



A CASE STUDY ON COMPASSION FATIGUE AMONG TEACHERS HANDLING STUDENT WITH DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOURS IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

Dr. S.Kanmani*

Post Doctoral Scholar (ICSSR), Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Science, Alagappa University, Karaikudi. *Corresponding Author

Dr. J.Sujathamalini

Professor, Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Science, Alagappa University, Karaikudi.

ABSTRACT

The case study highlights on examining the compassion fatigue among teachers handling student with disruptive behaviours in inclusive classroom. If a child has a diagnosis of disruptive behavior disorder, it may be decided to place him in a special classroom set up for more intensive behavior management. Compassion fatigue occurs when the person handling with the child with a disorder becomes so preoccupied with the disability of the child that it in turn makes the therapist or the helper stressful. Disruptive behavior disorders can seriously impact a child's daily life. Children with disruptive behavior disorders show ongoing patterns of uncooperative and defiant behaviors. Treatment procedures involve therapy for such children to reduce the behavioral issues and provide positive reinforcement to improve self-control. The present study adopted a qualitative approach, a semi-structured interview was conducted among six teachers to assess the compassion fatigue while handling student with disruptive behavior in three different inclusive schools. The teachers were interviewed individually on two occasions to gather information on the impact of this phenomenon. The interview data were coded and categorized using thematic analysis. Through this analysis, three criteria were generated, that is, preparation and adaptation of learning materials, instructional process, and interpersonal relationships. The results revealed that the six teachers go through different emotional problems due to disruptive behaviours exhibited by their students and had health-related issues. It also showed that teachers were mostly concerned with the loss of their instructional time. As a result of this, these teachers were unable to deliver the curriculum within the allocated time. The teachers reported that the impact is not only the disruptively behaved child but the learning of the rest of the students were also hindered due to the disruptive behavioural issues. The implications of the findings for teachers and further research are discussed.

KEYWORDS : Compassion Fatigue, Disruptive Behaviour Disorder, Stress, Inclusive school

INTRODUCTION

In recent education context, the inclusive education has become an obligatory. The idea of the inclusive education has become part of the discussion on developments in education at an international level. Inclusive practices are in reality in at least some schools in many education systems. The inclusive setup, it is very challenged by diversity and differences. There are children, with individual differences i.e., average, below average, above average, gifted, slow learners, with all their strengths and weaknesses, as a part of the school community (Forlin, 2001; Vlachou & Barton, 1994). It is observed that, it is becoming difficult for the regular teacher to deal with these different types of students at the same time in inclusive schools. It is always good if the special educators can prepare different strategic methods of teaching for the above inclusive group of children. But it is also observed that such teachers are found very scarce. Inclusive school teachers require multi talents and should play diversified roles to handle these children. As the inclusive concept is new and the teachers working such schools are not well oriented with this inclusive procedures which resulted in lot of problems and bewilderment in their job responsibilities. The stress within teachers to cater to the needs of the diverse group of learners in inclusive schools resulted in compassion fatigue.

Need for the Study

This study aimed to bridge several gaps in the literature on work-related to fatigue responses among teacher handling student with disruptive behaviours in inclusive classroom. Numerous researchers have found that individual who work traumatized children are most vulnerable to the development of compassion fatigue (Beaton & Murphy, 1995; Figley, 1995). The need for this case study was to understand the compassion fatigue of teachers handling students with disruptive behaviours in inclusive classroom.

The literature review encompassing on this phenomenon reveals that teachers spend a significant amount of time in dealing with the disruptive behaviours while trying to cover their daily lessons in the classrooms (Houghton, Wheldall, & Merrett, 1988; Little, 2005; Malak, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2017; McEvoy & Welker, 2000; Shen et al., 2009). Additionally, students misbehaviours have been associated with reduced instructional time (Aloe, Shisler, Norris, Nickerson & Rinker, 2014). In the multivariate meta-analysis of student misbehaviour and teacher burnout paper by Aloe et al (2014), they contend that teachers report spending a significant amount of time dealing with problem behaviours and approximately one-third of the

teachers in the study indicated that misbehaviours interferes with their teaching. Similarly, Crawshaw (2015) in his review of international research on secondary school teachers' perceptions of student misbehaviours, highlighted that one in twelve secondary school teachers reported that more than ten minutes of learning per hour was lost due to behaviour problems. Furthermore, among his other findings, 39 per cent of principals and teachers were reported to spend 20 percent of their time – equivalent to one day per week – on behaviour management.

Inclusive educational settings develop more pressure, frustration and fatigue to the teachers when compared with the teachers working in normal school setting. The present study will be a lime light for identifying the compassion fatigue among teachers handling student with disruptive behaviours. The present study will help the teachers to develop better insight on their psychological wellbeing in order to reduce their compassion fatigue.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to find out the compassion fatigue among teachers handling student with disruptive behaviours.

