



A Study of School Adjustment of Children with Intellectual Disabilities

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Abstract- School adjustment represents a vital component of a child's comprehensive development, especially for those with intellectual disabilities who frequently encounter academic, social, emotional, and behavioral obstacles within the educational setting. This study intends to investigate the degree of school adjustment among children with intellectual disabilities and to pinpoint the factors that affect their adaptation in school environments. In this context, school adjustment is defined as the capacity of children to effectively acclimate to academic requirements, peer interactions, teacher expectations, and the overall school atmosphere. The research employs a descriptive design and concentrates on children with intellectual disabilities enrolled in elementary and secondary education. A representative sample is obtained through appropriate sampling methods from both special and inclusive educational institutions. Standardized instruments and rating scales pertinent to school adjustment are utilized for data gathering, alongside relevant background information. The collected data are analyzed using appropriate statistical methods, including mean, standard deviation, and inferential statistics, to interpret variations based on factors such as gender, age, type of school, and level of intellectual disability. The anticipated findings of the study are expected to underscore the differing levels of school adjustment among children with intellectual disabilities, with specific challenges noted in areas such as social engagement, classroom involvement, and emotional management. Additionally, the study aims to uncover the influence of supportive elements such as teacher attitudes, peer acceptance, family assistance, and the availability of specialized educational resources in promoting school adjustment. The findings of the research carry considerable educational significance for educators, school leaders, parents, and special education professionals. Gaining insight into the adaptation behaviors of children with intellectual disabilities can assist in devising effective intervention methods, enhancing inclusive practices, and establishing a nurturing school atmosphere that encourages both academic achievement and social well-being.

Keywords-School Adjustment, Intellectual Disabilities, Inclusive Education, Special Education, Social Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment.

Introduction

School plays a vital role in the overall development of a child, as it provides not only academic learning but also opportunities for socialization, emotional growth, and the development of life skills. School adjustment refers to the ability of a child to adapt successfully to the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral demands of the school

environment. Proper school adjustment enables children to participate actively in classroom activities, maintain healthy relationships with peers and teachers, and develop positive attitudes toward learning. For children with intellectual disabilities, achieving effective school adjustment is often more challenging due to limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Children with intellectual disabilities experience difficulties in areas such as reasoning, problem-solving, communication, and social skills, which directly influence their ability to cope with school demands. These children may struggle with academic tasks, following classroom routines, understanding instructions, and interacting appropriately with peers. As a result, poor school adjustment may lead to academic failure, social isolation, low self-esteem, and emotional problems. Therefore, understanding the nature and extent of school adjustment among children with intellectual disabilities is essential for promoting their holistic development and educational success. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on inclusive education, which advocates for educating children with intellectual disabilities alongside their typically developing peers in regular school settings. While inclusive education offers numerous benefits, such as increased social interaction and a sense of belonging, it also presents challenges related to curriculum adaptation, classroom management, and individual support. The success of inclusive education largely depends on how well children with intellectual disabilities are able to adjust to the school environment and how effectively schools respond to their diverse needs. School adjustment is a complex concept that encompasses academic, social, emotional, and behavioral adjustments. Academic adjustment pertains to managing curricular demands and learning tasks, while social adjustment involves establishing positive relationships with peers and educators. Emotional adjustment refers to the ability to handle feelings such as anxiety and frustration, and behavioral adjustment is concerned with adhering to school rules and norms. Children with intellectual disabilities frequently exhibit uneven development across these areas, necessitating targeted assessment and intervention.

Various factors affect the school adjustment of children with intellectual disabilities, including the severity of the disability, instructional methods, teacher attitudes, peer acceptance, family support, and the availability of special educational services. A nurturing and inclusive school environment can greatly improve adjustment, whereas negative attitudes and insufficient resources may impede it. Despite the significance of school adjustment, there is a scarcity of empirical research specifically addressing the adjustment patterns of children with intellectual disabilities, especially within the Indian educational framework.

Consequently, this study aims to investigate the level of school adjustment among children with intellectual disabilities and to identify the factors influencing their adjustment in educational settings. By understanding their adjustment needs and challenges, the study aspires to contribute to the formulation of effective educational strategies and interventions that foster inclusive, supportive, and child-centered learning environments. Such insights are vital for ensuring that children with intellectual disabilities receive equal opportunities to learn, develop, and engage meaningfully in school life.

Concept of school adjustment-The notion of school adjustment refers to the process of acclimating to the academic and social settings of a school. This process entails managing various life demands and transitions, including the shift from home to school and the assimilation into the school community. Key elements such as relationships between students and teachers, behavioral independence, and support from the school environment are vital to this adjustment. This process encompasses not only the condition of adjustment but also the preparedness and willingness to fulfill the criteria for a state of school adjustment, which comprises anticipated academic results, social

outcomes, motivation to learn, and personal achievements such as enhanced self-esteem and the absence of depressive symptoms.

Meaning and characteristics of intellectual disabilities-Intellectual disability (ID) is a condition that restricts an individual's capacity to learn, reason, and function in everyday life. It is characterized by an IQ score generally below 70, along with challenges in adaptive behaviors, which encompass the practical, social, and conceptual skills essential for independent living. This condition is identified during childhood and can arise from a variety of factors, including genetic disorders, brain injuries, and environmental influences.

