

Education Opportunities and Challenges of the Children with Special Needs in the Littoral Zone of Bangladesh: A Research on Specific Area

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ABSTRACT: Bangladesh has already achieved incredible success in increasing literacy rates, but it still lags far behind in ensuring educational facilities for the children with special needs. It is impossible to ensure inclusive education excluding a segment of the society. For various reasons, it has not yet been possible to create a conducive environment for the education of the children with special needs in most areas of Bangladesh among these are lacks of family and social awareness, prejudice, negligence for the children with special needs, reluctance to educate them, insufficient institutional facilities, lack of proper training of the teachers and the staffs of the educational institutions, lack of necessary financial support, etc. Educational opportunities for the children with special needs in the coastal region are more complex. They have been facing various challenges to get their education rights. This research aims to narrate the education opportunities of the children with special needs in the littoral zone of Bangladesh and to indicate the core challenges of getting education facilities in these areas. To provide a wide understanding this study adopts a quantitative technique. In this research both primary and secondary data has been used. This research is based on field investigation and the data was collected from the children with special needs, from their parents and their teachers through interviews and observation of the researchers. To supplement primary data the data from government reports, academic publications and relevant data-sources were analyzed. This research exposes that, 60% children with special needs in the littoral zones are not going to any educational institutions and only 40% children with special needs are going to any types of educational institutions. Those who are going to school among them 80% children with special needs have faced different types of negative experiences when they are going to school. Almost in the every educational institution have minimum a special needs child but there have no special arrangements for the children with special needs in the educational institutions of the littoral zones of Bangladesh.

KEYWORDS: Bangladesh; Education; Littoral zone; Children with Special Needs

1. INTRODUCTION

To achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs) The United Nations has set a global target. There are total 17 Goals and among them the goal number 4 is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030 (Programme) Bangladesh has made significant progress toward SDG- 4. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) report the literacy rate in Bangladesh is 74 percent now. Bangladesh has made some development in its various socio-economic indicators in the last few years but arranging inclusive education for all, especially for the children with special needs, still remains a big challenge. There are about 11 million people who are victims of some kind of disability in Bangladesh. Of these, about 1.7 million school-going children have special needs. The number is not a small figure. (amin, 2020). A report of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' National Survey on Persons with Disabilities (NSPD) states that 40 percent of the children with special needs are participating in primary education and only 24 percent are participating in secondary education (Mahiuddin, 2022). A survey of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) reveals that only 65 percent are enrolled in primary school and only 35 percent are enrolled in secondary school among the children with disabilities (aged 5-17 years), In total, 60 percent of children with disabilities aged (5-17) years are not in education. (Selim, 2023) It is the overall picture of the entire Bangladesh but the picture of the littoral zones of Bangladesh is not same. There are various challenges to ensure education right for the children with special needs. Among these are lacks of family and social awareness, prejudice, negligence for the children with special needs, reluctance to educate them, insufficient institutional facilities, lack of proper training of the teachers and the staffs of the educational institutions, lack of necessary financial support, etc. However, this research aims to state the education opportunities of the children with special needs in the littoral zone of Bangladesh and to identify the main challenges of getting education facilities in these areas.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

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This research aims to narrate the education opportunities of the children with special needs in the littoral zone of Bangladesh and to identify the main challenges of getting education facilities in these areas. However the main objectives of this study are:

- To identify the actual conditions of the education opportunities of the children with special needs in the littoral zone of Bangladesh
- To narrate the hindrances of getting education facilities of the children with special needs in the littoral zone of Bangladesh.

