



Infrastructural Facilities for Differently Abled Students - A Comparative Study of Government and Non-Government Institutions

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Abstract

The term “Barrier Free” indicates an environment where all users irrespective of their disabilities access the resources which they need. The students with disabilities have to face multiple challenges in the wake of unique barrier whether architectural, attitudinal or institutional which may include lack of understanding and co-operation from administration, faculty, staff and other students, inaccessibility of buildings, facilities and support barriers. The present study is conducted with an objective to identify the differences in infrastructural facilities and student’s level of satisfaction among government and non- government institutions. The study was conducted among eight universities offering higher education existing in Lucknow city to explore the infrastructural facilities for the differently abled students. From among, one university which is specially constructed for differently abled students was excluded from the study, so that exact differences among Government and non-Government institutions can be analyzed. To measure the level of satisfaction among students with regard to facilities for differently abled students, 30 students (15 Boys and 15 Girls) from each university were selected. A self-developed inventory to identify differences in infrastructural facilities was developed. Results revealed that non-government institutions were providing more facilities for differently abled students in comparison to government institutions. It was found that 74.28% the students belonging to Government institutions had low level of satisfaction compared to 55.71% of students belonging to non-Government institutions. Results may be used to explain suitable and barrier free environment in academic institutions for the convenience of differently abled students.

Keywords: Barrier free environment, government institutions and non- government institutions, infrastructural facilities.

Introduction

Barrier free environment in an academic institutions helps in enhancing the performance and also helps in making a person independent. Differently abled person’s requirements for a barrier free environment in terms of infrastructure will be exclusive in terms of making them comfortable, safe and independent. Universities offering higher education where there exists reservation for admission of disabled also has to cater to their special needs. Special emphasis has to be given during construction of buildings, which poses many problems for the differently abled students leading to inability in using various facilities along with normal students. Algaryouti (2010) in his study tried to identify the obstacles to inclusion of the handicapped students in Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). In addition to highlighting the obstacles they face in the university setting, the study also tried to provide enough information to the decision makers in the university, so that they are to recognize such obstacles and consider them carefully while planning for inclusion in the University. The sample of the study consisted of 28 physically and visually handicapped students and research used a questionnaire schedule. The results of the study revealed that there were statistically significant differences in these obstacles due to the type of disability among the visually handicapped students who indicated obvious problems within the first domain.

Pivik et al (2000) in their study “Barriers and Facilitators to Inclusive Education” described barriers to inclusive education and underscored the value of parental reports for assessing and evaluating inclusive school environments and practices. Based on a services of focus group meetings, 15 students with mobility limitation(9-15 years) and 12 parents identified four categories of barrier at their school: i. the physical environment (eg. narrow doorways ,ramps); ii. intentional attitudinal barriers (eg. isolation, bullying); iii. unintentional attitudinal barriers(eg. lack of knowledge, understanding, or awareness); and iv. physical limitations (eg. difficulty with manual dexterity). Results revealed that a major barrier identified by many of the students was physically getting in to school, environmental barriers included the following categories; doors, passage ways, elevators, washrooms, stairs and ramps, lockers, water fountain and recreational areas. Along with the environmental and attitudinal barriers they faced on a daily basis, these youth also bear difficulties associated with their condition or disability. The students were also asked to suggest possible facilitators to the barriers identified, in order to improve accessibility and promote full participation. It was suggested that facilitating inclusive school environment requires ensuring physical access, the opportunity for optimal learning and social experiences and providing a nurturing climate.

The present study is an attempt to explore the extent of the facilities provided for differently abled students in the universities offering higher education with the following objectives:- i. To identify the differences in infrastructural facilities for differently abled students among government and non-government institutions. ii. To measure the level of satisfaction of the students with regard to the availability of barrier free environment for differently abled students.

Methodology

The present study was conducted in Lucknow city India. All the universities (8 universities) offering higher education existing in Lucknow were identified. From among, one university which is specially constructed for differently abled students was excluded for the study, so that exact differences among government and non-government institutions can be analyzed. From each of the seven universities, 30 respondents (15 Boys and 15 Girls) were selected, to measure the student’s level of satisfaction. While selecting the sample, care was taken that all the respondents were hostelates, so that first hand information regarding hostel may be obtained. Types of institutions (government and non-government institutions) were taken as independent variable and availability of infrastructural facilities in institutions was considered as dependent variable of the study.