Characteristics

Intellectual Functioning: People with intellectual disabilities frequently face difficulties in learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and comprehending complex ideas. This may present as delayed academic learning and challenges in making everyday decisions.

1. Adaptive Behavior: This includes the abilities required for daily living, such as self-care, communication, and social interaction. Individuals may find it hard to manage personal hygiene, interpret social cues, and carry out household tasks.

2. Severity Levels: Intellectual disabilities can be classified from mild to profound. Mild ID may enable individuals to live independently with some assistance, whereas profound ID typically necessitates significant help in daily activities.

3. Common Causes: The origins of intellectual disability can be quite diverse and may involve genetic conditions (such as Down syndrome and Fragile X syndrome), prenatal exposure to harmful substances (like alcohol), and complications during birth or early childhood.

4. Lifelong Condition: Intellectual disability is a lifelong condition, and although some individuals may enhance their skills with suitable support and education, many will need assistance throughout their lives.

Importance of school adjustment for children with intellectual disabilities

The significance of school adjustment for children with intellectual disabilities is rooted in customizing educational content and methods to address their specific needs. Key strategies encompass:

Simplifying and deconstructing content to render complex concepts more accessible.

1. Employing visual aids and experiential learning to improve comprehension and participation.
2. Adapting instructional techniques to suit various learning styles and preferences.
3. Promoting independence and practical life skills through hands-on experiences and real-world applications.
4. Encouraging involvement from families and peers to foster a supportive and inclusive atmosphere.
5. These modifications guarantee that children with intellectual disabilities obtain a meaningful and enriching education, facilitating their academic and social development.

ISSUES & CHALLENGES

The government has implemented various schemes and policies aimed at the education of children with special needs. Despite the establishment of special schools, rehabilitation centers, vocational training centers, and voluntary organizations to facilitate these schemes, many disabled children remain deprived of education or are unable to receive a complete education. Even with the initiatives put forth by the government for the education of students with special needs, they continue to encounter numerous educational challenges such as:

1. Lack of awareness among general teachers regarding the challenges faced by disabled children: - The difficulties experienced by secondary school-aged students with disabilities are not well understood by general educators. These teachers often lack a scientific and educational understanding of disability and the associated awareness, despite holding their own social and cultural perspectives on the disabled. Consequently, these educators struggle to fully grasp the issues faced by children with disabilities, which hinders their ability to create an appropriate learning environment for students with special needs.

2. Inadequate Curriculum: - Textbooks do not include any examples featuring children with disabilities, and there is not a single lesson in any secondary level textbook that addresses topics relevant to them. Furthermore, throughout the various sections of the book, there is a noticeable absence of representation of students with special needs in the images. As a result, pupils with special needs are frequently overlooked in these contexts. An inclusive curriculum that enables students to connect emotionally and acquire new knowledge is crucial for the contemporary educational system.

3. Lack of an adequate learning environment in schools: - The educational setting in schools fails to align with the fundamental principles of inclusive education. Consequently, students face various learning challenges. Certain activity-oriented subjects, such as science and art, are offered in specific schools without the essential resources or tools, making it challenging for individuals to independently grasp these subjects.

4. Lack of familial support: - Families often do not provide sufficient assistance for the education of their disabled children. It is imperative for families to take initiative and enroll their children in educational institutions; however, this is frequently not the case, as many parents overlook their children's educational needs for financial and trivial reasons.

5. Academic and administrative challenges: - While the Indian government makes considerable efforts to promote the education of individuals with disabilities, in reality, the intended beneficiaries do not fully reap the benefits. The primary reason for this is the inadequate implementation of the initiatives. Administrative personnel often fail to effectively supervise and execute the programs aimed at enhancing the educational prospects of individuals with disabilities. Consequently, they do not receive the complete advantages of these initiatives. Presently, India hosts numerous programs related to the education of the disabled. Nevertheless, a relatively small number of disabled individuals are actually benefiting from these programs. The ineffective management of these policies and initiatives results in improper dissemination, hindering the achievement of the desired outcomes.

6. Physical Infrastructures: - The inclusive education system in India primarily emphasizes physical infrastructure. In the context of inclusive education, this presents a considerable challenge. Merely enrolling a child with a disability does not guarantee that the school will offer the necessary accommodations or that the child will be able to engage

effectively in standard classroom environments. These necessitated modifications to the existing structures of institutions to better equip children from diverse backgrounds. A variety of initiatives have been launched to address this issue, including the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the Mid-Day Meal program, the Minimum Learning Level initiative, and Operation Blackboard, which aimed to provide essential classroom resources, blackboards, books, drinking water facilities, restrooms, and other necessary physical infrastructure for schools.

