

Challenges Experienced by Special Teachers in Dealing with Intellectually Challenged Children in Perambalur District: A Qualitative Study

C. Dhinesh Babu¹, Dr. B. Arunkumar²

¹Doctoral Research Scholar (Full Time), Department of Social Work, Bishop Heber College, Tiruchirappalli,

²Assistant Professor of Social Work, Bishop Heber College, Tiruchirappalli.

Abstract: Special Education Teachers play an important role in the life of the intellectually challenged children. While dealing with intellectually challenged children, teachers experience various problems related to educating them, handling the parents and administering the services for the welfare from the school management. In this background, the paper attempts to present the challenges experienced by teachers of intellectually challenged children. The researcher adopted Focused Group Discussion (FGD) as one of the qualitative methods for data collection. The study is conducted among the teachers working in ANBAGAM Special School for Mentally Retarded situated in Perambalur District. The study found that all the special education teachers are having problems while dealing with special children. The FGD explored their intellectually challenged children's behaviour, school management's problems and special children parent with a view to understand their level of satisfaction with their job. Salient findings related to the study and suggestions will be discussed in the full paper.

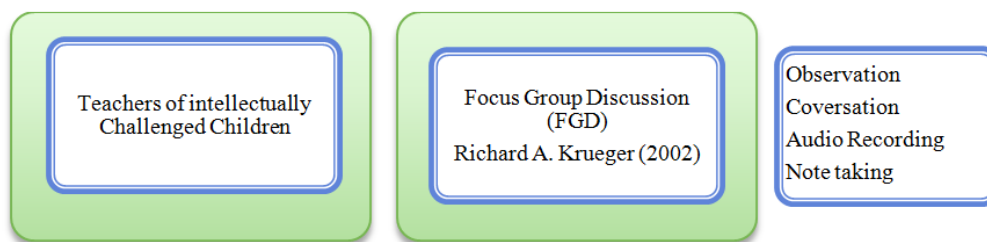
Keywords: Intellectually Challenged Children, Occupational Problems, Special Teachers, Challenges Experienced.

I. Introduction

Teaching is socially responsible occupation. Teachers are engaged in a wide variety of tasks along with the basic face-to-face teaching, such as curriculum design and development, school planning, marketing, community relations, information technology, workplace, health and safety, resource management, students' welfare, as well as playground and sports supervision. Special education teachers working with individuals who have intellectual disabilities (mental retardation) must know how to meet their students' unique needs. A special education teaching program covers methods for leading and instructing students with intellectual disabilities. Mental retardation is defined as a condition that includes below-average intellectual function and a lack of typical daily living skills. Students enrolled in a special education degree program discover basic methods to help individuals with intellectual disabilities learn. Methods can include problem-solving assignments, individualized instruction and small-group work. Prospective teachers also learn what special accommodations are needed when students take tests. Working as a special education teacher with a concentration in intellectual disabilities requires you to be creative, patient and willing to motivate students. Special education teachers usually go through more training than do general education teachers. In order to teach individuals with intellectual disabilities, special education teachers need to earn at least a bachelor's degree in education, specializing in special education or intellectual disabilities.

Special education is a very challenging field. In all classes, students who are at different ability levels, learn in different ways, and understand concepts at different times. Differentiated instruction and individualized teaching practices are challenging for all teachers. It gets even more difficult in a special education, multi-aged classroom. Special education teachers were lack of appreciation and parents support. The attrition, or "burn-out," rate for special education teachers is extremely high compared to most other professions. 50% of special education teachers leave their jobs within 5 years. Half of those who make it past 5 years will leave within 10 years. Teachers who are satisfied with their jobs have a high degree of professional competence (Melissa, 2012). They feel qualified in terms of their knowledge of subject matter and their teaching skills, and they feel secure about classroom management. In schools where the atmosphere is open and collegial, teachers have more job satisfaction and higher morale. In schools where the atmosphere is tense and where teachers feel isolated, they tend to have less job satisfaction. Lack of job satisfaction is responsible for frequent teacher absenteeism from schools, aggressive behaviour towards colleagues and learners, early exit from the teaching profession and psychological withdrawal from the work.

1.1 Conceptual Framework



1.2 Theoretical aspect of Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focus Group discussion is one of the research tools for collection of data and it is a form of qualitative research. It is group of people are asked about their perception, opinion, beliefs and attitudes towards a particular topic and also can yield a lot of information in a short time.

II. Review of Earlier Studies

The study has attempted to reveal the job satisfaction among special educators of children with developmental disabilities. The study revealed that the majority of the respondents have a moderate level of job satisfaction(Eljo, 2014). The study special education teacher burnout and act. Special educators teach high risk children and, ironically, have become a high risk group themselves.They are prone to low job satisfaction, low self-efficacy, as well as increased stress and burnout(Vandenberg, 2010). Job satisfaction among female teachers working in mental retardation centers. According to the results of her study, there are statistically significant differences in job satisfaction regarding the level of income and incentives(Yahia, 1994).

