school by volunteering in school held activities. It can benefit the school where parents get an opportunity to meet each other and share their learning experiences. Parent-networking means that parents of children building partnerships by contacting and communicating with each other. This allows them to stay up to date on school related information. These three categories of parental involvement are also discussed in the results chapter in relation to how parents in the current study were involved in their child's school and how they were able to help children at home with their academics.

Park and Holloway's analysis was on the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten, a national study that includes data gathered from kindergarten students, parents, teachers, and schools from United States. They conducted a longitudinal study by analyzing the dataset of analytic sample of 17,385 students enrolled in kindergarten school year during the 1998-1999. This cohort was followed from kindergarten to grade 5. The students were assessed at six different time periods during their school year. "Trained assessors administered child assessments in schools and conducted parent interviews by telephone" based on their demographics and parental involvement in school (Park & Holloway, 2017, p. 4). During spring in each year, survey was conducted in schools and completed by the school administrators based on the "school's physical, organizational, and learning" milieu (Park & Holloway, 2017, p. 4).

Table 1 Three Aspects of Parent School-Based Involvement.

Type	Format	Definition	Example	Operationalization	Expected Benefits
Public-good	School-sponsored	Involvement in school activities to benefit the school	Fundraising, PTA membership, volunteering	Whether or not parents participate in each of the activities	Shared benefits to other families at the same school, possible private benefit
Private-good	School-sponsored	Involvement in school activities to support own child	Attending parent-teacher conference, back-to-school night	Whether or not parents participate in each of the activities	Private returns to the family involved, possible spill-over effects to the school community
Parent network	Parent Initiated	Regular contact with parents in their children's school	Sharing information about school policies	The extensiveness of parents' network in their child's class	Public and private returns

Source: Reproduced from Park and Holloway, 2017, p. 2.

They found that "public and private-good parental involvement were more strongly associated with student-level mathematics achievement for high SES students; aggregated private-good parental involvement was more strongly related to school-level achievement in low

SES students" (Park & Holloway, 2017, p. 1). Public-good parental involvement in this study refers to "improve the school" and be involved in peer networking and private-good parental involvement refers to "help an individual's own child" (Park & Holloway, 2017, p. 1). This explains that both public good and private good played an integral role in parents' involvement in improving their children's academic scores.

McWayne et al. (2004) explored parental involvement and social and academic competencies of kindergarten children in urban schools in the United States. A total of 307 participants were selected from seven different public elementary schools in Northeast, United States. Families of children that received assistance, such as "Aid for Dependent Children or food stamps ranged from 90% to 98.5%" (McWayne et. al, 2004, p. 365). Researchers conducted exploratory factor analyses that showed three dimensions in relation to parental involvement: supportive home learning environment, direct school contact, and inhibited involvement. The parental involvement factor was measured using a self-reporting questionnaire that included 40 items related to the three dimensions. The results showed that parents who were actively involved in creating a learning milieu at home and are regularly communicating with the school and faced fewer difficulties in engaging with school have children who "demonstrate positive involvement with their peers, adults, and learning" (McWayne et. al, 2004, p. 363). The findings of this study help to show that continuous parental involvement in school and their children's education is related to children performing better academically and socially.

Antony-Newman (2019) examined how Eastern European immigrant parents in Canada were involved in their children's education. Purposeful and snowballing sampling was used to select 19 immigrant parents to interview. This study focused on Bourdieu's concepts of cultural and social capital, described in the study as: "cultural capital as parental education level, English

language skills, and literacy practices. Social capital is defined here by communication with teachers, social networks that contain people in professional occupations, and relationships with other parents" (Antony-Newman, 2019, p. 3). Parents viewed themselves as playing a key role at home where they can be actively involved in their child's learning and setting high expectations (Antony-Newman, 2019, p. 6). Also, only two parents reported having a language barrier when communicating with school and other parents were able to communicate with the teachers due to having higher educational background. Unlike in the study for this MA analysis, this is an example of cultural and social capital as majority of the parents' educational qualifications assisted them in interacting with the school and be actively involved with their children's learning and development at home.

2.5 Barriers to Accessing Schools

Substantial literature found exclusion is still present in schools in India (Bakhshi, Babulal & Trani, 2017; Das 2011; Das 2016; Ramachandran & Naorem, 2013; Singh, 2014). Barriers of accessing schools are multiple, including the lack of sufficient bilingual teachers at school (i.e., local language and English) who can facilitate parental involvement in school. If there are no bilingual teachers parents from marginalized groups may face language barriers when communicating about their child's progress. There are also other barriers.

Agrawal (2014) conducted a quantitative study using data from National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) of India to explore the inequality related to education that took place in India in both rural and urban areas. The "NSSO surveys are nationally represented household surveys, and followed stratified multi-stage sampling design" (Agrawal, 2014, p. 12). One of the main findings in this study was that disadvantaged households that experienced poverty were not able to admit their children in school in both urban and rural sector due to lower family income.

It was reported by many households that they had their daughters at home to take care of the younger children while parents are working. This study shows the barrier of financial constraints experienced by many households in both urban and rural area.

A study conducted by Mushtaq et al. (2012) used convenience sampling of total of 76 parents of students from one private school in Burewala, Pakistan. The aim of the study was to explore parents' perceptions on the milieu of the school, their awareness about school curriculum, parents' views regarding the interaction with schools, and "how the principal showed responsive towards parents' complaints, and the association between parents' qualifications and their involvement in the school meetings" (Mushtaq et al., p. 442). This research showed that there is a need for teachers to inform parents about the school curriculum on regular basis as they were less involved in school meetings. Parents were less involved due to lack of communication between parent and teacher being a contributing factor. Communication plays a critical role in helping children develop their personal and academic skills. Sample in this study is parents of students in private school. One of the main finding in this study was that there was lack of awareness among parents regarding the school curriculum. A sizeable proportion had low incomes. This study also shows the barrier of teachers not organizing activities for parents to ensure it meets their schedule so they can participate in their child's education to gain knowledge.

There have been some studies conducted on students' access in India and barriers that parents face while in the process of accessing freeship seats for their children (Mehendale et al., 2015; Srivastava & Noronha, 2016). Mehendale et al. (2015) reviewed "rules, guidelines, notifications of the appropriate governments related to the 25% provision and to assess the extent to which it has been operationalized through administrative measures; (b) examine the

administrative structures and processes for the implementation of the provision and its functioning and to assess the preparedness of the government to implement the said provision; and assess the nature of inclusion under this provision in select private unaided schools" (p. 45). The study was conducted in Bengaluru and Delhi in private-unaided schools. The results showed that there is lack of awareness regarding the RTE Act in schools and parents were unable to support their children in the education but was able to provide basic necessities such as uniforms, "food and school provisions" (Mehendale et al., 2015, p. 48).

In addition to this, it was also mentioned that the government websites were not useful in assisting parents to learn about the admission process due to language barrier, which also does not provide adequate guidance to "families about seeking admission in a neighbourhood private unaided school" (Mehendale et al., 2015, p. 47). Language was shown one of the key concerns in this study and it is the school's responsibility to provide information in various formats and languages so parents from all backgrounds can understand. In the early implementation period, there was a lack of awareness of the RTE Act among parents in India, which can possibly make it difficult for families to understand their children's right to education in depth (Kumari, 2015; Mehendale et. al, 2015; Ojha, 2013).

Ojha (2013) conducted a descriptive study to examine how the RTE Act was being implemented and "its awareness among teachers, parents and children" (p. 2). "Observation method was used to collect the data coupled with unstructured questionnaire and interview schedule" (Ojha, p. 2). Several findings were stated in this study, but in relation to the barriers to accessing schools was that there is no partnership between the teachers, principals and parents and children, which results in children enrolled in government school to experience education that is lacking in teacher training, lack of equipment and resources available, and helping parents

gain knowledge about the RTE Act, so they can be aware of the benefit that their child is entitled to and can access. This study describes that lack of interaction between the school and parents results in children facing challenges while studying in school. This shows the barrier faced by parents as they do not have access to activities that can help them learn about their child's education and be actively involved in school.

Srivastava and Noronha (2016) conducted an exploratory study to examine "relative household costs and experiences of accessing private and government schooling under RTE Act in the early implementation phase" (p. 561). The data were collected from 290 households using the household survey and 40 households were selected to conduct semi-structured interviews. The site chosen for this study was in a slum in Delhi. An important finding was that families with lower education levels and relatively more disadvantaged were unable to complete the paperwork to admit their children in desirable schools, particularly for the freeship. This study shows that the lack of structures and processes to help parents with lower SES backgrounds access freeship seats was a barrier.

2.6 Conceptual Framework and Key Dimensions

In this study, the three dimensions of parental involvement by McWayne et al. (2004) are used to analyze the findings. McWayne et al. (2004) used the "Parent Involvement in Children's Education Scale, which was informed by Epstein's (1995) categories of parent involvement and co-constructed with parents and teachers in a large urban Head Start program as part of a larger university-school district partnership project" (p. 365). This process led to a "40-item self-report instrument and the exploratory factor resulted in three reliable dimensions" (McWayne et al.,

2004, p. 365). The framework developed by Epstein (1995) includes six types of involvement

that are designed especially for educators to use in their workplace to cultivate "more

comprehensive programs of school and family partnerships and also help researchers locate their

questions and results in ways that inform and improve practice" (p. 705). The three dimensions,

i.e., supportive home learning environment, direct school contact, and inhibited involvement,

were found to be significant in the framework modeled.