3. LITERATURE RIEW

Literature Review is indispensable for all types of research work (Abedin, 2005). A number of research works have been conducted in the matter of education facilities of the children with special needs in Bangladesh but none of them is directly concerned to this research. From them, some information, ideas and guidelines were taken for a conclusive completion of this research. (Ahmed & Kashem, 2015) Described how the people think about the disabilities, the importance of the people place on them, and the social, cultural, and political misconceptions and stigmas that exist. In their research article, they discussed the existing situation of the disabled students but the education opportunities of the children with special needs in the littoral zone of Bangladesh and the main challenges of getting education facilities in these areas were not stated clearly. (Saha & Saha, 2024) Investigated the factors associated with children with disabilities missing school. They brilliantly discussed in their research work the barriers of the disabled children to enrollment in school but the present opportunities and the hindrances of the children with special needs in the littoral zone of Bangladesh of getting education facilities were not discussed broadly. (Mehtab, 2014) was trying to identify the real picture of inclusive education in Bangladesh and the present situation of inclusive education in Bangladesh. The researcher was also trying to find the answers of the questions, how the teachers implement inclusive education, what the impact of inclusive education on both special and normal learners and what the difficulties and challenges faced by the teachers in the schools but the real picture of the education opportunities of the children with special needs in the littoral zone of Bangladesh and the suffering of getting education facilities of the children with special needs in the littoral zone of Bangladesh are not stated clearly in this research. (Siahaan, 2022) discussed in his research paper the importance of the inclusive education for the children with special needs. He emphasize on inclusive education of the children of Indonesia. The education facilities for the children with special needs in Bangladesh are not analyzed in his research work. (Titumir & Hossain, 2005) In this research work the researchers have shown an overall picture of the disabled persons in Bangladesh but the situation in the littoral zones or the regional areas of Bangladesh is not stated here particularly. (Zaman & Munir, 2006) brilliantly discussed the special education system in Bangladesh. They emphasize on the inclusive education facilities and challenges in the public and private educational institutions in Bangladesh. However, the education facilities and challenges for the children with special needs in the littoral zones of Bangladesh were not stated clearly.

4. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In this research work both quantitative and qualitative methods of research were used to provide a wide understanding of the actual conditions of the education advantages of the children with special needs in the littoral zone of Bangladesh and the main hindrances of getting education facilities in these areas. For this purpose surveys and interviews methods were used. By questioning and interviewing of the concerned of these areas the study is conducted. To the respondents both open and close ended questions were placed. To examine the actual picture, survey methods was used to fold field data directly from the respondents. However, Only the Bhola district of Bangladesh has been selected as the research area for this research work due to time and other different limitations. The study was based on field investigation where the data was collected from the children with special needs, their parents and their teachers through interviews and observation of the researchers. 20 children with special needs, 20 family members of the children with special needs and 20 educational institutions were interviewed in this ressearch. Respondents were selected randomly from the study area. The study area and the other littoral zones of Bangladesh are almost same. So, the selection of this study area can be justified. To supplement primary data the data from government reports, academic publications and relevant data-sources were analyzed. By using simple mathematical tools like tabulation and percentage the data of this research have been analyzed. The data have been placed with chart/diagram and table in this research.

5. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY AREA

It is very time-consuming as well as expensive to collect data from all the littoral zones' citizens of Bangladesh. Only the Bhola district was selected by the researcher. Bhola is one of them among the 19 coastal districts of Bangladesh (WARPO, 2003). Moreover, the researchers now live in Lalmohan upazila of Bhola district so, this zone has been chosen for the time-consuming.

6. CONCEPTUAL CLARITY

6.1) Littoral zone of Bangladesh: The littoral zone of Bangladesh is located in the southern part of the country. The littoral zone of Bangladesh lies between 21-23° N and 89-93° E. The length of the littoral zone of Bangladesh is about 700 kilometers. It can be

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broadly parted into three areas (Banglapedia.(n.d.)). There are 19 districts in these littoral zones. The socio-economic conditions of these littoral districts are somewhat different from the other districts of Bangladesh.

6.2) Zila/ District and Upazila: The administrative system of Bangladesh is made up of central and local administration. Local administration is made up of divisions, Districts, and Upazilas. The districts are the main administrative unit in the local administration. The Upazilas are the lowest unit that functions as the part of the districts at the local area in Bangladesh. A Deputy Commissioner (DC) is the executive head of a district and an Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) is the executive head of an Upazila in Bangladesh. Currently there are 495 upazilas under 64 districts in Bangladesh.