Research Question:

Do the teachers demonstrate compassion fatigue while handling student with disruptive behaviours in Inclusive Educational Set up.

Hypotheses of the study

1. The teachers experience compassion fatigue while handling student with disruptive behaviours in Inclusive Educational Set up.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative case study method was adopted to explore the compassion fatigue among teachers while handling disruptive behaviours in inclusive classrooms. Based on the prevalence of disruptive behaviours in inclusive classrooms, three inclusive schools were selected. Six teachers (three males and three females) served as respondents in this study.

A semi-structured interview guide was used for each individual interview. During the interview, further questions, prompts and probes were done to explore the effects of this phenomenon. The participants were asked to describe the effects of stress and fatigue while handling students with disruptive behaviour. The fatigue experienced by their

compassionate nature is explored through scheduled interview and the responses were recorded. The recorded responses are analysed and interpreted under three criteria.

Qualitative Analysis

The criteria that emerged from the data were planning for adaptation, instructional process, and interpersonal relationships. The criteria are discussed below.

Criteria- I: Preparation for adaptation

Lesson Planning:

This is very essential in the teaching and learning process, which focus on understanding the individual differences, students' ability and plan the instructional process where all students are given approximately the same content for learning in different methods, materials, time to learn in inclusive set up.

Classroom Facilities:

Inclusion of students with special needs doesn't result in successful learning if the classrooms facilities are not adapted to the diverse learner. We can't teach all the children in the same way. The classroom environment need to be adapted to make it barrier free and least restrictive environment for the children with special needs to move around and use the classroom facilities in a full-fledged manner (Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose, & Jackson, 2002).

Learning Materials and Methods:

Learning strategies help students learn and perform by providing them with a specific set of steps for: (a) approaching new and difficult tasks, (b) guiding thoughts and actions, (c) completing tasks in a timely and successful manner, and (d) thinking strategically (Lenz et al., 2004, p. 261). Learning strategies may include organizing materials, memorizing information, taking notes, reading text, and taking tests.

The students with special needs require adaptation in the learning material to suit to their current ability level and achieve mastery in learning. These adapted learning materials will make the students with special needs to feel at ease in learning environment (Bateman & Bateman, 2002; Hitchcock, et al., 2002).

Criteria- II: Instructional Process

Instructions:

Teacher needs to adapt their teaching methods and strategies to meet the needs and abilities of children with special needs. The effective teaching of diverse learners requires different instructional methodology (Bateman & Bateman, 2002; Hitchcock, et al., 2002).

1. Interactive Teaching - Teachers alternate roles of presenting, reviewing, and monitoring instruction.
2. Alternative Teaching - One person teaches, re-teaches, or enriches a concept for a small group, while the other monitors or teaches the remaining students.
3. Parallel Teaching - Students are divided into mixed-ability groups, and each co-teaching partner teaches the same material to one of the groups.
4. Station Teaching - Small groups of students rotate to various stations for instruction, review, and/or practice.

Criteria-III: Interpersonal Relationship

Teacher- Students Relationships

It is important in inclusive settings to have interaction within teachers for planning the classroom instruction and delivering. This teacher's interaction promotes better learning environment to the students with special needs (Cole, et al., 2000; Friend & Bursuck, 2006; Wood, 1998). Interaction of teachers with students creates motivation within the students to learn better. This interaction helps the students to come out with their strengths and weaknesses. In turn, the teacher can adapt the teaching procedures and instructional materials according to the students' ability level (Bateman & Bateman, 2002; Hitchcock et al., 2002).

Students-Students Relationship

Students' interaction plays a vital role in the concept of inclusive classrooms. To improve relationship between students with and without special needs it is necessary realizing the vision of inclusive education. The inclusion is successful when the students without special needs accept the students with special needs which lead for peer acceptance and peer tutoring (McGregor, Halvorsen, Fisher,

Pumpian, Bhaerman, & Salisbury, 1998; Tichenor, Heins, & Piechura-Couture, 1998). Interaction within students promotes peer guidance in learning process. Interaction within learning community helps them to learn together and identify their competencies (Wegner, 1998).

These criteria were formulated by the investigators with a literature background to analyse the compassion fatigue of teachers handling disruptive behaviours in inclusive classroom. The interview data was coded and categorized and used thematic analysis in relation to research questions with above criteria. This criterion has been developed based on our literature overview and theoretical framework for compassion fatigue of teachers handling disruptive behaviours in inclusive classroom. At the same time, on the basis of information received from the sample were also crystallized in the results of the present study. In this way, the analysis involved both inductive and deductive thinking on the part of the investigators. Our general understanding has been rooted in a tradition that focused on lived experience which requires hermeneutic ability to make interpretive sense of the phenomena to find out the school situations and relations of children in classroom (Van Manen, 1997). Therefore the qualitative data was analysed with the framed criteria with real school life situations. Through this analysis, three criteria were generated, that is, preparation for adaptation, instructional process, and interpersonal relationships. The obtained data were analysed and discussed to answer the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study found that the essential activity of the inclusive schools is that the learning process was very disturbed due to disruptive behaviour. Thus, the six teachers in the study reported that the phenomenon has an impact on the learning process.