2.6.1 Definition of the Three Dimensions of Parental Involvement Dimensions and Application to Analysis

McWayne et al., (2004) define the three dimensions as stated below:

The supportive home learning environment dimension is characterized by parent activities and behaviours that promote learning at home and reinforce learning that occurs during the child's school day. The direct school contact factor is comprised of items that describe parents' direct involvement in school-based activities. The inhibited involvement factor describes barriers to parents' involvement in their children's education, such as time constraints and competing responsibilities (p. 368).

The three dimensions along with the 30 items are listed in Table 2, originally used in

McWayne et al.'s (2004) study.

Table 2 Exploratory Factor Structure for PICES-K Dimensions

Supportive Home Learning Environment	I provide my child with learning opportunities
	I ask my child about his/her day at school
	I talk to my child about what they want to be when they grow up
	I say positive things to my child about his/her school
	I set regular after-school routine for my child
	I follow a specific set of rules to discipline my child
	I buy educational materials for my child
	I help my child practice what he/she learns at school
	I give my child rewards when he/she learns at school
	I review my child's school work on a regular basis
	I make sure that my child has the school supplies he/she needs
	School-to-home communications are respectful to me as a parent
	I talk to my child about what it's like for them to be a boy or a girl
	I plan after-school and summer learning activities for my child
	I talk to my child about how important school is
	My child hears me praise others who do well in school

	I feel that my ideas are welcomed by my child's teacher
	I discipline my child when I receive reports of misbehavior
	I tell my child how I expect him/her to behave at school
Direct School Contact	I attend parent meetings
	I participate in parent education programs at my child's school
	I create opportunities to get to know my child's teacher
	I talk with the teacher about how my child is doing
	I check the school schedule for upcoming events
Inhibited Involvement	Household tasks prevent me from having enough time to read to my child
	I worry that I don't spend enough time talking with my child about what he/she is learning at school
	I have a tight schedule and do not have time to talk with other parents
	Home or work responsibilities prevent me from going on school trips
	My parental responsibilities are stressful
	I am concerned that I am not involved enough in school activities

Source: Reproduced from McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen and Sekino, 2004, p. 369.

However, the limitation of this framework is that it only related to two of the research questions. Also, while direct school contact was part of the framework, if indirect school contact was also included, the framework could have helped in guiding the research question on how parents were involved in monitoring their children's education. For example, indirect school contact could relate to how parents at home were involved on WhatsApp and Snap Homework through their phones, and whether they were supported from school. This would be especially helpful if parents could not attend PTMs since there were no other structures like SMCs. This framework could be adapted to suit the context of this study by adding new categories in each dimension that could help to answer all the research questions. For example, categories can relate to the quality of education provided to freeship children; how children were included or excluded in their school; and how teachers were responsive towards children. Data in my study are related to these categories.

Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs (2000) conducted a quantitative study in the United States to "develop and evaluate Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ), a multidimensional scale of family involvement in early childhood education" (p. 367). Participants in this study were "641 primary care-providers of children enrolled in the school district's Head Start, Comprehensive Day Care (CDC), kindergarten, or first grade programs in the northeastern United States" (Fantuzzo et al., 2000, p. 369). The FIQ is defined as a rating scale that question the care-providers regarding how they are involved in their children's experiences related to early education (Fantuzzo et al., 2000).

Exploratory factor analyses revealed three factors mentioned in FIQ, which includes "school-based involvement, home-based involvement, home-school conferencing" and these factors corresponds to Epstein's (1995) six types of involvement (Fantuzzo et al., p. 370). Another objective of this study was to explore using the three factors "to determine whether there were differences in these involvement constructs as a function of child and careprovider characteristics and preschool, kindergarten, and first-grade differences" (Fantuzzo et al., 2000, p. 373). As shown in Table 6, it lists the types of involvement supporting the factors examined in the FIQ. The results in that study found that parents with more education were more involved in home-school conferencing. Parents with lower education levels were involved in their children's education similar to other parents with higher education. In the home-based involvement, parents from all levels of educational backgrounds were significantly found to be involved. In addition to this, parents with high school diploma and further education were reported as being more involved in school-based activities; whereas, parents who attained less than high school diploma scored lower in school-based involvement.

Table 3 FIQ Factors and Epstein's (1995) Multidimensional Framework of Parent Involvement

FIQ Factors	Epstein's Categories of Involvement
School-Based Involvement	Volunteering
	Decision-Making
Home-Based Involvement	Basic Obligations
	Home Involvement
	Supportive Learning Environment
Home-School Conferencing	Communication
	Home-School Collaboration

Note. Adapted from Fantuzzo, E. Tighe, and Childs, 2000, pp. 372-373.

Furthermore, with regards to school-based involvement, parents in the Head Start program shown to be more involved in school activities and kindergarten parents were more involved in CDC (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). "The home-school conferencing results indicated that CDC parents were conferencing with teachers significantly less than Head Start, kindergarten, or first-grade parents and that there were no significant differences in conferencing among Head Start, kindergarten, and first-grade programs" (Fantuzzo et al., 2000, p. 373). In contrast to this, among all of the educational programs, there were not any significant differences reported (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). This study is significant to note as it helps to understand the validity of the framework used in McWayne et al.'s study (2004) as that was also created using Epstein's categories of involvement.

Griffin and Steen (2010) conducted a quantitative study to explore how school counsellors were involved in school-family-community partnerships considering Epstein's framework and how it relates to the occupation of school counsellors. Participants in this study were "205 members of the American School Counselor Association and these counsellors worked in middle, elementary and high school" (Griffin & Steen, 2010, p. 220). A survey in the form of questionnaire was sent to all counsellors, which asked numbers of questions about school-family-community partnerships (Griffin & Steen. 2010, p. 20). The researchers used

deductive analysis to individually code the data on questions regarding involvement. The results showed that about 73.2% of participants mentioned that they "agreed" how "school-family-community-partnerships are useful," whereas; "only 1.5% were "neutral" and 25.4% "disagreed" that school-family-community-partnerships are useful" (Griffin & Steen, 2010, p. 221). It is interesting to note that 54.6% of the respondents said they were confident in their capability to create an environment that allows school, family, and community to build partnerships with each other.

On the other hand, 30.3% of the respondents reported as not being confident in their capability to create a milieu in building "partnerships with families and communities, and 15.1% marked the "neutral" response to this statement" (Griffin & Steen, 2010, p. 221). Considering Epstein's framework, in this study, there were some comments that fall in the "communication category and these comments were about sending newsletters home and communicating with parents about available resources" Griffin & Steen, 2010, p. 221). These results indicate that while school counsellors indicated that they find the school-family-community partnerships to be useful, but they were also not much involved. This study helps to make connections between the framework used and McWayne et al.'s (2004)[4] dimensions as it also discusses about the school-to-home communications as one of the categories in "supportive home learning environment" dimension (p. 369). This shows the reliability of these dimensions as Epstein's categories contribute to this.

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[4] This Thesis utilized McWayne et al.'s (2004) framework and the term 'dimension' throughout this thesis refers to McWayne et al.'s (2004) framework.

McWayne et al.'s (2004) framework was adopted to inform the results because the categories selected from the three dimensions help to relate to the research questions explored in this study. McWayne et al.'s (2004) framework was developed from Epstein's (1995) original framework. However, as shown in Table 4, very few categories relate to the current study. On the other hand, McWayne et al.'s (2004) framework directly relates to the categories emerged from the data and it also helped to answer the two main research questions. Questionnaire used in Griffin and Steen's (2004) study was also adapted from Epstein's framework, as the researches used the six types of parental involvement and conducted deductive analysis to explore an open-ended question based on "parental involvement in school-family-community partnerships" (p. 220). Although, Griffin and Steen's data instrument informed their results in detail, but McWayne et al. (2004) specify categories for each dimension, which helped to understand and select the ones that directly relates to the research questions explored in the current study.

As shown in Table 4, the items for three dimensions were selected from Table 2 to help categorize the findings in this analysis. The items listed in each dimension helped to answer the most directly related research questions on parental involvement. As shown in Table 5, the dimensions are not applied to research questions 1, 2 and 3 as the categories in the framework by McWayne et al. (2004) do not match with the categories that emerged from the data to help answer the research questions. These questions are answered using the categories emerged from the interviews. However, all three dimensions of the framework were applied to questions 4 and 5 as shown in Table 5. The research question 4 based on parental involvement and monitoring children's education is analyzed using the category "I am able to help my child practice what he/she learns in school and I am able to review my child's school work on a regular basis" to

explore how parents ensured that they receive information about their child's school work, so they can monitor their academic progress. For instance, in results chapter, parents' perceptions on their access to technology and tuition teacher is discussed in regards to how it has helped them to be aware of their child's school work.

Table 4 Adapted Framework to Analyze Parental Involvement

Supportive Home Learning Environment	I am able to help my child practice what he/she learns at school
	I am able to review my child's school work on a regular basis
Direct School Contact	I attend parent meetings
	I participate in parent education programs at my child's school
	I create opportunities to get to know my child's teacher
	I talk with the teacher about how my child is doing
Inhibited Involvement	I have a tight schedule and do not have time to talk with other parents
	I am concerned that I am not involved enough in school activities

Source: Adapted from McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen and Sekino, 2004, p. 369.

Table 5 Research Questions and Applied Parental Involvement Dimensions

Research Questions	Adapted Dimensions of Parental Involvement
1. What were the parents' perceptions on the quality of education provided to their children?	N/A
2. What were the parents' perceptions on their children's experiences of social inclusion or exclusion in school?	N/A
3. What were the parents' perceptions on the responsiveness of the freeship private school regarding their child's academic needs?	N/A
4. How were parents involved in monitoring their child's academic progress?	Dimension 1 Categories: I am able to help my child practice what he/she learns at school.
	I am able to review my child's schoolwork on a regular basis
	Dimension 2 Categories: I attend parent meetings
	I talk with the teacher about how my child is doing.
	I participate in parent education programs at my child's school
	I create opportunities to get to know my child's teacher.