6.3) Children with Special Needs:

The children who require special care due to physical, mental, emotional or health reasons are the Children with special needs. In the world every child is an individual person, but some children may need extra care due to physical, emotional, health, or development needs. Every child is unique and everyone has unique needs, a common approach to caring for children with special needs can't be applied to all children. (Mahmoud, 2021) Mainly, there are three types of children with special needs. These are: Physically disabled children, mentally disadvantaged children, socially maladjusted children. The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that approximately 15% of the world's population has some form of disability, and of those, 2-4% struggle significantly to function. (Khushaboo & Dua, 2022)

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

7.1) Education Opportunities and Challenges of the Children with Special Needs; Opinion of the Family Members

A family is the reliable shelter for a child with special needs. The future of the child largely depends on the family in which he grows up. If he gets his rights in the family, he will be accepted in the society. The family must come first in terms of his health and education. The family must play a pivotal role in his education. If the family fulfills its primary and fundamental responsibilities properly, then the responsibility of the society, the state and the educational institutions will come. But in reality, it is seen that many families do not give much importance to the education of the children with special needs. Research has shown that many families are not careful enough about the education of their special needs child.

7.1.1) School attendance rate of the Children with Special Needs

Currently, 25 out of every ten thousand children in the urban areas and 14 out of every ten thousand in the rural areas are affected by autism in Bangladesh. (Zahid, 2024) In every region of Bangladesh there are children with special needs, but for various social and economic reasons they are not going to school. The number of school-going children with special needs is very low.

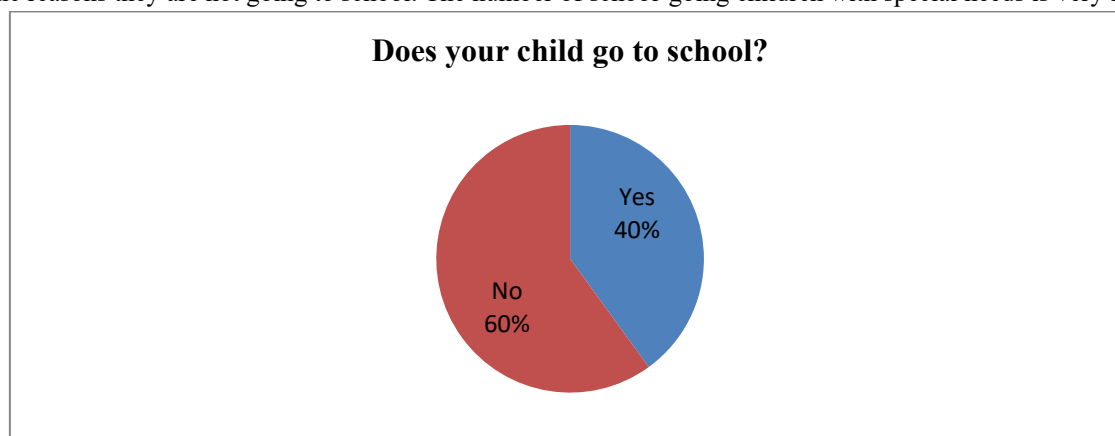


Figure 1: Does your child go to school?

Data source: Field data

Figure 1 shows that, 60% children with special needs in the littoral zones are not going to any educational institutions and only 40% children with special needs are going to any types of educational institutions. It is clear that majority of the children with special needs in the littoral zones are deprived of education.

7.1.2) The reasons, why the Children with Special Needs do not go to School

Due to economic crisis, social and family ignorance, lack of proper education, lack of consciousness, prejudice, neglect of the children with special needs etc. the children with special needs do not go to school in the littoral zone. However, the family members of the children with special needs said various reasons for which their child not attending school.

