

THE IMPACT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STRATEGIES IN THE LEARNING ENHANCEMENT OF SPECIAL CHILDREN DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

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Abstract *The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced education systems worldwide, leading to the closing of near-total schools, universities, and colleges. The global COVID-19 pandemic epidemic is also impacting mental health. Families are concerned, and schools are being shut down at this time, which has a huge impact not just on regular children's education but also on teaching children with special needs. Children with special needs are becoming complicated; they are impaired because their memory and processing ability is not equivalent to others. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic effect, the halt of therapy development, speech therapy sessions and social ability classes are halted and impacted children with special needs. While the Special Education Schools (SES) struggle during the lockdown era to interact with Children with Special Needs, it has driven them to find new ways to get them out of the school situation. The Researcher has used the convenient sampling technique to gather data from parents, teachers and administrators from the Tirunelveli district. The Researcher has sent a Sample questionnaire coupled with 2 variables relating to technology and Communication. It is to understand how technology-based inputs enhances the children's psychological, emotional and mental development. The results revealed that 2 elements are very strong: Technological Orientation (TO) and Communicative Orientation (CO). The technological orientation results from a technology-based intervention guides the Special Education Schools to help the Special Children through techno-savvy parents. On the other hand, the parents who are slow in technology use are given orientation to use their communicative skills to help the children. Thus, the current research recommends using ICT tools and techniques support special needs children and help them learn at home.*

Keywords *COVID-19, Special Children, Psychological, Emotional, Mental, Technical Orientation, Communicative Orientation, ICT*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced education systems worldwide, leading to the closing of near-total schools, universities, and colleges. Global COVID-19 pandemic epidemic is also impacting mental health. Families are concerned and schools are being shut down at this time, which has a huge impact not just on regular children's education but also children with special needs. Teaching Children with special needs is becoming complicated; they are impaired because their memory and processing ability is not equivalent to others. Due to COVID-19 Pandemic effect, the halt of therapy development, speech therapy sessions and social ability classes are halted and impacted children with special needs. While the Special Education Schools (SES) struggle during the lockdown era to interact with Children with Special Needs, it has driven them to find new ways to get them out of the school situation. The current research focuses on the role of Parents in educating Children with Special needs. The Management of Special Education. Special Education Schools (SES) is targeting the parents to be empowered to teach their children at home. As Educational institutes are going online to help the students,

the management of Special Education Schools are also conducting sessions with parents of children with Special Needs and enabling them to learn the art of teaching children at home with knowledge developing techniques and tools. Thus, the paper presents an overarching view of imparting quality education to Children with Special Needs through the parents and how statically various aspects are related.

Background Understanding

The Pandemic COVID-19 has impacted on education system around the globe largely. The Education of Children with Special Educations also has suffered the most. Special Educational Schools are shut down largely and online communicative system is not working at this moment. Brittle, (2020) has observed that Teachers in special education during the COVID-19 situation have impacted teachers as they work in a stressful situation to manage the children with Special Needs. DeRish et al. (2020) indicated in their studies that there is a link between Children with special needs who are externalizing behaviour problems and parents who disengage themselves with their words

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in their learning. The alternative method of educating Children with Special Needs are to involve the parents in Special education and orient them to support their wards. Brydges and Mkandawire (2020) have given an insight that there are urgent needs of involving the parents of Children with Special Needs and train them to assist their children. Since they are the custodians of the children, they are to be trained to support children's education. Carlson et al. (2020) have enumerated that the interaction between School management and the Parents of Children with Special Needs is a must and this may bring change in learning of special children. They have suggested further that the cooperation of parents and the Collaboration of Teachers could bridge the gap of Children with Special needs learning. DeMatteo (2020) has explained that the parents with Special Children are to adapt ways with concrete plans to meet Special education challenges. Burke et al. (2020) have indicated that many parents lack sufficient knowledge of Special education curriculum design and imparting methods especially during this period. Viner and Shaughnessy (2020) proposed a solution that parents and teachers have to bring on a digital platform and mould them to use low-tech and High-tech medium of digital technology communication in teaching and learning purposes of Special Children. Thus, the current research has paved a way to explore the role of parents in educating their Children with Special Needs as the pandemic COVID-19 has negatively impacted special education. It has to be further validated through the current research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Yan (2020) describes research design that Research area turns into specific and measurable questions with data collected, validated and interpreted. The research has drawn insights from the current research background, leading the Researcher to identify the research gaps in the special education systems. Based on the research gaps in the existing literature, the researcher has formulated the blueprint of research to carry out formally.