5.Did parents face barriers when communicating with teachers or other parents?	Dimension 3 categories: I have a tight schedule and do not have time to talk with other parents.
	I am concerned that I am not involved enough in school activities.

Note. Adapted from McWayne et al., 2004, p. 369.

Supportive home learning environment is important to ensure that parents are involved in their children's learning at home. This dimension will be used to answer question 4 as shown in Table 5. It was somewhat adapted for analysis. The dimension on direct school contact is important in answering question 4 as well. All four categories listed in Table 5 are used to explore how parents were involved in monitoring their child's academic progress. These categories helped to inform the results based on attending PTM regularly, communicating with teachers in Hindi, and checking their children's diaries as well. All modes of communication, whether it is through meeting the teachers in person and/or staying up-to-date by using the WhatsApp group created for parents, they both are important as they assist parents to gain knowledge about their children's education.

"Direct school contact" helped to explain how parents in this study are directly involved in their children's school related events. If schools fulfill their responsibilities by showing care towards students', parents', and teachers' needs and that all staff stay adhered to policies set in place, it can create a welcoming place for all children to study and flourish. In addition to this, it is the principal and teachers' duty to include parents in attending school meetings and related activities regularly as it helps to enhance their knowledge about what their children are being taught in school and what resources are available to help both parents and children succeed.

It is vital to note if parents are facing difficulties in being involved at the school. This refers to the dimension of inhibited involvement. For example, there may be difficulty in

communicating due to not being able to speak in English, feeling hesitant to voice their opinion regarding any concerns, and/or do not have enough time to attend school PTMs, then it can result in not being aware of their children's academic progress and how they are being supported in school. Two categories listed for question 5 in Table 5 helped to inform whether any parents felt that they did not have sufficient time to communicate with other EWS and non-EWS parents and were concerned about not being involved in their children's education. Categories listed for question 5 were used to answer whether parents faced any barriers while communicating with teachers and other parents and how did they overcome those barriers. For instance, "In most countries, the vast majority of students are taught in a language other than their home or first language, which compromises their ability to learn effectively" (UNESCO, 2017, p. 205). In the case of the schools in this study, if the language of instruction in some private schools is English, then it can be a barrier to encourage parents who are not fluent in English to participate in school activities.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to provide background to the data source and the methods used in this study for analysis. The methodological framework of the inductive approach is defined and explained how it was useful in analyzing the data. It also discusses the approach used to analyze the data, including the coding framework. NVivo was used to create codes and tables that illustrate nodes and their descriptions.

3.1 Data Source

The analysis in this MA study focuses on examining how Dalit parents whose children were successful in accessing freeship seats in private schools in Delhi felt the schools responded; and how these parents were involved in their children's schooling in the context of the RTE Act. This MA study used data from a larger research project on the right to education in India.[5] It used a databank of semi-structured household interview data that were collected through the *Insights into Education Household Semi-Structured Interview Schedule* (2017) for the larger study. The interview schedule was devised by Srivastava and senior researchers at Collaborative Research and Dissemination (CORD), the collaborating research organization in India for the project. The interview schedule went through several rounds of revisions and was piloted in a similar population before it was administered. It was administered by a team of field researchers who were trained by senior researchers from CORD with input by Srivastava.

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[5] The larger project was headed by Prof. Srivastava, funded by an Insight Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

3.2 Data Collection Tool

The interview schedule was administered to a sub-sample of households that identified as Dalit, and who had been successful in receiving a private school freeship in 2015 for at least one child. The schedule was administered the same catchment area as the survey by field researchers in Delhi in 2017. Households were drawn from among the 851 that were included earlier in the *Insights into Education Household Survey* in 2015 for the larger research project. That survey had four modules designed to gather data on a number of issues, including: SES and education background of households; schooling histories, drop-out, and attendance of school-aged children; schooling choices and decision-making; household schooling expenditure; and processes and experiences of applying for and accessing schools via private school freeships.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain a more in-depth understanding of the schooling experiences of freeship households two years on. Dalit households were chosen as the focus for the interviews because they are amongst the most marginalized, and there is little research reporting their experiences post-implementation of the RTE Act. The data were used for the original purpose they were intended. The depth of data allowed to engage in questions for this study building on the larger *Insights into Education* project.

The following research questions were investigated for this study:

1. What were the parents' perceptions on the quality of education provided to their children?

2. What were the parents' perceptions on their children's experiences of social inclusion or exclusion in school?

3. What were the parents' perceptions on the responsiveness of the freeship private school regarding their child's academic needs?

4. How were parents involved in monitoring their child's academic progress?

5. Did parents face barriers when communicating with teachers or other parents?

The interview schedule was designed for three potential cases that households may fall into. In Case A, the focus child from 2015 would still be attending the same private school on a freeship in 2017. In this case, parents were asked questions on issues, including: school and school responsiveness; reflections on social experience; and summative reflections. Some of the questions asked in Case A, included: Can you provide an example of a time when you had questions about your child's progress? Whom did you approach? What was the response? How do you feel the school treats freeship children? Is this the same or different from non-freeship children? In what ways? Do you feel your child has benefitted from the freeship? Why or why not? In Case B, the focus child from 2015 is no longer attending the same school and is no longer a freeship private school student. In Case C, the focus child from 2015 is a freeship student at another private school in 2017.

All of the interview households were Case A, that is, the focus child attended the same private school in 2017 on a freeship basis as they were in 2015. As far as possible, interview participants were the same respondents who completed the household survey in 2015 (most often, mothers). The interviews were conducted in Hindi and transcribed in Roman Hindi. They were not translated in English given the fluency of the PI and the research team. They were not translated into English for this analysis as I am also fluent in Hindi. This allows one to maintain authenticity of the voices as much as possible during analysis.

3.3 Data Analysis

I conducted original analysis of *Insights into Education* household interview data for this study. This analysis is intended to inform the larger project team for more in-depth areas of eventual inquiry. It is not intended as a final analysis of the interviews. I verified the draft transcriptions and made changes for accuracy. The next step was to use the axial coding

technique, defined by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) as: "a category label ascribed to a group of open codes whose referents are similar in meaning" (p. 671). This form of coding allowed me to identify the connections between the codes. For instance, when I was examining the research question regarding the barriers that parents faced, I considered questions asked in the transcript that relates to the theme barriers faced and saved them under the nodes in NVivo. This coding framework was necessary to develop as it became guiding tool in the data analysis process and when organizing themes and patterns from the interviews.

I followed grounded theory procedures to identify key relationships and patterns in the data. For example, the first step was to use this theory to explain the topic of my study and use tools including, "coding framework, theoretical sampling, and theoretical saturation" to fully develop a theory (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 75). For example, this helped to examine the differences and similarities between the kind of activities that parents were involved in the school and barriers they faced while communicating with teachers and other parents. Theoretical sampling is defined as "the researcher to have sufficient data to be able to generate and 'ground' the theory in the research context" (Cohen et al., p. 223). Theoretical saturation is described by Cohen et al. as a researcher would know that they have reached saturation when "no new insights, properties, dimensions, relationships, codes or categories produced even when new data are added; are accounted for in the core categories, and sub-categories and when the coding, categories and data support the emerging theory" (p. 720).

Keeping this aim in mind, I used NVivo to code the interviews, which helped in locating themes, make meaning of the words that relate to the context, organizing themes, and making links to understand the relationships between various responses in the data. Below is the table that identifies the nodes and their description that specifies the meaning of nodes (Table 6).

Table 6 Nodes and their Description.

Nodes	Description
Quality of Education	Parents' perceptions on how they felt the quality of education was at the schools their children attended.
Treatment of EWS Children in School Exclusion Inclusion	Perception of parents on whether their child was being socially included or socially excluded in school.
School Responsiveness to Academics	Support provided by staff in school to students regarding resources given to learn, including extra classes and extra-curricular activities.
Parental Involvement Monitoring Child's Academics	How parents took part in monitoring their child's education on a daily basis How often they communicate with the school (e.g., parent-teacher meetings; homework) Parents' use of technology to communicate
Barriers when Communicating	The kinds of barriers faced by parents when they approached any staff in school and support they received.

Note: Created using the QSR International's NVivo 12 Software.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

While analyzing the interviews, bias may arise from the assumptions that I may have regarding participants' responses to certain questions they were asked. Hence, this can affect the validity and reliability of my analysis. Creswell and Miller (2000) define triangulation as "a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (p. 126). It is a methodical process which requires a researcher to locate themes or categories in data by ensuring to exclude any coinciding areas. In qualitative research, generally researchers are expected to provide evidence collected from various forms of data and combine them, which includes "observation, interviews, and documents to locate major and minor themes" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). Another procedure followed to establish the validity in this study is to "describe the setting, the

participants, and the themes of a qualitative study in rich detail" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.

128). The purpose of this procedure is to provide thick description in rich detail to assist the

readers comprehend that the narrative is trustworthy.

In the analysis, I provided detailed explanation of the participants, background, and the

categories developed in detail, and double-checked with my supervisor for further clarifications.

Household profiles are described in next chapter in detail. As Golafshani (2003) mentioned "to

ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial" (p. 601).

After finishing the coding in NVivo, I created Table 7 to list the categories that are used to

inform the results. Excerpts from transcripts were also selected to discuss in the analysis. These

were reviewed by Dr. Srivastava to ensure that the excerpts selected fit into the appropriate

categories. Expert checking is significant as it helps to confirm the consistency of the analysis.