A self made inventory was prepared to gather required information for the study. Inventory was divided in to two sections, first section covered the information regarding institutional facilities of the institutions (eg.common place facility, classroom facility, library facility, canteen facility, washroom facility and transport facility of institutions) and second section covered the information about hostel facilities

(eg. common facility, hostel room facility, common hall facility, mess facility and washroom facility). The data was analyzed through Mean and SD. To test significances, ‘t’ test statistic was applied and to assess the level of satisfaction, Chi-square test was applied.

Results and Discussion

Infrastructural Facilities for disabled in government and non government institutions: Barrier free environment is the environment in terms of infrastructural facilities available for the differently abled student in an academic institution to get along with the normal children. Academic Institutions are a place of learning. The policy of inclusion where in stress is given to include the disabled children into mainstream, the facilities required for them in terms of the special infrastructural provisions to providing barrier free environment has to be focused up on. This in turn will create a congenial and viable atmosphere for differently able students and make them perform well in their academics and achieve success.

In addition to the observations of the researcher, which are presented in table 1 and Figure 1 with regard to status of the institutions, which provided various infrastructure facilities for the differently abled children in various institutions existing in Lucknow, 30 students from each campus were selected and information regarding various facilities in their respective institutions was collected which is presented in the table no 1. The mean responses were calculated and t-test statistic was used to analyze the data significance of the same was tested. High significant differences were found with respect to transport facility (28.53**), common hall facilities (20.90**), library facilities (13.80**), washroom facilities (19.04**), canteen facilities (18.55**), and hostel washroom facilities (19.04**).

Table-1
Comparison of differences among Government and Non-Government Institutions

Facilities available in Institutions	Inclusive Institutions				Test t-value
	Government Institutions (N=4)		Non-Govt. Institutions (N=3)		
(A)Institutional Facilities	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
(i) Common Facilities	3.64	0.87	6.5	1.052	20.90**
(ii) Class room Facilities	7.69	2.09	10.25	1.99	3.69*
(iii) Library Facilities	5.98	1.32	8.48	1.20	13.80**
(iv)Washroom Facilities	7.05	1.47	10.61	1.12	19.04**
(v) Transport Facility	1.71	2.74	9.48	1.78	28.53**
(vi) Canteen Facilities	3.82	2.92	9.8	1.31	18.55**
(B)HOSTEL FACILITIES					
(i) Common Facilities	12.32	2.65	15.4	2.04	3.41*
(ii) Common Hall facilities	4.26	1.03	5.15	1.25	1.06 NS
(iii) Hostel room Facilities	6.57	0.94	6.68	0.84	0.22 NS
(iv) Mess Facilities	6.64	1.80	8.86	2.01	2.49 NS
(v)Washroom Facilities	7.05	1.47	10.61	1.12	19.04**