Research Objectives

Sreejesh et al. (2013) has indicated that research objectives act as parameter to enhance the research. The researcher has formulated the research objectives based on the research gaps and insights drawn. The objectives are: (1). To identify Children with Special Needs, (2). To correlate Special School content instruction and Parents motivation, (3). To form proximity of parents teaching children with Special Needs. (4). To extract different factors affecting the parents teaching Children with Special Needs,

Sampling Method

Frey (2018) has explained convenient sampling as a sampling technique used to collect data from the readily available participants for sharing information. The Researcher has used the convenient sampling technique to gather data from parents whose children from selected Special Education Schools (SES) in Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu. The Researcher has selected 300 parents whose children are in Special Schools and sent the questionnaire to collect data.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

Based on the predetermined sample size, the researcher has received 172 (out of 300) parents, which signifies a response rate of 57.33%. Leung, (2001) described Cronbach's Alpha as a measure internal consistency of items (Variables) used in a research construct and the value scores (0.7) is good for the research. Researcher has obtained a satisfactory value of reliability using Cronbach's Alpha (0.885) which signifies the overall strength of the research construct of items covered 49. The outcome of the research findings are enumerated with specified objectives.

The Children with Special Needs and their Types

Table 1: Special Children types

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dump	172	4.41	.857
Visual	172	4.14	.951
Physically challenged	172	4.13	.924
Hearing	172	4.08	.776
Deaf	172	3.66	1.339
Valid N (listwise)	172		

The objective 1 is to study the types of Special Schools that exist in the target populated district. The mean value of the Table 1 indicates the different types children who enrol in Special Education Schools (SES) in Tirunelveli District. Many schools are found to be carted to the needs of people with speech problem as it scores the mean value 4.41. Many parents have to deal with Children with Dumbness. along with action orientation. Many parents have voiced that their wards are dumb children who cannot communicate orally. This needs special care to assist them in learning. The

Parents have been guided to help their wards with pictorial representation of things, events and situations. Identification of the Special needs of Children is given scope to develop the content and its delivery medium. Children with Speech Difficulty or dumb Children are more in numbers in the Special Schools. The second highest mean value is Visual Impairment children and they are to be given more care. The Children with Visual Impairment have faced a lot of difficulty in learning during the pandemic period.

Parent-Content Instruction Module

Number of Cases: Proximity and closeness of Parents

Table 2: Parent-Content Instruction Strategies

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Guided Instruction	172	4.24	.681
Guided Monitoring	172	4.13	.865
Guided Content plan	172	4.12	.700
Guided Assignment	172	4.06	.870
Guided Training	172	3.85	1.043
Guided Sharing	172	3.84	1.017
Guided Problem Solving	172	3.81	.963
Guided Feedback	172	3.72	.938
Valid N (listwise)	172		

The pandemic COVID-19 has forced the Special Schools to find alternative ways to instruct the children with Special Needs. The Special Schools have been trying their best to instruct the students enrolled in their schools. Objective 2 was to study the impact of COVID-19 on the parents of Special Children and how they are given orientation to follow up with their wards in terms of teaching-learning. The Management of Special Schools has devised several mechanisms to educate the parents as primary instructors of Children with Special Needs. The Table 2 reveals that Guided Instruction scores very high mean (4.24) and Parents are guided by the Special schools and helped them understand their roles as teachers who could instruct their wards and assist in their wards' learning. The parents of Children with Special needs were given teaching orientation and how to engage with their wards in moulding their learning. The second highest mean is Guided Monitoring having value (4.13), ranked as second component. Teachers of Special Schools have developed a mechanism to assist the parents in developing the content and guided them to teach their wards. They also try to monitor the way the parents are engaging and assisting their learning. This is a positive feedback from the parents and encouraging moment for the special schools.