3.5 Methodological Framework

3.5.1 Inductive Analysis

As mentioned by Thomas (2006) "inductive analysis refers to approaches that primarily

use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations

made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher" (p. 238). This approach relates to this

study as findings were discovered by analyzing the data. Although, the objectives and research

questions in this study was also considered while doing inductive analysis. Table 7 shows the

process used in inductive analysis. These five steps were followed to analyze the transcripts in

detail.

Table 7 Procedures for Inductive Analysis

Preparation of Raw Data	Format the raw data files in a common format. Print and/or make a backup of each raw data file
Close Reading of Text	Once text has been prepared, the raw text is read in detail until the evaluator is familiar with its content and gains an understanding of the themes and events covered in the text.
Creation of Categories	The evaluator identifies and defines categories or themes. In inductive coding, categories are commonly created from actual phrases or meanings in specific text segments.
Overlapping Coding and Uncoded text	Among the commonly assumed rules that underlie qualitative coding, two are different from the rules typically used in quantitative coding: (a) one segment of text may be coded into more than one category, and (b) a considerable amount of the text (e.g., 50% or more) may not be assigned to any category, because much of the text may not be relevant to the evaluation objectives.
Continuing Revision and Refinement of Category System	Within each category, search for subtopics, including contradictory points of view and new insights. Select appropriate quotations that convey the core theme or essence of a category.

Source: Reproduced from Thomas, 2006, pp. 241-242.

The raw data were already prepared by Dr. Srivastava and the CORD team. After having access to the data, I read and listened to each transcript in detail and made edits. While reading the text, research questions were considered and identified and described the categories by selecting the phrases that relate to each category. After all the categories and related texts were arranged in NVivo, it was reread to ensure that the codes are not overlapping. The last step was to revise each category to explore any subtopics that derive from the main category and then select excerpts that corresponds to the main category.

3.6 Ethics Statement

The research program was approved following ethical guidelines of the University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board (REB). The data are from the PI's project which had ethics approval. A modification was made and approved. The data are being used in the same way and for the same purpose as was originally intended. Access to interviews was granted via a

secure site with a secured password. I do not have direct connection to the participants as this

data are gathered by the research team.

Chapter 4

4.1 Results and Analysis

The purpose of this study was to examine how Dalit parents whose children were successful in accessing freeship seats in private schools in Delhi felt the schools responded; and how these parents were involved in their children's schooling in the context of the RTE Act. The aim of the analysis is to help direct future analysis for the larger research program. The first section in this chapter introduces the demographics of participants in the study, which includes a total of 47 household interviewees, as some interviews had more than one participant. The sections following the demographics explain the findings discovered while analyzing the data. The results are organized by stating the dimensions of parental involvement with sub-categories from the dimensions from McWayne et al., (2004). Each sub-category has categories described which are applied to the data from the interviews.

Dimension 1: supportive home learning environment include sub-categories from the adapted conceptual framework with categories emerged from the data, and includes: "I am able to help my child practice what he/she learns at school and I am able to review my child's school work on a regular basis" (McWayne et al., 2004, p. 369). The category emerged from the data applied to Dimension 1 is 'How parents took part in monitoring their child's education on a daily basis'?

Dimension 2: direct school contact includes categories "I attend parent meetings; I talk with the teacher about how my child is doing; and I participate in parent education programs at my child's school" (McWayne et al., 2004, p. 369). The categories from the data applied to dimension 2 are 'How often they communicate with the school? (e.g., parent-teacher meetings; homework) and Parents' use of technology to communicate.'

Dimension 3: inhibited involvement includes categories of: "I have a tight schedule and do not have time to talk with other parents; and I am concerned that I am not involved enough in school activities" (McWayne et al., 2004, p. 369). The category from the data applied to dimension 3 is 'The kinds of barriers faced by parents when they approached any staff in school and support they received.'

4.2 Household Profiles

It was important in this study to consider parents' backgrounds on education, occupation, and reported income group. The analysis included 43 interviews, in which there were a total of 47 participants, either the mother or the father. Both parents were interviewed in four interviews. In the sample, 36 out of 43 mothers' occupation was housewife, whereas 38 out of 47 fathers held a job. Figure 1 shows the education attained by fathers and mothers in the household. The greatest number of fathers (20) and mothers (13) reported some secondary as the highest level of education. It is important to note that EWS freeship only applies to households that have income less than Rs. 100,000/year. In this analysis, 58% of households reported falling within the

eligibility criterion. The majority of mothers were housewives, and the majority of fathers had a

private job. Four fathers were unemployed at the time of the interview.
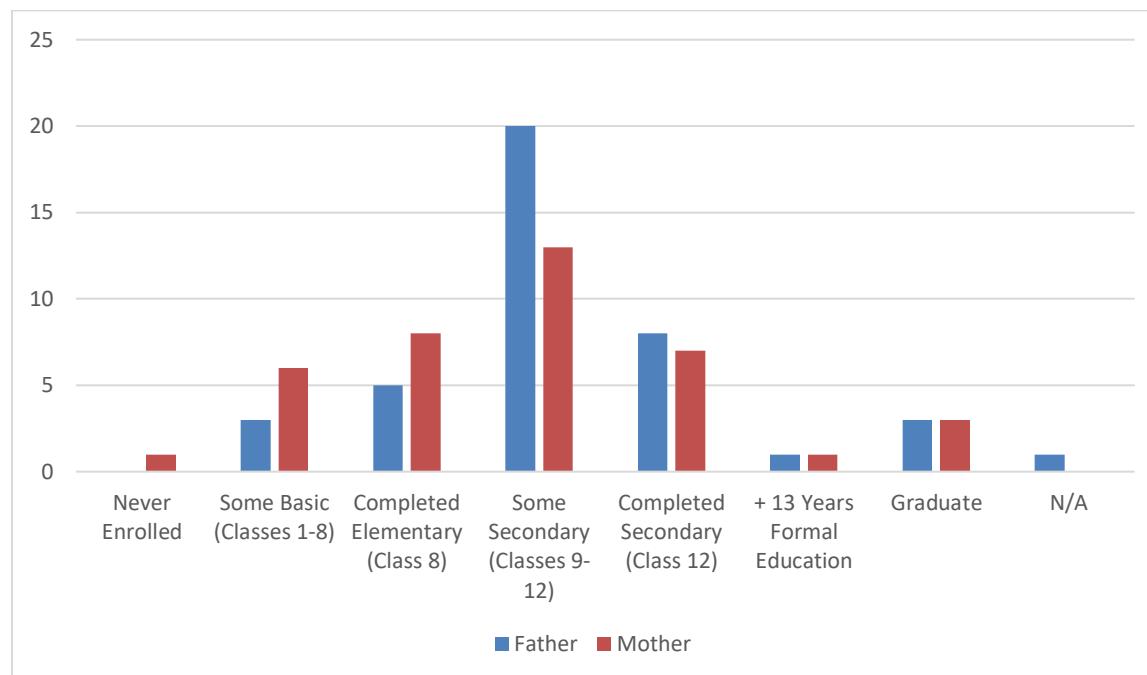
Figure 1: Mother's and Father's Highest Level of Education
Source: Insights into Education Household Semi-Structured Interview Schedule, 2017

Table 8 presents the household profiles of the total number of children in each household

and their schooling status at the time of the interviews in 2017. There were 89 children in total in

the households interviewed, of whom 68 had a freeship seat in a private school. The majority of

children in the interview households accessed private schools via a freeship. Figure 1 presents

the number of children from the households that accessed private schools in total, the number of

children with a freeship, and the total number of children in the households that attended

government schools. It is important to note that all of the focus children who attended private

schools with a freeship in 2015 continued doing so in 2017. All of the 68 children were enrolled

in private schools have freeships and 18 children were enrolled in government schools. As

shown in Table 8, there were no data reported on the schooling of 3 children.

Table 8 Children's Profiles in Interview Households

Household (HH) ID	Number of Children	Focus Child School*	Focus Child Grade	Sibling School+^	Sibling Grade	Number of Freeships in Household
1	2	Private	1	S1: Private	S1: 4	2
2	3	Private	3	S1: Government S2: —	S1: Pre-primary S2: —	1
3	3	Private	2	S1: Private S2: Government	S1: 5 S2: 8	2
4	2	Private	3	S1: Private	S1: Pre-primary	2
5	2	Private	2	S1: Government	S1: Pre-primary	1
6	2	Private	3	S1: Government	S1: 7	1
7	2	Private	3	S1: Private	S1: 7	2
8	2	Private	3	S1: Private	S1: 5	2
9	2	Private	7	S1: Private	S1: 6	2
10	2	Private	1	S1: Government	S1: 3	1
11	3	Private	2	S1: Private S2: Government	S1: 7 S2: 10	2
12	2	Private	3	S1: Government	S1: 8	1
13	2	Private	3	S1: Government	S1: 5	1
14	2	Private	3	S1: —	S1: —	1
15	2	Private	2	S1: Private	S1: 1	2
16	3	Private	2	S1: Private S2: Private	S1: 1 S2: 1	3
17	2	Private	2	S1: Private	S1: 1	2
18	1	Private	4	N/A	N/A	1
19	2	Private	3	S1: Government	S1: 7	1
20	4	Private	3	S1: Private S2: Private S3: Government	S1: — S2: — S3: 3	3
21	1	Private	2	N/A	N/A	1
22	1	Private	2	N/A	N/A	1
23	1	Private	2	N/A	N/A	1
24	3	Private	5	S1: Government S2: Government	S1: 6 S2: 11	1
25	3	Private	2	S1: Private S2: Government	S1: 7 S2: 8	2
26	2	Private	5	S1: Private	S1: 3	2
27	2	Private	3	S1: Private	S1: 4	2
28	1	Private	6	N/A	N/A	1
29	1	Private	4	N/A	N/A	1
30	3	Private	2	S1: Private S2: Government	S1: 3 S2: 7	2
31	2	Private	4	S1: Private	S1: —	2
32	2	Private	2	S1: Government	S1: 8	1

33	2	Private	2	S1: Government	S1: 6	1
34	3	Private	3	S1: Private S2: Government	S1: Lower kindergarten S2: 6	2
35	2	Private	3	S1: Private	S1: 5	2
36	3	Private	4	S1: Private S2: Private	S1: 11 S2: 9	3
37	2	Private	2	S1: Private	S1: Pre-primary	2
38	2	Private	4	S1: Private	S1: 2	2
39	1	Private	4	N/A	N/A	1
40	1	Private	2	N/A		1
41	2	Private	4	S1: Government	S1: 7	1
42	2	Private	3	S1: Private	S1: 4	2
43	2	Private	4	S1: —	S1: —	1
	89					68

Source: Insights into Education Interview Data, 2017
Note:
*: Focus child refers to the child who originally had a freeship in the 2015 Insights into Education Survey and who was the focus of the 2017 follow-up household interview on which this analysis is based.
+: 'S' refers to sibling of the focus child. They are numbered continuously.
^: — Indicates missing data.