Criteria- I: Preparation for adaptation

Lesson Planning:

Teacher 1 expressed that she has to spend lot of time while preparing lesson planning. As she has to provide variety of learning experiences to the students in her class she has to design exclusive learning experiences to the students with disruptive behaviours to participate effectively in teaching learning process. Hence, Teacher 3 noted that she had to spend lot of time while preparing lesson planning. The diverse learners need to be effectively met when the teacher pre plans her teaching time. The teacher 2 stated that she has to refer more materials for adapting children with disruptive behaviours.

Classroom Facilities:

Teacher 1 & 5 stated that classrooms facilities are not adapted to the diverse learners. Teachers 2 shared her experiences that classrooms environments that are frequently interrupted by minor infractions interfere with the students' concentration and contribute to teacher stress. Teacher 4 expressed that most of the schools providing barrier free environment for the children with special needs but some schools only use the classroom facilities in a full-fledged manner. Teacher 3 and 6 have evinced lack of proper lighting and seating arrangement for children with special needs, lack of adaptive devices such as group hearing aids and lack in architectural barrier free environment for free movement of children with physical limitations.

Learning Materials and Methods:

Teacher-1 tried to make the students understand what is learning and the importance of learning material as a part of her everyday lesson. The teacher 2 stated that learning materials (such as building blocks, memory learning materials, assistive devices) help the students with disruptive behaviours in the classroom environment. Teacher 3 noted that adaptive teaching learning materials motivated the children with special needs and other students as well to be actively engaged in their learning process. These materials also help them to develop the necessary skills required to learn and mastery their subjects. Teacher 5 concluded that adapted learning materials make the students with disruptive behaviours feel at ease in learning environment.

Criteria- II: Instructional Process

Instructions:

Teacher 1 reviewed that differentiated instructional methodology need to be used in a effective manner to the children with disruptive behaviours. But she met more troubles in implementing differentiated instruction in a classroom of children with disruptive behaviours. Teacher-2 described how the disruptive behaviours deviates her from staying on the main focus of the instructional process leading to stay with incomplete syllabus. In the same regard, however, more specific on the above subject, Teacher-4 also reported the same experiences.

Criteria-III: Interpersonal Relationship**Teacher-Students Relationships**

Teacher 1 described that teacher and students with disruptive behaviours are very limited. There was poor interaction between teachers and students in traditional instructional practice. On other hand of inclusive practices the interaction was not so strong than that of variety and flexible classroom. Teacher 3 and 5 stated that variety and flexible practices had created more opportunity for interaction between teachers and all students. The learners benefit from their teachers' and students interaction. Teacher 2, 4 and 6 expressed that flexible classroom environment demonstrates better option for effective interaction. So, all the teachers concluded that this teacher's interaction promotes better learning environment to the students with special needs but it is difficult when they have children with disruptive behaviours.

Students-Students Relationship

Variety and flexible classroom provide a good opportunity for interaction between students with and without disruptive behaviours. But six Teacher-1, Teacher-2, Teacher-3, Teacher-4, Teacher-5, and Teacher-6, articulated interaction between students with and without disruptive behaviours is very hard and it is solved only when both students understand their strengths and weakness. Inclusion is successful when the students without special needs accept the students with disruptive behaviours which lead for peer acceptance and peer tutoring.

Overall results of the present study showed that flexible and creative practices was the best practices that meet the learning requirements of children with disruptive behaviours successfully. All three criterions under preparations for adaptation, instructional process and interpersonal relationship is a need of an hour to be differentiated to meet the need of children with disruptive behaviours effectively in inclusive education. In this regard, all the teachers' felt stressed and caused fatigue because of dealing with disruptive behaviours on a daily basis in the classrooms. The teachers' expressed the emotions and feelings they go through as a result of dealing with this phenomenon. All the teachers stated that "we feel compassion fatigue in the inclusive classroom" because of children with disruptive behaviours. The narratives of all the teachers' proved that these teachers face emotional problems due to the existence of this phenomenon in their classrooms. The results showed that it had negative effects on teachers themselves. It also revealed that teacher burnout exists among these teachers' as a result of the negative emotions that they go through. This means that disruptive behaviour has severe negative impacts on teachers' health. As professionals, the teachers' had to deal with the students learning as well as their behaviour which in turn has drawbacks for them to carry out their responsibilities. Thus the result of the study revealed that it is a need of an hour to organize sensitization programme to both in-service and pre-service teachers to design differentiated instructional procedures to meet the needs of children with disruptive behaviours. Thus the study will be a limelight to the teacher educators to restructure the teacher education curriculum to incorporate the instructional strategies for children with disruptive behaviours and design the teaching learning process in a more inclusive in nature.