Forming Proximity of Parents in Special Education

Table 3: Factors Convergent

Sr. No	Factors	No. of Aspects Covered	Reliability Construct
1	Teaching Aids	10	.921
2	Content Sharing	7	.919
3	Teaching Instruction	7	.918
4	Parent Resources	6	.880
5	Parent Interaction	5	.856
6	School Support	5	.847
7	Reinforcement Value	4	.812

The objective 3 is to find out the closeness and the proximity among the parents. The cluster analysis gives us an orientation to understand the proximity and the closeness that parents of the Special Children have. There are 3 clusters formed. These 3 clusters are named Parents with High Technology, Parents with Moderate Technology, Parents with low Technology. Cluster 1 is Parents with High Technology, having 43% of the share of total respondents. In this cluster, Parents are technologically sound and use mobile and other Technology to support their wards and assist them in learning. These parents have become techno-savvy in using modern methods of teaching with online videos and graphical mode. It has been observed that Parents in these clusters are more prone to Technology and its benefits. Thus, Children with Special needs are different in learning. The second cluster is named Parents with Moderate Technology having 59% of total respondents, which is higher than the other 2 clusters.

Cluster	1	2	3
Cluster	47.000	102.000	23.000
Valid	172.000		
Missing	.000		

In this cluster, the parents are moderate in following technology-oriented instruction and teaching their wards. In this group, they can understand the process of enhancing themselves in teaching and learning paradigm. Parents with Moderate Technology have used the combination of Technology orientation and Communication orientation. The third cluster is named as Parents with Low technology orientation. These parents are less acquainted with modern Technology and its impact on Children with Special Needs. The parents of Children with Special Needs are more prone

to Communicative orientation. Thus, these parents use Communicative orientation as a tool to instruct their wards and make use of flashcards, spell cards and drawing kits to teach with confidence.

Extracting Different Factors Affecting the Parents (Factor Analysis)

The objective 4 is to extract different factors that the aspects are converged. The Table 3 indicates the factor scores of 49 items (aspects) being converged into 8 factors. These factors are grouped with specific aspects which are supportive. The 1st factor is Teaching Aids consists of alpha value (.921). This explains about the learning materials used for instruction of Children with Special Needs. The parents can use the Teaching Aids like Spell Card, Pair words and ABC kit.

The 2nd Factor is Content Sharing having 7 aspects converged with value (.919). The content sharing factor involves the teachers of the Special Schools and the parents of the Children with Special Needs. Due to COVID-19, Teachers introduce the parents to the lessons taught and instruct how to handle the lessons through activities. The 3rd factor is Teaching Instruction which scores .918 as construct reliability of the factor. Special Schools uses the teaching instruction to help the parents learn the art of teaching the Children with Special needs. Teachers can guide and monitor their works. The 4th factor is Parent Resources which has value of (.880) with 6 aspects being converged. The parents use their mobile phone, taps and other electronic devices to instruct and communicate to the children with Special needs. The 5th factor is Parent Interaction is having high value (.856). Parent interaction with their wards have improved and found to be positive as it has reduced the negative orientation of the parents. The 6th factor is School Support, which covers 5 aspects with the value of (.847). The school support factor indicates that the school extends its support to the parents in analysing their wards' growth and development. The 7th factor is Reinforcement Value. Parents are given psychological support and being encouraged to assist their wards in their learning.

CONCLUSION

We are at the end of the journey of current research. It has been a motivating experience to understand the concept of educating Children with special Needs. The parents of the Children are found to be motivated and enriched by the new initiatives taken by the schools to support them. The schools have also used parents to enhance the education of the

Children with Special Needs. One of the Major learnings of the current research was identifying parents who are having proximity with each other and developing high, moderate and low levels of understanding of Technology. The current research gave new insights into parents' and their teaching influence on the Children with Special needs.

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