4.3 Parents' Perceptions on the Quality of Education

Every child has a right to high quality education and teachers play an important role in delivering quality education. Teachers should provide ongoing support to all children regardless of their background. Also, private and government schools and teachers must offer resources to parents, so that they can be involved in their child's education. However, teachers may lack access to resources in the school which are required for children to succeed academically. In this study, parents expressed their perceptions on the school environment and on the quality of education in both private and government schools. There were uneven experiences reported by the parents in regard to the perceived quality of education in private and government schools. The following were perceptions of some parents:

> The school is good. I mean when my daughter was young, when she was in nursery, then she had pretty good teachers. Because the thing is, right, that my daughter didn't really speak much before but then when she got these teachers they helped her speak up. Like, 'Dear, make sure to take part in the activity, participate in dancing.' […] But everything

is fine now. She participates in all the activities. Like, if there's a school function, they have to recite a poem or something, then she can recite it all. So, she always had really good teachers. (Mother, HH 25, p. 4).

As the mother above noted, she felt her child's teachers played a role in her development. The father in Household 4 compared his perception on the quality of education at government schools based on his assessment of children in his extended family's experiences, but not on his own experiences. He felt that private schools would better prepare children for academic success, communication in English, and towards future-oriented skills.

Many parents mentioned that teachers used a smart board. Some parents stated that the schools offered extra classes to help children at no cost, however, this was not the case at most schools. In fact, nearly all the households sent their children to private tuition classes at further expense. Parents said they were encouraged by teachers to support children's ongoing academics by setting up a supportive milieu at home such as a study area. The majority of the parents reported that their children shared what happened in school on a regular basis.

However, large class sizes in the private schools their children attended was one of the main concerns reported by some parents. According to the RTE Act, the mandated student-teacher ratio is 30:1 (Government of India, 2009). For example, the mother in Household 20 stated that there were 46 children in her child's class. Another claimed that class sizes could be 50-70 but was aware that the ratio was 30:1. That particular parent was very involved. In addition to accessing the technological application on her child's homework, having some secondary education, she said she helped with Hindi and math, as she was not fluent in English. However, she felt that school should provide supplemental tuition for more support. Among participants, this household was relatively better-off (reported monthly income of Rs. 25,000-34,000), exceeding the income criterion for the freeship. Three children were enrolled in private school on freeship. Whereas one child was attending government school.

4.4 Treatment at School

Parents reported uneven experiences in interviews on how their children were treated in school. Some said that initially they thought teachers would treat their children differently if they were aware of their freeship status. One parent was concerned because of negative news in the media. The majority of the parents did not feel their children were treated differently. They felt that teachers were generally supportive and that their children were included in extra-curricular activities. However, some reported that their children were excluded from activities. In one instance, one mother went to the school to speak to the teacher, after which her daughter was included in class activities. Some others reported negative experiences. However, there are some households that mentioned that their children do not share anything about the private school with them even when asked. Therefore, they expressed their perceptions based on their involvement in PTM and monitoring their children's homework on the app.

One mother said that there was a medical incident with her daughter at school and the parents were not informed. The schools should be accountable to ensure that if any incident occurs with any child, their parents are contacted immediately. The same parent expressed how she noticed during the PTM, the teacher was not attentive towards her answers and concerns. The teacher did not specify the reason behind child's weak progress in academics in detail. It is very interesting that when this parent spoke to other parents during PTM about her child's performance in school, they mentioned that the child is doing well in dance and play, but not in studies. This parent in interview took initiative to ask other parents because she felt the teacher was not helpful. She felt the teacher did not spend adequate time in answering her questions about her child's progress. This parent felt ignored as she was not notified about her daughter being ill and not getting enough attention during the PTM.

4.5 Parents' Perceptions on School Responsiveness to Academics

Parents commented on how schools responded to academic concerns. Parents stated that the teachers encouraged them to communicate with other parents and seek for any kind of assistance with children's education. However, some parents expressed their feelings about how they appreciated the teachers' effort to support them by connecting them with other parents. Some parents reported that their child's teacher offered to communicate with the tuition teacher to speak about child's academics. The teachers encouraged parents to help their children with homework at home as much as possible and also enroll them in tuition, but further support needs to be provided by the school to ensure that freeship children's academic needs are being met. The majority of the parents in this study were not fluent in English and had low education levels. Therefore, they enroll their children in private tuition, which was an extra financial burden for them.

4.5.1 Dimension 1 Categories: I am able to help my child practice what he/she learns at school; I am able to review my child's schoolwork on a regular basis

4.5.2.1 How did parents took part in monitoring their child's education on a daily basis?

Some parents expressed that teachers offered assistance to parents on how to support their children at home. For example, one parent reported that they were taught by the teacher how to teach their child at home. The teacher communicated in Hindi because the parent was not fluent in English:

> There was this that in the beginning she went to pre-school they teach A-B-C-D there. In our time, A for Apple, B for Ball, they taught this. At their her school is different. So, ma'am called me that she did not understood properly. Then I went to meet the madam. Then madam specially wrote it for me that teach her like this, not like this. Then they told me that that's how make A for Apple, this way explained to me everything in Hindi that that's how its taught. Wrote it for me fully up till Z" (Mother, HH 41, p. 12).

The child in this household no longer attend tuition due to family facing financial crisis. Therefore, the mother took the time to help with homework in English but it is not ideal because they are not fluent in English. It is also important to consider that not all parents can afford tuition as they have to fulfill their basic needs. Some parents reported that they assisted their children at home with the course material they could understand. However, this also raises a question. As in this example, some parents were told by teachers to teach at home as well but did not acknowledge that due to lack of education parents cannot help beyond a basic level. In some cases, instead of providing resources to support parents, they were told that their children cannot move forward. Schools need to work more on providing support to children in school with their academics as many parents cannot afford tuition.

Some parents reported that teachers did not check children's notebooks for past few months or did not receive feedback on progress. Such interviewees felt that parents have the right to know how their child is progressing in school and what assistance they require. One mother stated that the teacher got angry and spoke to her disrespectfully. In these cases, parents felt that teachers did not communicate effectively on how they can help improve their child's studies. Some parents expressed opinions about how they do not share their concerns about the child's education with the school because no one will consider them:

So, have you ever spoken about these things in school?

Mother: So, what if we say something? It's not like they'll agree. Even if one or two people say something they'll just say if you're having so many problems then don't send your kids here. (HH 13, p. 22)

Out of 43 households, 41 enrolled their children in private tuition because they felt that tuition teacher would also be helpful in preparing children for exams and assist them in understanding the course material in detail. Paying for private tuition was a further cost that

families found difficult to bear. Parents also stated that the teacher tells them to pay attention to tuition teachers who assist children. Teacher also offered to speak to tuition teacher as well and they discuss about this with parents of all children who are weak.

Parents in this study used various modes to monitor their children's progress, which includes, WhatsApp group, Snap Homework App; asking the tuition teacher, class teacher, relatives and neighbours. Parents mentioned that they would seek help from the tuition teacher if they have any concerns about their child's education. Tuition teachers have knowledge about the app as it is accessible on their device and they can answer any questions that parents may have. Parents who access Snap Homework app regularly find it useful and helpful as it automatically monitors if the child has completed their homework or not. Parents stated that they would ask school teacher if they do not understand any course material and have questions about their child's homework and any activities that takes place in school.

4.5.3 Dimension 2: Direct School Contact

4.5.3.1 How often parents communicate with the school? and Parents' use of technology to communicate

It is imperative for parents to involve in their children's education on a regular basis as it can help them to be successful academically. There is literature that supports how parental involvement in private schools helps to enhance children's academic performance (Muchuchuti, 2015; Park & Holloway, 2017). In this study, there were several findings discovered based on parental involvement towards their children's education. Majority of the parents attended PTM regularly, which allowed them to learn about their children's education and several resources that includes, diaries, WhatsApp, and Snap Homework App were provided to parents. Parents also

discussed questions and concerns they may have about their child's education. This relates to private-good category of parental involvement in Park and Holloway's (2017) study. Majority of the households reported attending PTMs regularly, so they can gain knowledge to help their children with schoolwork at home. This shows how by attending PTMs, it resulted in benefit for children as they were able to seek assistance from their parents.