III. Methods

Factor	Focus Group
Format	Special Education Teachers
Age	20 – 50
Size	7 Teachers
Date and Time	8 th October 2016, 4.00 pm
Length of Session	45 Minutes
Nature of Sitting	Circular Group
Forms of Data	Conversation including tone / voice and body language
Data Collection	Direct observation and documentation
Documentation Pattern	Observation and Audio recording (Mobile)
Place	ANBAGAM Special School for Mentally Retarded in Perambalur District
Moderator	Dhinesh Babu. C
Assistant Moderator	Ramu. C

IV. Results

4.1 Introduction

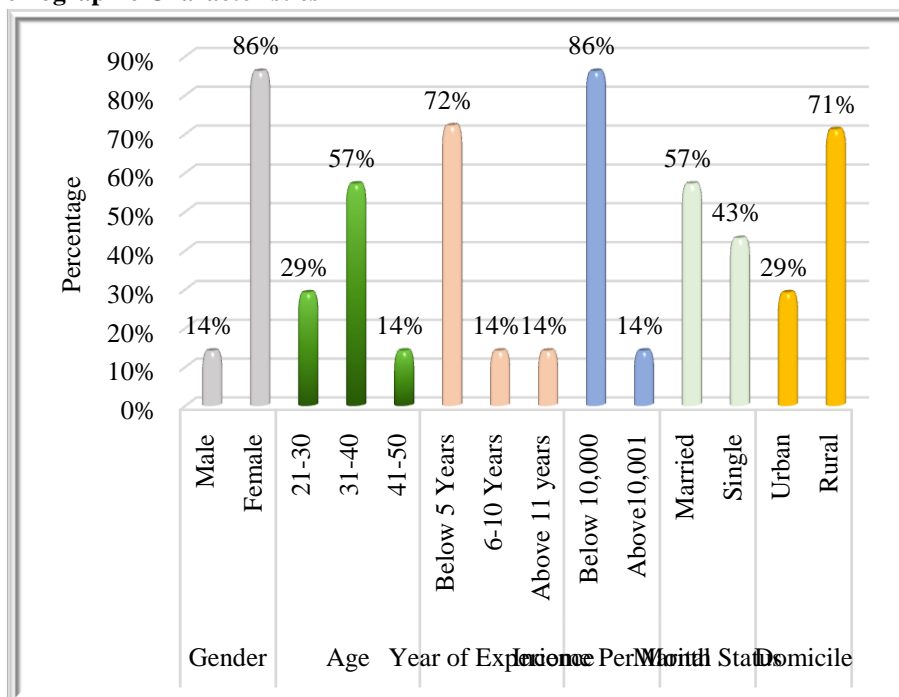
While beginning the focus group discussion the researcher introducing himself, welcomed the teachers, and overviewed of the topic, rules and regulation. The introduction was given as below: “Good evening and welcome to our discussion. Thanks for giving opportunity to discuss with us and also thanks to the Director and coordinator of this special school for giving permission me to conduct the focus group discussion. My name is Dhinesh Babu and assisting me is Ramu. I am a Doctoral Research Scholar in Social Work from Bishop Heber College, Tiruchirappalli. I am doing research in the area of Intellectually Challenged. In this regard I want to know about what are the challenges experienced by special education teachers while dealing with intellectually challenged children. That’s why I conduct this focus group discussion. There are no wrong answers but rather difference points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. With your permission, I want to record the discussion because I don’t want to miss any of your comments. Your comments are fully confidential and it’s for my academic purpose only”.

The discussion was designed to gather information from the teachers with regard to the following outcomes:

1. To describe the Socio-Demography Characteristics of the respondents.
2. To find out the Challenges Experienced by teachers of Intellectually Challenged Children.
3. To suggest the suitable measures to the respondents.

4.2 Outcome

4.2.1 Socio Demographic Characteristics



The above table shows that less than one fifth (14%) of the respondents are males and vast majority (86%) of the respondents are females. With regard to their age, more than half (57%) of the respondents are 31-40 years old. Less than one third (29%) of the respondents are 21-30 years old and less than one fifth (14%) of the respondents are 41-50 years old. Majority (72%) of the special teachers' teaching experience is below 5 years and less than one fifth (14%) of the respondents' teaching experience is above 6 years old. Vast majority (86%) of the respondents' monthly income is below 10,000 and less than one fifth (14%) of the teachers' income is above 10,001. More than half (57%) of the respondents were married and less than half (43%) of them are single. Majority (71%) of the respondents are belonging to rural area and less than one third (29%) of them are belong to rural area.