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Table 1: The reasons, why the Children with Special Needs do not go to School

The Reasons, Why The Children with Special Needs do not go to School	Percentage
The child with special needs has a little interest in studying.	20
We are not optimistic about the future of his education.	38
We are not financially solvent.	10
People in the society make various negative comments.	15
School authorities sometime discourage us.	05
His classmates and friends do not behave well at the school.	12
Total	100

Data source: Field data

Table 1 shows that, the family members of the children with special needs gave different opinions about the reasons for which their children with special needs are not to go to school. 20% of the respondents say that the children with special needs have a little interest in studying, 38% of the respondents opine that, we are not optimistic about the future of his education, 10% of respondents say that, We are not financially solvent, 15% of the respondents opine that, people in the society make various negative comments, 5% of the family members opine that, School authorities sometime discourage us and 12% of the respondents say that, His classmates and friends do not behave well at the school. In this research it is obvious that, most of the family members are not optimistic about the future of their child with special needs so that they are unwilling to educate their child.

7.1.3) The Negative Experiences are faced by the Family Members of the Children with Special Needs

In the coastal are a large portion of children with special needs do not go to school but those are going to school they have to hear various types of negative comments and they have to face various negative experiences.

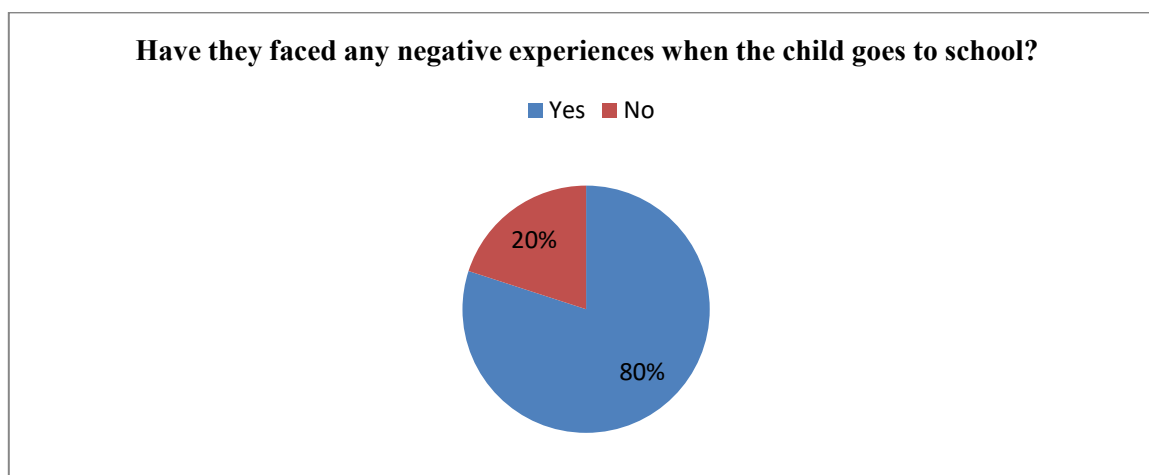


Figure: 2 Have they faced any negative experiences when the child goes to school?

Data source: Field data

Figure 2 shows that, 80% children with special needs in the littoral zones have faced different types of negative experiences when they are going to school and only 20% children with special needs opine that they have not faced any negative comments or experiences when they are going to school. It is clear that majority of the children with special needs in the littoral zones are faced negative experiences from the family or from the society or from the school.

7.1.4) Types of Negative Experiences that they have faced

This research shows that majority of the children with special needs and his family members in the littoral zones of Bangladesh are faced various types of negative experiences when a child with special needs is going to the school.

Table 2: What kind of negative experiences have you faced?