CONCLUSION

One of the most stressful aspects of teaching is dealing with disruptive behavior in the classroom. Teachers reported that the impact of these behaviours on the people concerned more pressure, frustration and fatigue to the teachers working in student with disruptive behaviours when compared with the teachers working in normal students. All the teachers face emotional problems due to the existence of this phenomenon in their classrooms. The present study took into account the level of compassion fatigue among teachers handling student with disruptive behaviours. It is very essential to explore the compassion fatigue of teachers and provide necessary assistance to enhance the competency of the teachers and in turn promote overall development among children with disruptive behaviours. The study explored the reasons why the teachers experience compassion fatigue and tries to figure out ways to overcome them. Only when the teachers are in a good state of mental health, it will have an effect on the child with special needs. Hence, it is very important that the teachers stay in a positive mood and hold an optimistic attitude towards working with children with disruptive behaviours. The study will be a limelight to the teacher educators to restructure the teacher education curriculum to incorporate the instructional strategies for children with disruptive behaviours and design the teaching learning process in a more inclusive in nature. Future research should concentrate on the effects of

disruptive behaviour on both the professional and personal lives of teachers as well as the type of relationship between the teacher and children with disruptive behaviours.

Acknowledgement

This article has been written with the financial support of ICSSR-New Delhi. Grant sanctioned vide letter F.No. 3-28/18-19/PDF/SC award dated 07-12-2018.

REFERENCES

- Aloe, A. M., Shisler, S. M., Norris, B. D., Nickerson, A. B., & Riniker, T. W. (2014). A multivariate meta-analysis of student misbehavior and teacher burnout. *Educational Research Review*, 12, 30–44.
- Bebetos, E., Vassiliki, D., Zafeiriadis, S., & Kyrgiridis, P. (2013). Relationship among students' attitudes, intentions and behavior towards the inclusion of peers with disabilities in mainstream physical education. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 5(3), 233–248.
- Brouwers, A., & Tomic, W. (1999). Teacher burnout, perceived self-efficacy in classroom management, and student disruptive behaviour in secondary education. *Curriculum and Teaching*, Vol. 14, pp. 7–26.
- Buli-Holmberg, Nilsen, S. & Skogen, K. (2008). Inclusive Education. A survey with focus on activities related to the curriculum, teacher and principle. *Spesial pedagogikk* 06/2008.
- Jorun Buli-Holmberg & Sujathamalini Jeyaprabhan (2016). Effective practice in inclusive and special needs education. *International Journal of Special Education* vol 31, no:1, 119-134.
- Lawrence, J., Steed, D. M., & Young, P. (1984). European voices on disruptive behaviour in schools : Definitions, concern, and types of behaviour. *British Journal of Educational*, 32(1), 4–17.
- Malak, M. S., Sharma, U., & Deppeler, J. M. (2017). Development of a scale for measuring teachers' attitudes toward students' inappropriate behaviour. *International Journal of WholeSchooling*, 13(1), 1–21.
- Merrett, F. & Wheldall, K. (1984). Classroom behaviour problems which junior school teachers find most troublesome. *Educational Studies*, 10(2), 37–41.
- Närhi, V., Kiiski, T., & Savolainen, H. (2017). Reducing disruptive behaviours and improving classroom behavioural climate with class-wide positive behaviour support in middle schools. *British Educational Research Journal*, 43(6), 1186–1205.
- Nasha, P., Schlösser, A., & Scarra, T. (2016). Teachers' perceptions of disruptive behavior in schools: A psychological perspective. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 21(2), 167–180.
- Shen, J., Zhang, N., Zhang, C., Caldarella, P., Richardson, M. J., & Shatzer, R. H. (2009). Chinese elementary school teachers' perceptions of students' classroom behavior problems. *Educational Psychology*, 29(2), 187–201.
- Spilt, J. L., Koomen, H. M. Y., & Thijs, J. T. (2011). Teacher wellbeing: The importance of teacher-student relationships. *Educational Psychology Review*, 23, 457–477.
- Wheldall, K., Merrett, F., & Study, C. (1988). Which classroom behaviours do primary school teachers say they find most troublesome? *Educational Review*, 40(1), 13–27.
- Yuan, X., & Che, L. (2012). How to Deal with Student Misbehaviour in the Classroom? *Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*, 2(1).