Most parents attended a meeting that was held at the beginning of school year for freeship parents at the freeship private schools. Parents mentioned that this meeting was planned for them to gain knowledge about how they should communicate with their children at home to help them with transitioning to new environment in school. In instances where parents attended the meetings, they said that tools and strategies were presented on how to help their children at home. Most parents felt such meetings were helpful as they became aware of the school environment and spent time communicating with teachers. However, some parents felt that they were given less time compared to other parents in PTMs. PTMs allowed parents in this study to get to know their child's teacher and communicate with them regularly as it helped them to learn about their child's academic progress.

Parents in this study did not speak about parent education programs being held at school. They only reported attending PTMs and very few parents attended school events that were designed for children. Schools need to work on ensuring that all parents are given the opportunity to attend educational programs that can help them gain knowledge about the education system and strategies they can use at home to promote their child's learning. This relates to the public-good category of Park and Holloway's (2017) study. In the current research, households did not report of any experiences related to attending any volunteer activities in their children's school, which could help them to share their learning with other parents.

There was one notable experience of interactions between freeship and non-freeship parents. One mother stated that she had made friends with some of the non-freeship parents and they had visited each other's homes. This allows her to seek help with her child's homework when required. While a number of other households reported that schools encouraged them to speak to non-freeship parents, this was only instance in which a parent said they regularly connected with them. Some households stated that they preferred not to build any friendships with other parents. Some felt uncomfortable because of their social and educational backgrounds. This relates to the parent-networking category from Park & Holloway's, (2017) study. The parent in the current study contacted and interacted with other parents in their child's school. This allowed the parent from this household to build friendships and seek support from the other parents. This was the experience reported by only one parent.

The majority of the parents reported that WhatsApp groups were available in private schools for parents to stay up to date on children's syllabus, missed homework and any questions that may arise. Parents who said they were part of a WhatsApp group helped to communicate with other parents about schooling issues, such as homework, upcoming events, and so on. Some parents who do not have access to phone and/or internet were not able to access the App. This caused a problem for these parents who would seek assistance from the tuition teacher who had access to App on their phone. Some parents reported that they may have access to phone and internet, but do not know how to use the applications.. There were number of parents who had difficulty accessing Snap Homework due to not understanding how it functions. For one parent this meant the child missed the homework sometimes, so they have to ask someone around in their neighbourhood for help. The homework app seemed to be easier and more convenient for teachers than writing in each child's diary, but not necessarily for parents. Some parents reported

that their children's diary is checked daily and their improvement is documented as well. Some

parents also reported that they receive planners every Friday to inform parents about the course

material that their child had missed due to being absent. On the other hand, a few parents

reported that their child's notebooks were not checked for few months.

4.5.4 Dimension 3: Inhibited Involvement: Barriers when Communicating with School

In this study, barriers when communicating with school was an important area of analysis

as some parents who attended PTMs in private schools had difficulty communicating with the

teacher. The majority of the parents said they took part in attending PTMs regularly and asked

teacher questions regarding their child's studies and progress. Since, the majority of the parents

in this study were not fluent in English, and private schools their children attended were English-

medium, most parents expressed that teachers were supportive as they offered to speak in Hindi.

This was appreciated. However, this was not the experience of all parents. The following

experience was recounted by one mother:

> *Do you face any difficulties in due to English when you go to meet the teachers in school?*
>
> I, I mean that one… I feel that one of the problems is when, I mean, when I speak to her then Madam [the teacher] only replies to a couple of questions. Like, if we speak in Hindi then she should also speak in Hindi. But she doesn't speak in Hindi.
>
> *She doesn't speak in Hindi?*
>
> No. Now, it's like this — if you speak in English and we speak in Hindi then I won't be able to understand what you're saying. So, they should speak with me in Hindi, right, like how your child is doing and you should concentrate on this. But they don't tell us anything like that. (Mother, HH 11, p. 28)

This mother faced language barriers when interacting with the teacher in school during

PTM. She further felt that she was not valued compared to other parents with higher SES. She

felt teachers were more attentive to them. This interviewee also felt that because she is not

well educated, teachers did not respond to her in detail or clearly. This resulted in the parent

facing a big challenge in building a partnership with the teacher. The effect of these kinds of

experiences could be that parents do not feel encouraged to take part in the school.

Parents who did not have much English fluency generally reported assisting their children

with homework in Hindi-related subjects. Parents who had basic English fluency also reported

helping their children with homework in English. Parents who had difficulty understanding

course material also sought help from relatives and neighbours. However, as discussed above,

private tuition played a big part for all households other than two. One mother reported:

> *So, you're saying that you don't have any difficulties in speaking to the teachers?*
>
> No, Ma'am, the first time I went there was a new new ma'am [teacher] so there was a
> little bit, but I tell ma'am beforehand. It's been three years. The teachers have changed
> three times. I've told all three teachers that I can talk to you, or whatever, but I can't
> teach him much in English or whatever. They said, 'It's alright, no problem. You support
> him a little, we'll support him a little, and you've already arranged for tuition for the rest.
> The tuition people will support him. It will be fine.' But he's a really good student.
> Whenever I go in, ma'am says he's doing very well. (Mother, HH 40, p. 9)

Some parents also reported that teachers offered classes for a fee for parents to learn

English:

> The school had sent a circular in the diary with the child that there were classes held by
> the teachers for parents who are weak in English. I did not get the time for it. The fees
> was also not much, it was only Rs. 500. That was last year. (Mother, HH 2, p. 4)

However, there were some parents who felt hesitant in communicating with schools. One

mother reported feeling scared to question teachers because she was less educated. This shows

that parents felt a barrier regarding their social background and lack of education in interacting

with teachers in the school. This same mother said that if a child performed poorly, the 'blame'

was put on the parents. She generally felt that children considered academically weak did not

receive the same amount of attention as others. Some felt that some teachers devoted more time

communicating with non-EWS parents during parent-teacher meetings, which made it difficult for EWS parents to learn about their child's progress and ask questions.

Some parents mentioned being hesitant to communicate with teachers about other school-related expenses, such as activities. Parents expressed lack of voice as there are not many parents who raise questions about fees they have to pay. They stated that teachers should understand that it can be challenging for EWS parents to afford all of their child's expenses. Therefore, parents expressed how there should be group of EWS parents who can raise these concerns, then it is more likely that their voice will be heard compared to only one parent asking the school. This shows a financial barrier reported by some parents as they discussed their struggles to afford children's education related expenses.

In one school, where there was no WhatsApp group, mothers got together at a nearby park to discuss schooling issues. However, not all parents participated in informal meetings with other parents or on WhatsApp groups, stating they did not have time or had too many other responsibilities. In addition to this, some parents mentioned teachers used WhatsApp to upload pictures of activities and field trips. Some participants reported using the Snap Homework application to download their child's homework. They found this application to be helpful. However, there were very few parents that mentioned not being able to attend PTMs and be involved in WhatsApp due to lack of time. Some parents, however, stated that the school did not organize such a venue and did not actively send information to parents, making it difficult for them to be involved. Some parents were told that the PTM was the only way to have information from the teacher. This shows that some parents faced barrier of not being able to attend PTMs and take part in online Apps designed to monitor their children's academics and progress.

Many households were involved in attending PTMs regularly and participate in school held activities. On the other hand, there were some other households that reported not being able to attend PTMs due to household responsibilities. It was a case in many households, where only one parent would pick up children from school and attend PTM. Mothers were often home attending to housework. In the interviews, parents did not mention that they were concerned about not being involved in their children's school activities.

It is interesting to note that there was one father from the dataset that reported being involved in the SMC of a government school where one of the children attended (Household 3). Private unaided schools are not required to have SMCs. However, there should be such committees in private schools as it may encourage parents to participate and express their opinions. None of the parents reported such structure at the private schools. Therefore, this is a barrier found in this study because if there are not SMCs in private schools then it can limit parents' participation in the school.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This chapter presents discussion about the connection between the research questions, conceptual framework, results, and the current literature. The main goal of this study was to examine how Dalit parents whose children were successful in accessing freeship seats in private schools in Delhi felt the schools responded; and how these parents were involved in their children's schooling in the context of the RTE Act. To reiterate, the main research questions that were explored in this analysis are:

1. What were the parents' perceptions on the quality of education provided to their children?

2. What were the parents' perceptions on their children's experiences of social inclusion or exclusion in school?

3. What were the parents' perceptions on the responsiveness of the freeship private school regarding their child's academic needs?

4. How were parents involved in monitoring their child's academic progress?

5. Did parents face barriers when communicating with teachers or other parents?

5.1 Relationship between Conceptual Framework and Results

McWayne et al.'s (2004) framework was adopted and adapted for the analysis on parental involvement and school responsiveness. The adapted dimensions and categories were selected as they helped to answer the research questions and related to the findings in these areas in this study. This framework was helpful in understanding the connection between different types of parental involvement and how households reported in relation to the categories for each

dimension. While in a different setting and primarily on early childhood transition, the framework was developed regarding groups experiencing urban poverty and from marginalized backgrounds. This was relevant to the group in this analysis. McWayne's framework was originally designed for urban school district and the categories were created considering the school setting as well.

The limitation of this framework was that I was able to answer only two of my research questions by applying it to the three dimensions. However, the first three research questions were answered by carefully analyzing parents' responses. For example, the research question based on parent's perceptions of the quality of education was answered by exploring parents' responses based on how they perceive and experienced the education in private and government schools. This was done through the thematic analysis of the interviews. This process was followed to answer the other two research questions as well. The literature review was also considered to support the analysis.