When viewed comprehensively, the primary challenges encountered by students with special needs are as follows- Insufficient awareness and sensitivity towards students with special needs. Prevalent negative attitudes towards students with special needs and the societal stigma associated with them. Lack of family support and the economic hardships faced by families. Delays in the implementation of government schemes and policies. Poor coordination among various government initiatives. Inadequate medical facilities available in schools for students with special needs. Insufficient vocational training centers for students with special needs. Absence of modern technologies in special education and rehabilitation for students with special needs. Shortage of special schools catering to students with special needs. Deficiency of qualified and trained personnel in special schools for all categories of students with special needs. Lack of an appropriate learning environment and a suitable curriculum in schools. Inadequate teacher training and insufficient peer support. Limited awareness among general educators regarding the challenges faced by students with special needs. Encountering a range of educational and administrative obstacles.

SUGGESTIONS- Education for students with special needs has been a persistent concern in India. These students encounter numerous challenges in their educational journey, not only regarding physical access to facilities but also concerning broader accessibility issues related to curriculum, adaptations, accommodations, teaching, learning, and assessment. Consequently, the following are the key recommendations for enhancing the education of students with special needs in India:

- a. Firstly, both the government and society must embrace a positive approach.
- b. The challenges within the education system should be comprehended, and efforts should be directed towards resolving them.
- c. Special schools should offer child-friendly basic facilities, taking into account the various categories of disabilities.
- d. Students with special needs ought to receive free study materials tailored to their specific requirements.
- e. Schools should appoint teachers who are technically trained to educate students with special needs.
- f. A professional trained in child psychology should be designated for the counseling of students with special needs within the school environment.
- g. The quality of institutions related to disabilities should be periodically assessed.
- h. To foster self-reliance among students with special needs, provisions for various types of small vocational training should be established.
- i. To ensure the effective implementation of government policies and schemes, committees should be formed at the district and panchayat levels to fully support these

Implications for educators, educational institutions, and guardians

The implications for educators, educational institutions, and guardians concerning children with intellectual disabilities are complex. Educators encounter difficulties such as insufficient training and resources, which can impede their capacity to effectively teach students with special needs. Educational institutions must tackle obstacles to inclusion, including discrimination and the absence of supportive learning environments, to guarantee that all

children have access to quality education. Guardians are vital in advocating for their children's education and ensuring they obtain the necessary support and resources to flourish in an inclusive environment.

Teachers, schools, and parents each fulfill essential roles in assisting children with intellectual disabilities—teachers deliver customized instruction, schools foster inclusive settings, and parents advocate and collaborate to ensure their child's requirements are addressed.

1. Role of Teachers- Individualized Instruction: Teachers modify lessons to accommodate various learning needs, employing strategies such as differentiated teaching, visual aids, and hands-on activities.

A. Skill Development: They emphasize not only academic learning but also life skills, communication, and social interaction.

B. Encouragement & Patience: Teachers build confidence and self-esteem by recognizing small successes and maintaining a nurturing classroom environment.

C. Collaboration: They collaborate closely with parents, therapists, and special educators to formulate Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

2. Role of Schools

A. Inclusive Environment: Schools are tasked with establishing safe, accessible, and inclusive spaces where children with intellectual disabilities can learn alongside their peers.

B. Specialized Resources: The availability of resource rooms, assistive technologies, and trained special educators guarantees that children receive the necessary support.

C. Policy Implementation: Schools implement inclusive education policies, anti-discrimination initiatives, and ensure adherence to disability rights legislation.

D. Social Integration: By encouraging peer interaction, extracurricular activities, and awareness initiatives, schools contribute to reducing stigma and promoting acceptance.

Role of Parents

A. Advocacy: Parents frequently serve as advocates, safeguarding their child's rights and ensuring that educational institutions offer essential accommodations.

B. Decision-Making: They are instrumental in selecting appropriate schools, engaging in IEP meetings, and influencing educational choices.

C. Home Support: Strengthening learning at home, establishing routines, and fostering independence are vital contributions made by parents.

D. Emotional Anchor: Parents offer emotional support, resilience, and encouragement, assisting children in facing challenges with assurance.

Conclusion- This study on "School Adjustment of Children with Intellectual Disabilities" underscores the intricate and multifaceted nature of the adjustment that these children experience within educational settings. School adjustment encompasses more than just academic performance; it also involves emotional well-being, social relationships, classroom behavior, and engagement in school activities. The results of this research indicate that children with intellectual disabilities often encounter more significant challenges in adapting to the mainstream school environment than their peers. Issues such as difficulty in comprehending instructions, a slower learning pace, limited communication abilities, and problems with social interactions frequently undermine their confidence and participation in the classroom. The research further indicates that supportive school environments are vital for enhancing adjustment. Schools that implement inclusive practices, employ trained educators, utilize flexible teaching methods, and foster positive peer interactions enable children with intellectual disabilities to feel more accepted and secure. Likewise, collaboration among teachers, parents, and special educators plays a crucial role in

the overall adjustment and development of the child. Moreover, the study highlights the significance of emotional and social support. Children with intellectual disabilities who receive encouragement and understanding from their peers and teachers tend to exhibit improved self-esteem and social engagement.

In summary, the effective adjustment of children with intellectual disabilities in school necessitates a comprehensive approach that involves the school, family, and community. By offering inclusive education, suitable support services, and a nurturing atmosphere, schools can assist these children in achieving better outcomes.

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