** : Highly Significant, * : Significant, NS : Non significant

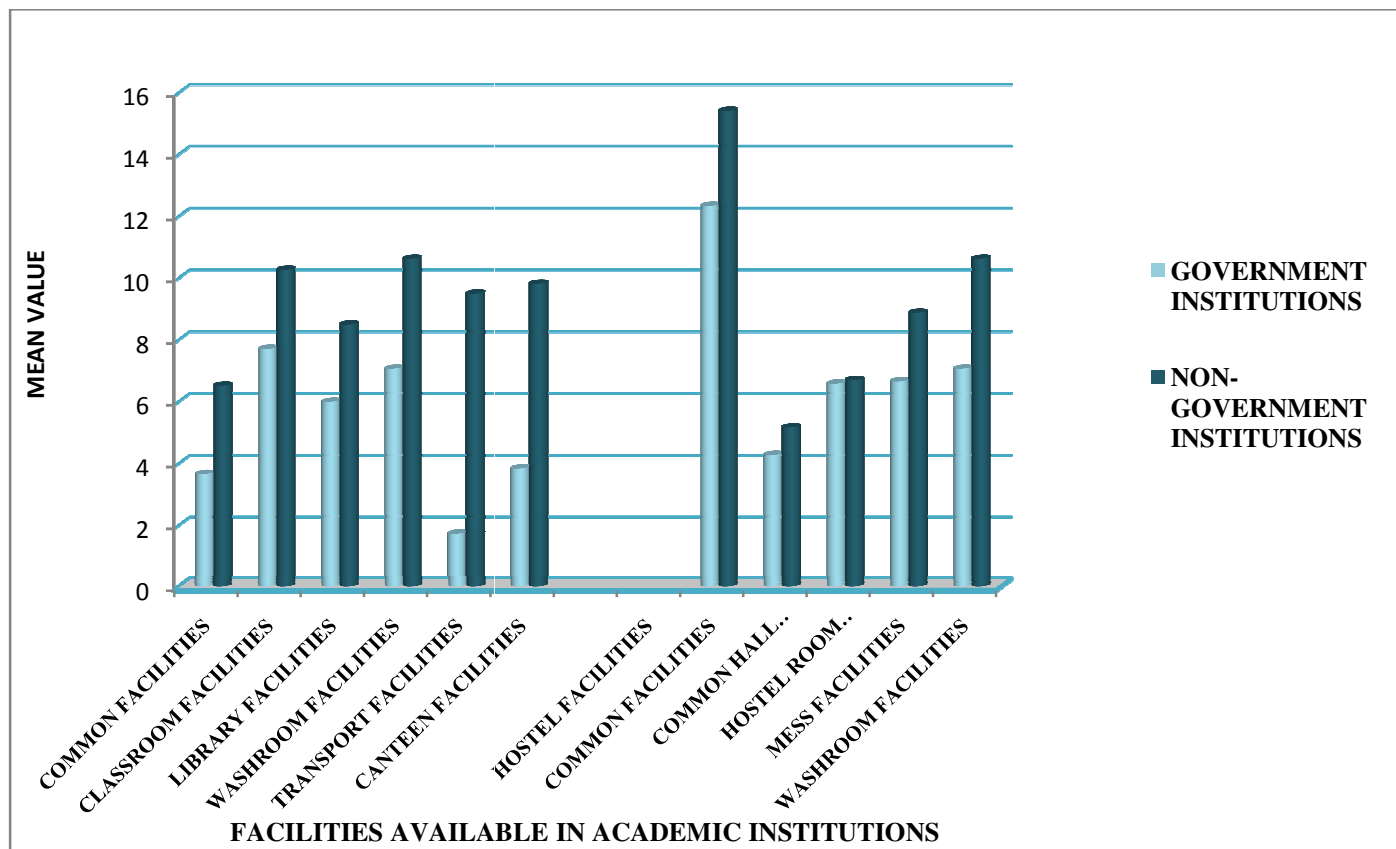


Figure-1
Comparison of facilities among Government and Non-Government Institutions

To measure these significant differences in common facilities, certain parameters considered were signage boards, placement, well lighted and wider roads, lift and ramp facilities, obstacle free pathways etc. The parameters identified to measure the library facility, reachable book shelves, talking books, reader services, telephone and computer facilities were etc. Audio signals availability, sufficient space, door and outside locks, fixed desk and seating arrangements cassette recorder, photo / information seats, display of classroom number were the certain parameters considered under classroom facilities. For assessing transport facility, low floor bus arrangements, nearer bus stops, parking facility, extra space for wheelchair, speed limit, and grab rail facility were studied. To see the canteen facility, sufficient space, suitable furniture, basins and drinking water facility were studied.

Non-significant differences were found in common hall facilities (1.06NS), hostel room facilities (0.22NS) and mess facilities (2.49NS). Sufficient space, well lighted rooms, Beds and alarms availability, walking aids and internal telephone extensions and two-way radio transmitters were seen to study the hostel rooms. For mess facilities food distribution and eating platform were analysed.

It can be inferred from the data that maximum facilities required for the differently abled students are provided in non-government institutions, even though admission is given to the differently abled students most of the institutions are not even providing minimum facilities for making them safe, comfortable and be along with their counterparts. Along with, collecting information regarding facilities, their level of satisfaction was also assessed and presented in the next table.

Level of Satisfaction with regard to availability of barrier free environment: The data in table 2 and figure 2 discusses the assessment of level of satisfaction of the respondents studying and staying in government institutions and non-government institutions. It can be observed that none of the students are highly satisfied with the facilities of Government institutions or non-Government institutions. Majority of the students belonging to government (74.28%) has low level of satisfaction and only 55.71% of students belonging to non-government institutions has low level of satisfaction. A few respondents (45.71%) belonging to Government institutions have moderate level of satisfaction in comparison to 55.71 percent of students belonging non-government institutions.

Table-2
Level of satisfaction with regarding facilities available in Government and Non-Government institutions for differently abled students.

