



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Psychology

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING OF SPECIAL SCHOOL TEACHERS

KEY WORDS: Psychological Well Being, Special Education, Disability, Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

The special education teacher plays a critical role in the proper education of exceptional students. The teacher is unique in that she is required to fit many different roles in the educational environment of children with special needs (CwSN). Certainly the work of a special education teacher is highly challenging and often emotionally exhausting. Teachers tend to experience more strain while dealing with disabled children on a regular basis. The present study explores the Psychological Well Being (PWB) of teachers from special schools. Research shows that psychological well being is highly related to the emotional status of an individual. This is especially important for special school teachers as they are engaged with children with varying learning, mental, physical and emotional disabilities. It was found that 15% of teachers were having high PWB, 18.33 % have low and 66.67 % average substantiating that Psychological Well Being is varied among special school teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the process that aims the manifestation of perfection already existing in man (Ranganandha, 1991). The perfect manifestations of innate abilities of individuals are aimed by all education programs. Indian constitution assures education to all by making it a fundamental right for every child. The right to free and compulsory education is applicable to all Children including those with Special Needs (CwSN). The students with different disabilities and problems must be included in educational development. The inclusive and special education systems are framed with this view.

Teachers are our nation builders—the strength of every profession in our country grows out of the knowledge and skills that teachers help to instill in our children. Teachers are extremely important assets for any society as they are the one who educate the youth of society who in turn become the leaders of the next generation of people and play an important role in developing their country as a good citizen of any nation. Teachers educate the kids in their most impressionable years that stay with these kids for rest of their lives. According to Kalam (2002) “A teacher is a beacon light that acts as a lighthouse to guide the stranded students in the sea of life and they should work as the role model for their students in order to achieve their all-round development”. Teachers are the key persons who enrich a young generation of children so that the future is a safe, secure and great place to live in for every person in the society.

The present study is about psychological well being of special school teachers. A special school is a school catering for students who have special educational needs due to severe learning difficulties, physical disabilities or behavioral problems. Special schools may be specifically designed, staffed and resourced to provide appropriate special education for children with additional needs. Special educators provide programs for specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, multiple disabilities, hearing impairments, visual impairments, autism, combined deafness and blindness, traumatic brain injury, and other health impairments (Allan, 1999). The special education teacher plays a critical role in the proper education of exceptional students. The teacher is unique in that she is required to fit many different roles in the educational environment of children with special needs (CwSN).

Children with special needs require special care and individualized attention. Unlike main stream teachers, the knowledge of each type of disability and the specific needs of the children with that disability is primarily requisite for the teachers who involved in the field of special education. Moreover they are expected to be

empathetic, even tempered, calm, adaptive, intuitive and organized. Hence their teachers need to put more effort and dedication to their work in order to provide a continuum of services, in which students with special needs receives varying degrees of support based on their individual needs. Special school teachers exert selfless efforts to help them achieve their highest potential and strive to progress beyond their limitations. Early identification and intervention of a child with special needs is an important part of a special education teacher’s job.

Undoubtedly the work of a special education teacher is highly challenging and often emotionally exhausting. The mental health and wellbeing of special teachers are detrimental in the efficiency of their service. Teachers tend to experience more strain while dealing with disabled children on a regular basis. The present study explores the psychological well being of teachers from special schools. Psychological well-being has been regarded as synonymous with mental health and quality of life. According to Deiner (1984) psychological well-being is equal to the good life or satisfaction with life in a hedonic sense. Psychological well being is highly related to the emotional status of an individual. It refers how people evaluate their lives, these evaluations in the form of cognition or in the form affect (Bradburn, 1969). The cognitive part, an information –based appraisal of one’s life, is when a person gives conscious evaluative judgments about one’s satisfaction with life as a whole. The affective part is a hedonic evaluation guided by emotions and feelings such as the frequency with which people experience pleasant/unpleasant moods in reaction to their lives.