4.2.2 Reasons for choose the job

The researcher received different types of answer to this question. Below mentioned reasons were given by the special education teachers working in Anbagam special school for mentally retarded. The answers were given as following: Res. 1: I had more interest to work with intellectually challenged children because I loved special children. My parents, siblings and relatives also encouraged and supported me. So, after complete my under graduation, I went to join special education for mentally retarded. Res. 2: My neighbours were having intellectually challenged children. Every day the parents were experienced more difficulties while dealing with intellectually challenged children. Because they did not know how to handle these children. So, at the time I decided to know about how to handle these children and how to train them. This was the main reason to choose this job. Res. 3: It's my own interest. Res. 4: Teaching was my ambition. In my village many persons were working as a teacher and my sibling also teacher. But there were no special education teachers in my village. So, I chose this career special education for mentally retarded. Res. 5: My cousin was an intellectually challenged and he was more attached with me. So, I would like to spend time with these type of children. That's why I chose this job. Res. 6: It's my own interest. Res. 7: My sister's child was an intellectually challenged. As my sister was working as a government school teacher she could not spend with her child. So, take care of her child I was intended to know about how to handle these children. This was the main reason to join this job.

4.2.3 Challenges Experienced by Teachers of Intellectually Challenged Children

It was noted that all special education teachers had some problems while dealing with special children. Intellectually challenged children's behaviour was vary with each and every special child. The special children were not ready to accept new atmosphere and new people. So, special teachers felt difficulty to understand their behaviour and to handle them. After two or three months each and every special children would be attached to any one of the teachers. In the absence of a teacher the children would not ready to cope up with other teachers.

In such a situation some children would even attack the teacher. From the study it was found that mostly special education teachers were leaving their job within 5 years, because special teaching was more complicated and they were facing lot of problems while dealing with special children. All the special education teachers opined that they were having low level of income than normal school teachers.

It was known that monthly twice District Differently Abled Welfare Officer would come to visit the special school. At the time the special children might behave in a wrong way. For example, a special child might refuse to answer the question, might denied taking of food, they might behave adamantly etc. A particular teacher only knew behaviour of the particular child. In such case the district differently abled welfare officer, school administrator, parents and other sponsored people condemned the teacher and were not ready to accept the justification given by a particular teacher. District Differently Abled Welfare Officer would conduct awareness programme, sports and cultural programmes for differently abled children. These programme would be conducted only in public place. At that time some special children would go outside beyond the control of the teacher. In such situation the special teachers would feel more difficulty to handle the children. But the school administration would not understand the difficulties of the teachers. Regarding the non-cooperation of parents the teachers opined that parents were not taking any effort to train the children in that home. The parents were fully engaged with work commitment and family problems. So, the parents were fully depending on the special school and special education teachers. In the absence of their own efforts they were expecting the child's development within two or three months of admitting in the school. This was the major drawback on the part of parents. This was result in posing a stressful situation to the teachers.

4.3 Summary

Thus the present study documented the challenges experienced by teachers of intellectually challenged children in Perambalur District. The study found that all the special education teachers were having problems while dealing with special children. The focused group discussion explored that intellectually challenged children's behaviour, the non cooperation of parents and lack of understanding on the part of school management would lead to stressful situation to the teachers. Job satisfaction among special educators of children with developmental disabilities. The study revealed that the majority of the respondents have a moderate level of job satisfaction (Eljo, 2014). But this focused group discussion revealed that all the special education teachers were having high level of job satisfaction in spite of all the difficulties they were facing.

4.3.1 Suggestion

Suggestion to the parents: Parents should co-operate with the efforts of special education teachers by giving regular training to their children in home also. Otherwise the special child would not develop. So, parent's contribution is very important to develop the child. Suggestion to the government: Maximum special education teachers are working in Non-Governmental Organization. Few special education teachers were appointed in Block Resource Centre (BRC) in each block of every district under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan special education teachers have high level of income than Non-Governmental Organization special education teachers. So, the government should implement new schemes to the development of special children and to give more opportunity for special education teachers.

References

- [1]. Eljo, V. D. (2014). Job Satisfaction among Special Educators of Children with Developmental Disabilities. *Indian Journal of Applied Research*, 4(12).
- [2]. Melissa. (2012). friendshipcircle. Retrieved 12 21, 2016, from <http://www.friendshipcircle.org>.
- [3]. Vandenberg, D. W. (2010). Special Education Teacher Burnout and Act. *International Journal of Special Education*, 25, 119-131.
- [4]. Yahia, K. (1994). Job Satisfaction for female worker at mental retardation centers in Amman City. *Human Research Journal*, 21, 142-168.