What kind of negative experiences have you faced?	Percentage
Many in the society do not look favorably his going to school.	18
Many make negative comments.	24
He does not receive necessary supports from the educational institution.	12
His classmates do not treat him well at the school.	16

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No one wants to be his friend.	17
He does not always receive good treatment from the school teachers, officials and employees.	13
Total	100

Data source: Field data

Table 2 shows that, the family members of the children with special needs shared different experiences that they have faced when their child is going to school. 18% of the respondents say that Many in the society do not look favorably his going to school, 24% of the respondents opine that, Many make negative comments, 12% of respondents say that, He does not receive necessary supports from the educational institution, 16% of the respondents opine that, His classmates do not treat him well at the school, 17% of people the family members opine that, no one wants to be his friend and 13% of the respondents say that, He does not always receive good treatment from the school teachers, officials and employees. In this research it is clear that every special needs child who goes to school is facing negative experiences from someone.

7.2) Education Opportunities and Challenges of the Children with Special Needs in the School: Opinion of the school authorities

After the family, the next place of trust for a child with special needs is his educational institution. The role of a school in shaping the future of a child with special needs is significant. But a child with special needs has been facing various challenges and obstacles in his school which is shown in this study.

7.2.1) The Number of Children with special needs is studying in the school

More or less almost in the every educational institution special needs child has been reading. But some of the students with special needs have no government certificate so that they don't get any government allowance.

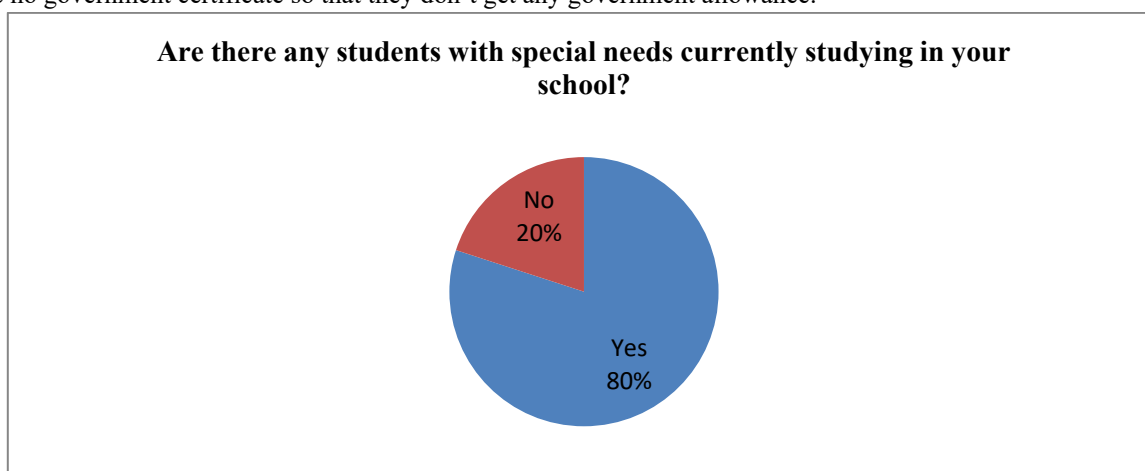


Figure 3: Are there any students with special needs currently studying in your school?

Data source: Field data

Figure 3 shows that in the 80% educational institutions of the littoral zones have minimum a child with special needs and only in the 20% educational institutions of the littoral zones have no children with special needs who are studying here. So it is clear that almost in the every educational institution of the coastal region have special needs child.

7.2.2) The Reasons, Why the Children with Special Needs do not go to School; opinion of the School Authorities

The teachers have given different opinion about the causes, why the children with special needs are not going to school. Their each opinion or comments is rational and important.

Table 3: There are more children with special needs in your school area, but why aren't they studying?

There are more children with special needs in your school area, but why aren't they studying?	Percentage
Reluctance of the families of the children with special needs	20
Negative role/thought of the society about the children with special needs	28
Economic crisis of the families of the children with special needs	14
Uncertainty about the future of the children with special needs	30
School authorities' disinterest about the children with special needs	8
Total	100

Data source: Field data

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Table 3 shows that, the authorities of the educational institutions gave different opinions that the children with special needs are not going to school. 20% of the respondents say that, the Reluctance of the families of the children with special needs is the main causes of their not going to school. 28% of the respondents opine that, Negative role/thought of the society about the studying of the children with special needs, 14% of respondents say that, the economic crisis of the families of the children with special needs, 30% of the respondents opine that, Uncertainty about the future of the children with special needs and 8% of the respondents opine that, School authorities' disinterest about the children with special needs.