The dimensions of parental involvement from McWayne et al.'s (2004) study were used to inform analysis. In the present study, most parents felt they had the opportunity to attend PTMs and communicate with teachers. Most parents felt teachers offered to help parents with their children's homework, although there were limitations on what the parents could actually provide regarding teachers' suggestions given their own lower education in many cases. The second dimension of direct school contact relate to the categories of parental involvement. Given the schooling context, some of this had to do with the actual language of communication, i.e. English or Hindi. However, there is a second implication raised in McWayne et al.'s (2004) study, which is that there should be "two-way partnership between families and schools to best educate young children and it must include reciprocal communication between both parents and

educators to find a common ground and common language in which to discuss involvement strategies" (p. 374). This relates to whether the schools and teachers encouraged parents to communicate with them about their children's academic progress, although a number of barriers were reported as stated in Section 4.5.4

The last dimension of inhibited involvement was used to inform results on the category of barriers when communicating with school. The third implication in McWayne et al.'s (2004) study stated that by creating a milieu where parents can participate in various "activities with their children may involve rethinking traditional parent involvement practices to accommodate families that are experiencing stress due to time constraints, new work responsibilities, or lack of adequate child care" (pp. 374-375). Schools in the present study created an online platform for parents to be involved, so they can monitor their children's homework, school activities, and upcoming meetings and events on regular basis. Other than PTMs and the homework apps, by and large, it did not seem that the schools these parents accessed instituted other ways to ensure that parents' involvement was not inhibited. There were issues with this. It was not possible for the vast majorities of families in this study to afford the expenses of computers. Only one parent in this study mentioned that they had installed internet at home and bought laptop for their children to use under parental supervision. Majority of the parents accessed their children's academic information through their phones using WhatsApp and Snap Homework App. Parents were nonetheless engaged in face-to-face contact with the school where this was possible. Very few parents mentioned not being able to attend PTMs and who said that they had a busy schedule at home. Some households had children that were not attending school at the time of the interview because they were underage. Therefore, they reported staying at home often to take care of young children and attend to house duties.

5.2 Insights from the Data

The following insights were gained through the analysis of parents' interview data.

5.2.1 What were the parents' perceptions on the quality of education provided to their children?

Parents' perceptions of the quality of education was analyzed by looking at how parents

perceived their children were being taught in private and government schools. The results in this

study showed uneven perceptions of parents regarding the quality of education in private and

government schools. Majority of the parents expressed feeling happy with the quality of

education provided to their children at private schools although there were some issues. There is

some literature on parents' perception of quality in private schools being better than government

schools (Bazaz 2016; Härmä 2009; Singh & Sarkar, 2015). Gurney's (2018) study reported that

parents considered private schools having better quality but would not enroll their children due to

issue of unaffordability. However, parents had no objective measures to assess relative quality in

this study, or generally, in existing literature.

Despite this positive feeling in this analysis, nonetheless, large class sizes at the private

schools were brought up by a number of parents. The parents reported that there may have been

between 50-70 children in each class in the private schools they accessed. The mandated ratio in

the RTE Act is 30:1. Parents reported that teachers used smartboard technology to teach children

and they encouraged children to participate in school activities. Some parents reported that their

children were excluded from activities. However, they also felt that private school provided

opportunities to all children to speak and learn English.

5.2.2 What were the parents' perceptions on their children's experiences of social inclusion and exclusion in school?

This was analyzed by exploring the perceptions of parents on the milieu that the teacher created for their children in the classroom, and whether they felt there was discrimination or unequal treatment towards children with freeship. The study reported uneven results regarding how children were reported to have been treated in private schools by teachers. The majority of the parents felt that their children did not face discrimination in school, and they were included the same as non-freeship children. Some parents reported that they would ask their children regularly about their day at school. However, a few parents mentioned their children experiencing social exclusion. These parents stated that some teachers excluded their children from class involvement. In another instance, the teacher reportedly blamed a child for hitting other children, rather than finding out what the situation was and how to solve it. One child was reported to have been neglected with a medical condition that was ignored by the teacher.

The mixed experiences reflect the literature. Some studies showed issues with the implementation of the RTE Act and exclusion of children in schools (Kaushal, 2012; Srivastava & Noronha, 2016). In Srivastava and Noronha's (2014) earlier study, it was found that children attending private schools on freeships were being taught by separate staff on a different shift. However, in Sucharita and Sujatha's (2019) study of two private schools in Delhi all the children were integrated. The general literature shows discrimination in schools in India, for example, exclusion among SC groups and unequal treatment in the classroom (Kumar, 2017; Nambissan, 2009). It is also important to ensure that teachers are supported by the school to foster inclusion in the classroom. However, in Mehendale et al.'s (2015) study on awareness of the RTE Act in private unaided schools found that the school itself was not given any support to implement

inclusion. Lafleur and Srivastava's (2019) analysis from the *Insights into Education* program's micro-study on freeship and non-freeship children's experiences found that teachers and peers labeled children, regardless of freeship status. Children who were labelled were socially excluded. My analysis from of parents' interview freeship from the same research program found that some parents felt their children were not given adequate attention in class. However, some took the initiative to speak to teachers to solve this issue.

5.2.3 What were the parents' perceptions on the responsiveness of the freeship private school regarding their child's academic needs?

School responsiveness was analyzed by exploring how teachers communicate with parents to help them involve in their children's education at home. Results revealed that the majority of the parents appreciated that teachers were responsive towards them and their child's education. For example, one parent explained that the teacher told both parents that they can connect with other parents to seek assistance with any questions and concerns that may arise. Many parents said they sought support from teachers if they were facing difficulties in understanding course material. This allowed parents to create a learning environment for their children at home. However, there were some parents that reported the teachers not providing adequate support to their children's academics, which makes it difficult for parents to help children with homework due to lack of fluency and lower education levels. This shows that schools need to work further on improving the support given to help children meet their academic needs.

Sharma's (2018) study discovered that principals labeled parents from lower SES, but they were also responsive to some of the needs of parents helping to provide resources for their children's academics. Parents did not report being labelled themselves, although children in the

Insights into Education micro-study on students' experiences reported that freeship and non-freeship children were labelled by peers and teachers (Lafleur & Srivastava, 2019). Most parents stated that teachers encouraged them to pay close attention to their children's education and to enroll them in private tuition. This was an added expense for these families. However, the parents wanted their children to succeed in life and they appreciated that their children had access to freeship seats. Therefore, they worked very hard in making sure that their children had access to valuable resources.

5.2.4 How were parents involved in monitoring their child's academic progress?
5.2.4.1 Dimension 1: Supportive Home Learning Environment

The analysis examined how parents were able to be involved in their children's schooling. Results showed that the majority of the parents were involved in ensuring that they were aware of their children's ongoing progress. A few parents mentioned that their children's notebooks were not monitored by teachers, which made it difficult for parents to monitor. One mother shared her experience regarding how a teacher supported her, so she could help her child with homework at home. Many other parents reported that they can help their children at home with homework if it is in Hindi and easy to understand. But, there are limits to how much parents can help, especially if they are not fluent in English or have low education levels. The vast majority of households (41 out of 43) enrolled their children in private tuition. Considering that many of them reported facing financial crises in paying for tuition fees, this was an extra burden.

The majority of parents also reported having access to technological applications, i.e., WhatsApp and Snap Homework, allowing them to view their children's homework and documentation of their work. For example, when children engage in any activities in school,

teachers post their pictures on the App for all parents to view and monitor the progress. However, this was not always easy to use for all the parents. In my study, majority of the parents did not mention preparing activities for their children at home, but they assisted them with their homework to their best ability. Muchuchuti's (2015) study in Zimbabwe states that in private schools, technological resources were available, but this was not the case in rural schools. Also, parents were more involved in private and urban schools than rural schools. McWayne et al.'s (2004) study also revealed that parents who participated in creating a learning environment at home for their children and were involved in contacting the school regularly had children who performed better in interacting with other students and teachers. Also, in Antony-Newman's study (2019), it was also found that parents were actively engaged with their children's academics at home, but they had higher education levels.

5.2.4.2 Dimension 2: Direct School Contact

The majority of the parents attended parent-teacher meetings (PTM) to learn about their children's progress. This relates to McWayne et al.'s (2004) framework as the second dimension, direct school contact is based on how parents are involved in children's school-related activities. This relates to the findings from the current study because parents took the opportunity to attend PTMs to learn how to connect with their children at home to help them with their schoolwork. Many parents felt that attending PTMs is vital because it allowed them to be aware of their children's strengths and areas of improvement. Parents also gain knowledge about resources at PTMs which were reported to be held once a month or every two months. There has been literature that revealed parents' satisfaction with attending PTMs (Mushtaq et al. 2012; Park & Holloway, 2017).

In Park and Holloway's (2017) study, it was reported that public-good and private-good was related to parental involvement in their children's academic progress. Private-good can be described in current study, as many parents reported that they were encouraged by their child's teacher to seek support so parents themselves can assist their children at home with schoolwork. In contrast to this, public-good was not addressed in this study as households did not report taking part in any of the educational and volunteer activities taking place in their child's school. Perhaps such opportunities did not exist. Perhaps they were inhibited because of their social status. Only one parent out of all the households interviewed mentioned regularly connecting with non-freeship parents through the phone and in person. This relates to the parent-networking category from Park and Holloway's (2017) research because this parent from only one household was actively engaged in communicating regularly with other parents.