Level of satisfaction	Government Institutions (N=120)	Non-Government Institutions (N=90)	Total (N=210)
High	0 (0)	0 (0)	0
Moderate	30 (45.71%)	50 (34.28%)	80
Low	90 (74.28%)	40 (55.71%)	130

$X^2 : 20.363^{**}$

** : Highly Significant

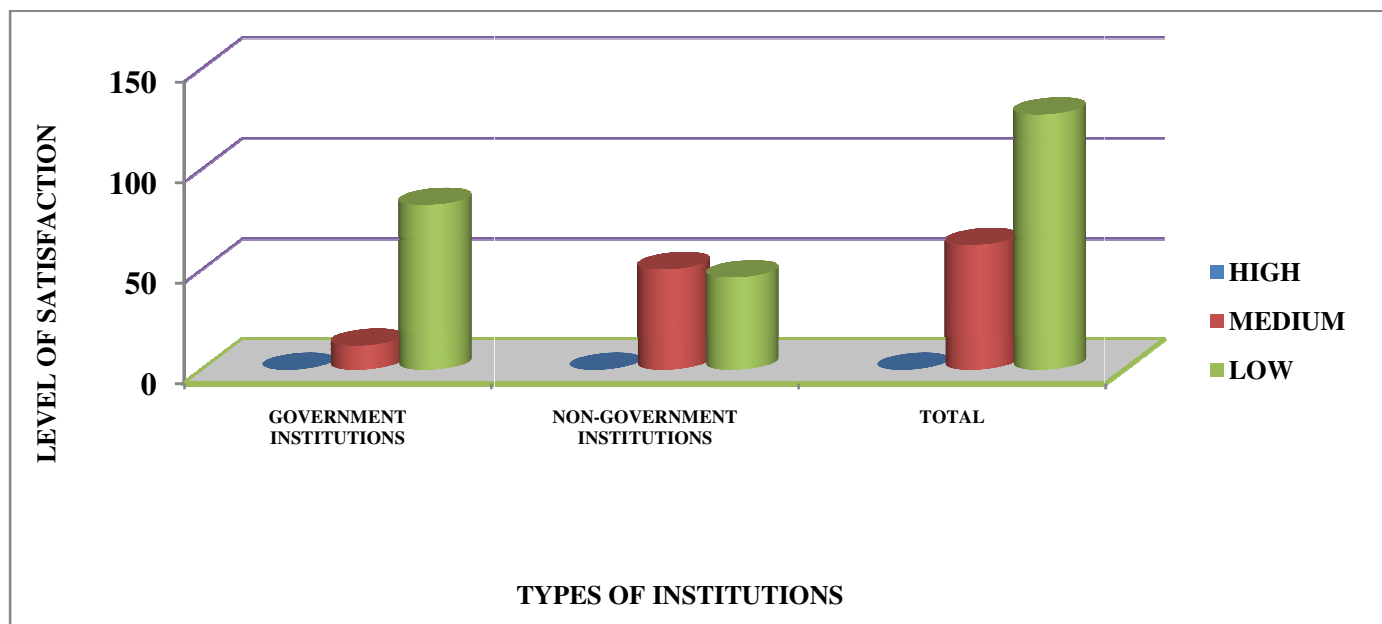


Figure-2
Level of Satisfaction of the respondents regarding Government and Non-Government institutional facilities for Differently abled students

The respondents expressed inconvenience and dissatisfaction with the facilities provided hindering their independence. The study clearly indicates that either the Government or non-Government institutions are concentrating in offering barrier free environment for differently abled, which in itself are inclusive.

From the results presented in the table it is clear that the differently abled students are more neglected in Government institutions in terms of providing them the facilities. The infrastructure is not at all disabled friendly leading to lot of inconvenience to them. A study conducted by Bigdeli³ in Iranian academic libraries studied the services provided for handicapped people and concluded that handicapped students are neglected in academic libraries, just projecting them as a lost generation depriving them from their special rights. The results are at par with the finding of Singh and Moirangthem⁴ who studied visual impaired in context to the academic libraries and found negligence in providing facilities.

Conclusion

The primary goal of the research study was to identify the differences in infrastructural facilities and student’s level of satisfaction among government and non-government institutions. The results show that non-government institutions were providing more facilities in comparison to government institutions. Majority of non- government institutions have proper placed washrooms, accessories of washrooms at suitable height and provision of hand bars in their institutions. Majority of the non- government institutions have fixed seating arrangements in their academic institutions. None of the institutions have walking aids, internal phone and two-way radio transmitters. Majority of the Government institutional students have very low level of satisfaction regarding the availability of facilities. The study can be used as a base and awareness among students and administration may be created. Even though policies are framed to protect the rights of the differently abled, the implementation of them is found to be very weak. The need of the day is to control these lapses and provide a barrier free environment and independent life to the differently abled.

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