7. 2.3) Special arrangements for the Children with Special Needs at the School

It is crucial for every educational institution to have special arrangements for the children with special needs like, special teaching methods, special assessment system, special classroom, special washroom and other necessary equipments. But in reality, none of these opportunities exist in any educational institution in the littoral zones of Bangladesh.

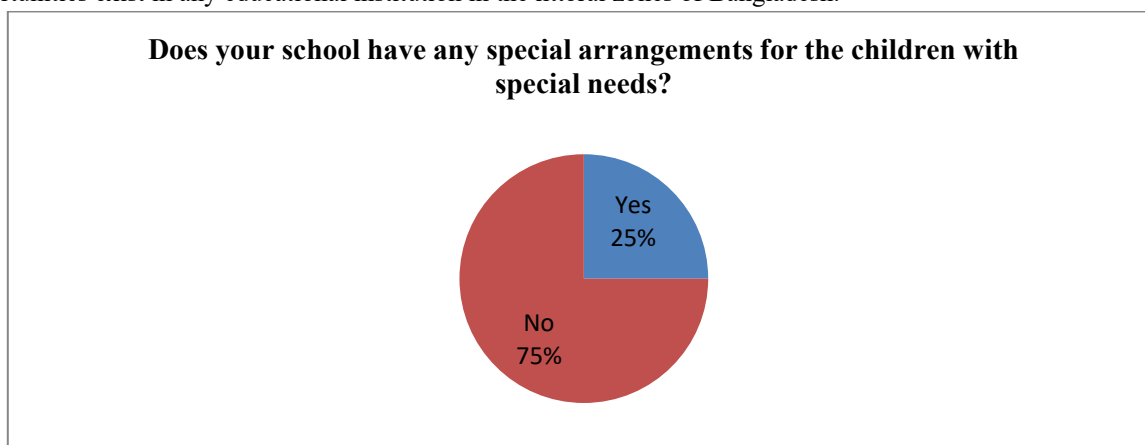


Figure 4: Does your school have any special arrangements for the children with special needs?

Data source: Field data

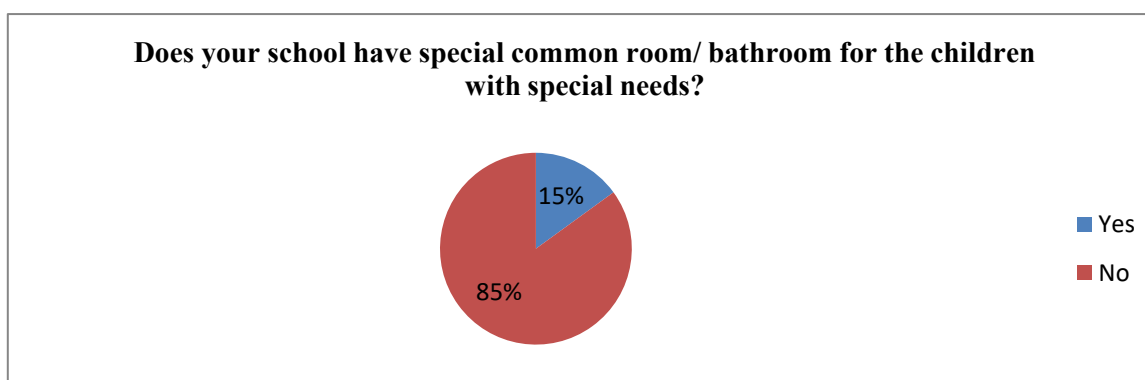


Figure 5: Does your school have special common room/ bathroom for the children with special needs?