A few parents shared concerns regarding PTMs regarding not given enough time compared to non-freeship parents. For instance, a teacher may only answer very few questions, but not in detail and not provide constructive feedback to freeship parents about their child's overall progress. This was the case only in very small number of households. Antony-Newman's (2019) research focused on the concept of cultural and capital of Pierre Bourdieu. The results on parental involvement category relates to the concept of social capital as parents communicating with teachers and building social networks with them and other parents is important. Antony-Newman's (2019) study revealed that parents' educational qualifications helped them with communicating with school, which is defined as cultural capital. Lack of encouragement from teachers in school towards parents played a key role in their involvement (Sreekanth, 2010). This study relates to the results as a few parents reported having difficulty gaining information about their children's learning and development due to teachers' lack of interaction with them.

In this study, parents felt their education or lack of fluency in speaking and understanding English was a barrier, which may lead to embarrassment in front of teachers. However, majority of the parents were involved in PTMs. A few could not attend due to health reasons. In some schools, parents felt teachers did not encourage freeship parents to attend. A few parents mentioned that they attended school activities. Some parents reported that a WhatsApp group was created by the school allowing parents of freeship and non-freeship children to interact with each other. Some parents who could not attend PTMs used the WhatsApp group to discuss concerns about homework.

5.2.5 Did parents face barriers when communicating with teachers or other parents?

5.2.5.1 Dimension: Inhibited Involvement

Barriers in communicating were analyzed by looking at the parents' perceptions on their experiences when they approached teachers in school and whether they took part in any parent education programs. In this study, parents did not speak about any parent education programs held at school and were not notified by school and teachers that there are any programs particularly for parents to attend. Results showed that the majority of the parents did not report facing language barriers when speaking to teachers in private schools during PTMs. However, some parents did report facing language barriers. Some parents reported not being as involved in children's homework, PTMs, and on WhatsApp due to lack of time, but did not express concerns about their lack of involvement. However, some parents did face barriers in having lack of access to internet and not being knowledgeable about how to use the phone and Apps. Therefore, these parents were not able to get involved in their children's education using technology. Although, only one parent reported building good friendships with non-EWS parents, but there were some parents who mentioned that they communicated very little with non-EWS parents in

school due to not being fluent in English and not being aware of what to communicate with other parents. This shows the lack of interaction and network building between EWS and non-EWS parents. This shows the connection to the language barrier, which was discussed in detail in this study.

A number of studies show barriers faced by parents in school (Bakhshi, Babulal & Trani, 2017; Das 2011; Das 2016; Ramachandran & Naorem, 2013; Singh, 2014). Mushtaq et al.'s (2012) study showed that teachers need to further promote knowledge about the curriculum among parents of children in private school. It was noted that this could be the reason for parents not being able to approach schools. The majority of parents in this study approached the school and built a network with teachers, even amongst the lowest-income within the sample. Some parents felt hesitant in the beginning due to their educational qualifications, income level, and lifestyle being different from the non-freeship parents whom they considered highly educated, rich and having better lifestyle. This relates to the barrier of social background and lack of education. Fantuzzo et al.'s (2000) study in United States discovered that parents with less than high school diploma were less likely to be engaged in their child's school-based involvement. Although, in the current study there were number of parents who had less than high school diploma (See Figure 1). Overall, there were some parents who reported that due to having lack of education, they would not interact with other non-EWS parents. Agrawal's (2014) study discussed about the financial barrier as disadvantaged families were not able to enroll their children in school due to lack of family income. Similarly, Gurney's (2018) study also reported that parents experiencing financial constraints choose not to admit their children in LFP school. This relates to the current study as some parents reported that affording all of the expenses related to their children's education can be difficult.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The objective of this MA study was to examine involvement of Dalit parents, an historically marginalized group in India, in their children's schools who accessed private schools in Delhi through freeships in the context of the RTE Act, and how they felt the school responded. Parental involvement and school responsiveness play important roles in children's education. The results show parents in this study were involved in their children's education despite their relatively lower educational levels, occupational status, and reported household income. Most parents reported feeling relatively able to approach the private schools, although there were some variations in experiences within the group of household interviewees. It is important to note that despite the fact that the majority of parents had relatively low incomes and lower-paid occupations, they were actively involved and interested in their children's education.

The Adapted Parental Involvement framework was utilized to inform the results in this study (McWayne et al., 2004). This was a relevant framework because the dimensions adapted helped to answer 2 of the main research questions. This framework used in McWayne et al.'s (2004) study explored the parental involvement of low-income households in urban contexts, albeit in a very different country context. However, it was found to be relevant to address some of the present analysis of urban Dalit parents, and their involvement using the three dimensions to analyze parental involvement. There were some limitations noted in Chapter 5 above. Griffin and Steen (2010) also used Epstein's (1995) framework to inform their study, but the categories used were not described in detail and do not closely relate to the current study. Whereas, McWayne et al.'s (2004) framework clearly details the categories for each dimension, which

help to explain the categories emerged from the dataset of Dalit households. Therefore, this framework was relevant for the purpose of exploring the perceptions of parents on their involvement in school and school responsiveness.

Most parents felt that the schools kept track of their children's educational progress by using diaries and technological applications, and also discussed this in PTMs as well. There were very few parents reported that their children's notebooks were not being checked by the teacher and it resulted in the child missing on schoolwork, which they had to complete by seeking help from other children in the class. However, some parents reported difficulties in accessing and using the apps due to lack of knowledge about its functions and some parents did not had access to internet or phone. Hence, this limited their communication with the teachers and monitoring their children's academic progress. Relatively lower education levels is an important barrier to consider as well.

A point to note is that nearly all the households (41 out of 43) enrolled their children in attending private tuition, in spite of struggling to pay. However, these parents felt they had no other choice since they had low education levels. Most parents felt that their children were being included in the classroom, but a few reported being excluded. Parents of some of the latter children claimed to have visited the schools to raise the issue, feeling it can influence their children's learning and development. Most parents did not claim to face language barriers, however, a few did. Overall, this study had a lot of uneven experiences. The finding about some parents taking the time to speak to teachers about their concerns is important to note. The parents in this study mentioned lacking voice to address issues with principals and teachers in private schools. However, some parents took the initiative to visit their child's school to resolve an issue to help their children to learn and flourish.

Private schools in India should continue to focus on how to provide resources to parents and support parents who have lower educational and socio-economic levels. This can help them to create a learning space at home for their children. Teachers in the school should communicate regularly with parents because some of them reported having challenges in assisting their children with their academics. Private schools offering freeship seats to children can also offer free tuitions to children to provide extra support, which they need to do well academically. However, in spite of having financial barriers, parents were willing to cut down on their personal expenses to afford private education for their children because they felt teachers were responsive.

The majority reported limited access to technology at home. If schools are using technology in their instruction, they must also consider how to include access for underprivileged households. Parental involvement in educational technology to support learning if children are using various modes of technology in schools. However, if parents do not have the opportunity they may not be able to play an active role in their child's academic journey.

The finding regarding parents not given sufficient time during PTMs is important to note as it helps to explain that there may be exclusion among Dalit and EWS parents. Teachers in the school system are accountable for including all parents regardless of their background because they have an equal right to be engaged in their child's education. It can be difficult for some parents to understand and be aware of how their children are progressing if the teachers do not effectively communicate with them.

Parents also reported facing language barriers that resulted in not communicating with non-EWS parents. This could lead to a lack of networking among EWS and non-EWS parents. This is significant to note because only one parent in this study reported that they communicated

with non-EWS parents regularly. It is crucial for all parents to build connections with each other parents because it can help with inclusion. In both private and government schools, teachers should set up programs for all parents to attend as this can be helpful. Parents in this study did not report teachers providing them with details about programs and events for parents in school.

6.1 Recommendations for Potential Research

This study sheds light on an under-researched area and group, and gives further insight on the RTE Act, specifically, how parents of children who belong to marginalized groups are accessing schooling and what their experiences are. Their perceptions are important as there is a gap in the previously published research on this topic, from the perceptions of Dalit parents, and in view of the RTE Act. It is imperative to look at the varying perceptions and experiences of parents on their involvement in school and on school responsiveness, and how parents were involved in schools and at home to monitor their children's progress and assist them, and any barriers they faced while taking part in their child's education.

This area needs to be further explored because parents play an important role in their children's lives, and they have direct and intimate knowledge about them. Parents should be respected by the school system and be able to express their concerns and seek support. This will help their children access a better quality of education and inclusive school milieu. Schools are accountable to providing equal opportunities to all children to learn in a safe and inclusive milieu. Future research should also explore parental involvement and school responsiveness in the context of the RTE Act. There should be longitudinal studies conducted on this topic as parents' involvement is significant to note as it helps to gain knowledge about how and to what extent is the RTE Act being implemented over time. Empirical research should also be conducted to see what the relationship is between the variables of parental involvement, school

responsiveness, and barriers experienced by parents. Mixed-methods research can also help provide a better understanding of the phenomenon, and in-depth analysis on the context of the RTE Act.

Although private unaided schools are not required to have SMCs under the RTE Act, it should be considered for private schools. It is important for policymakers to review the RTE Act and consider how the SMCs can also be applied in private schools. The lack of voice among parents from low-income and lower social and educational backgrounds is a continuing issue that requires structures in schools.

This MA study reported how some parents mentioned higher ratio in their children's classroom and some children's needs being excluded. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the rules in the Act are implemented and improvements are being made in the schooling environment. Stakeholders including parents, teachers, school principals, and policymakers should collaborate in all private and government schools to work on how to eliminate barriers faced by parents; allow parents to plan and implement activities that can help them to share their experiences; offer ongoing training and support to teachers for professional development; teachers must offer programs and resources to all parents that meets their needs; and supplementary tuition should be offered in school for free for children belonging to marginalized households. All parents should have an equal right to have their voice heard in the school system and be actively involved in their children's education.

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