Data source: Field data

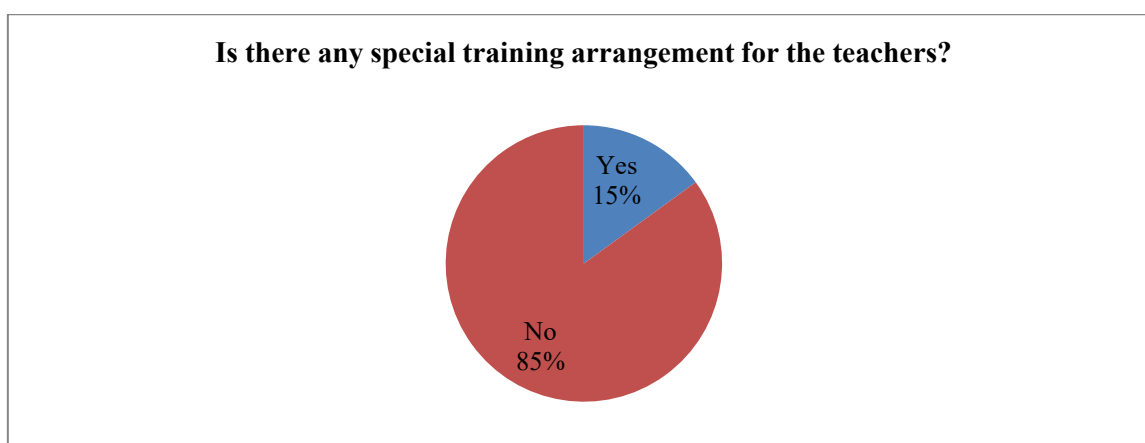


Figure 6: Is there any special training arrangement for the teachers?

Data source: Field data

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Figure-4 shows that in 75% educational institutions have no special arrangements for the children with special needs of the littoral zones. **Figure-5** shows that 85% educational institutions have no special washrooms or bathrooms for the children with special needs in the littoral zones of Bangladesh. **Figure-6** shows that 85% educational institution's teachers have not been given any special training how to they teach and how to they evaluate a child with special needs in the class room at the littoral zones of Bangladesh. However, during subject- based training, the teachers are given some ideas about teaching- techniques for the children with special needs.

7.2.4) How can ensure inclusive Education for the Children with Special Needs; the idea of the School Authorities

Table 4: What is your idea of how to bring them into inclusive education?

What is your idea of how to bring them into inclusive education?	Percentage
The negative perspective of the families and the society must change.	24
Everyone must be aware of them.	13
Special arrangements must be arranged for them in every educational institution.	25
The economic crisis of the families must be resolved.	10
Everyone must be careful about them.	12
In every educational institution should appoint a trained person to look after the children with special needs.	16
Total	100

Data source: Field data

Table 4 shows that, the authorities of the educational institutions gave different suggestions that how to bring the children with special needs into inclusive education. 24% of the respondents say that, the negative perspective of the families and the society must change. 13% of the respondents opine that, Everyone must be aware about the education of the children with special needs. 25% of respondents say that, Special arrangements must be arranged for them in every educational institution, 10% of the respondents opine that, The economic crisis of the families must be resolved, 12% of the respondents opine that, Everyone must be careful about them and 16% think that, In every educational institution should appoint a trained person to look after the children with special needs.

In this research it is obvious that, majority of the children with special needs in the littoral zones are deprived of education. The figure-1 shows that, 60% children with special needs in the littoral zones are not going to any educational institutions and only 40% children with special needs are going to any types of educational institutions.

The research reveal that, Due to economic crisis, social and family ignorance, lack of proper education, lack of consciousness, prejudice, neglect of the children with special needs etc. the children with special needs do not go to school in the littoral zone. Table 1 shows that, 20% of the respondents say that the children with special needs have a little interest in studying, 38% of the respondents opine that, they are not optimistic about the future of their child's education, 10% of respondents say that, We are not financially solvent, 15% of the respondents opine that, people in the society make various negative comments, 5% of people the family members opine that, School authorities sometime discourage us and 12% of the respondents say that, His classmates and friends do not behave well at the school.

The research proves that, majority of the children with special needs and his family members in the littoral zones of Bangladesh are faced various types of negative experiences when a child with special needs is going to the school. Table 2 shows that, 18% of the respondents say that Many in the society do not look favorably his going to school, 24% of the respondents opine that, Many make negative comments, 12% of respondents say that, He does not receive the necessary support from the educational institution, 16% of the respondents opine that, His classmates do not treat him well at the school, 17% of people the family members opine that, no one wants to be his friend and 13% of the respondents say that, He does not always receive good treatment from the school teachers, officials and employees.

The research show that almost in the every educational institution of the coastal region have special needs child. Figure 3 shows that in the 90% educational institutions of the littoral zones have minimum a child with special needs. There are more children with special needs in your school area, but why aren't they studying? To answer this question the authorities of the educational institutions gave different opinions. Table-3 shows that 20% of the respondents say that, the Reluctance of the families of the children with special needs is the main causes of their not going to school. 28% of the respondents opine that, Negative role/thought of the society about the studying of the children with special needs, 14% of respondents say that, the economic crisis of the families of the children with special needs, 30% of the respondents opine that, Uncertainty about the future of the children with special needs and 8% of the respondents opine that, School authorities' disinterest about the children with special needs.

In this research it is clear that that there have no enough special arrangements for the children with special needs in the educational institutions of the littoral zones. Figure-5 shows that only 17% educational institutions have special washrooms or bathrooms for the children with special needs in the littoral zones of Bangladesh. Figure-6 shows that only 15% educational institution's teachers

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have been given special training how they teach and how to evaluate a child with special needs in the class room at the littoral zones of Bangladesh.

8. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There is no alternative to education to survive in today's competitive world. Of course, the education must be information technology- based, action oriented and inclusive. It is not possible to implement inclusive education by excluding any part of our society. Children with special needs are also an integral part of our society. So, to ensure inclusive education and to achieve sustainable development goals(SDGs), the children with special needs must be included in our mainstream education. Bangladesh has made some progress in its socio-economic indicators and has made some special advancement in its education sector but education for the children with special needs in the marginal areas, especially in the littoral zone, it still remains a big problems.

Majority of the children with special needs in the littoral zones are deprived of education. Due to economic crisis, social and family ignorance, lack of proper education, lack of consciousness, prejudice, neglect of the children with special needs etc. the children with special needs do not go to school in the littoral zone. Majority of the children with special needs and his family members in the littoral zones of Bangladesh are faced with various types of negative experiences when a child with special needs is going to the school. Almost in the every educational institution of the coastal region have special needs child but there have no special arrangements for the children with special needs in the educational institutions of the littoral zones such as no educational institution has any special washrooms or bathrooms for the children with special needs, no educational institution's teachers have been given any special training how to they teach and how to they evaluate a child with special needs in the class room at the littoral zones of Bangladesh. However to ensure inclusive education, specially to ensure education for the children with special needs The government of Bangladesh should take logical and sustainable initiatives. Some recommendations are given below that will be helpful for the concerned authority to take certain and fruitful initiatives.

1. Special measures should be taken for the education of the children with special needs in all government and private educational institutions.
2. Regular relevant training should be provided to teachers, officials and employees.
3. Special incentives should be provided to poor families so that they are encouraged to send their children with special needs to school.
4. In every educational institution should appoint a trained person to look after the children with special needs.
5. Guarantees should be given that children with special needs do not face any physical or mental torture by any teachers, officials, employees or their friends when they come to school.
6. The coastal people should be encouraged to educate their children with special needs and awareness should be made among the general people.
7. Sustainable arrangements should be made to solve the problems.
8. Foreign donor organizations and domestic NGOs should be more encouraged to be a partner of the government's initiatives.

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