Significance of the study

Special education teachers are important figures in the education of children with disabilities. They are engaged with children with varying learning, mental, physical and emotional disabilities. Their profession is highly challenging as they have to meet the unique needs and demands of students with mental and physical disabilities. Unlike the mainstream teachers, special school teaching is more stressful and always requires the teachers to be alert and highly active. Personality and emotional regulation largely determines their performance. The interaction with disabled children and emotional exhaustion they experience on a regular basis tend to have a significant impact on the wellbeing of special school teachers. The contributions of special school teachers are substantial in bringing out positive changes through training and imparting life skills for their students. Several studies have been conducted on psychological well being of main stream school teachers but very few on special school teachers. In that respect the study can add new insight into this area and expect to contribute new knowledge to the existing literature.

Objective

- To understand the Psychological Wellbeing of special school teachers

Hypothesis

- Special school teachers are varied on their Psychological Wellbeing

METHOD

Sample

The sample for the study constituted 60 special education school teachers from various special schools functioning across Kerala. The sample was selected randomly. The sample selection is illustrated in table.1

Table.1: Sample selection for the study

Sl. No	Name of the School	N
1.	Kothelengo Special School, N.Paravur	12
2.	Chavara Special School, koonamavu	20
3.	Karuna Special School, Thrissur	15
4.	Raksha Special School, Ernakulam	8
5.	Pratheeksha Special School, Palakkad	5
	Total	60

Instruments

- Psychological wellbeing Scale:** Psychological well being is assessed using "Psychological wellbeing questionnaire" developed by Bhogle and Jaiprakash (1995). The questionnaire contained 28 items which dealt with the factors of meaninglessness, somatic symptoms, self esteem, positive affect, daily activities, life satisfaction, suicidal ideas, personal control, social support, tension, wellness and general efficiency. There are two response choices corresponding to each item on the scale, 'yes' and 'No'. The individual response is to be made by putting a tick mark against the answer selected. While scoring positive items, a weightage of '1' is awarded for 'yes' and '0' is for 'No' and for the negative items scoring pattern is reversed. Then by summing the scores the total score can be obtained. A high score indicates high level of psychological wellbeing and vice versa.
- Personal Information Schedule:** A personal information Schedule is used to understand the socio demographic variables such as school, age, sex, experience, annual income, educational qualification, and locale.

Procedure

The study is conducted among teachers of special schools in Kerala. To make the data collection convenient, researcher selected schools from three districts of the state, with a careful plan of selection. The samples represent all the features of the special schools, wherever they teach. After seeking prior permission from the head of the institution, the researcher met each participant in person and explained the rationale of the study. They were given the questionnaire along with a personal information schedule. Confidentiality of the responses was assured. Filled in questionnaire was collected back and scoring was done as per the manual of respective instruments.

ANALYSES, RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The objective of the present study is to assess the Psychological Well Being of the special school teachers. The hypothesis stated was 'Special school teachers are varied on their Psychological Well Being'. In order to find out the status of the variable Psychological Well Being among the special school teachers, the inferential analyses and the procedure of difference from the mean score is made use of.

Table : 2: Preliminary Statistical constants of the variable Psychological Well Being (N=60)

Mean	18.03
Median	19.00
Mode	20.00

Std. Deviation	4.01
Skewness	.184
Kurtosis	-.270

As per the table 1 the mean of the distribution is below the value of median and mode. The most repeated score, the mode, is 20 and that is a slightly high value. Standard deviation is 4.01. The standard deviation obtained is 4.01 and that means the data are scattered to all levels such as low, average and high, but clustered almost around the mean. Such distributions are normally considered as more reliable. The coefficient of skewness is 0.184, indicates that this distribution is moderately right skewed and positive. The kurtosis is found to be -.270 which suggests that the distribution is platy kurtic and the negative value indicates that the distribution has lighter tails and a flatter peak. By this it is possible to state that the distribution is approximately normal in character

The statistical constants indicate that the scores of respondents in the measured variable is scattered around the mean. Hence it point out that, the special school teachers are varied on their Psychological Well Being as well. The median and mode indicate most of the teachers are with high score of Psychological Well Being. The figure 1, below clearly illustrates the characteristics of the score distribution.

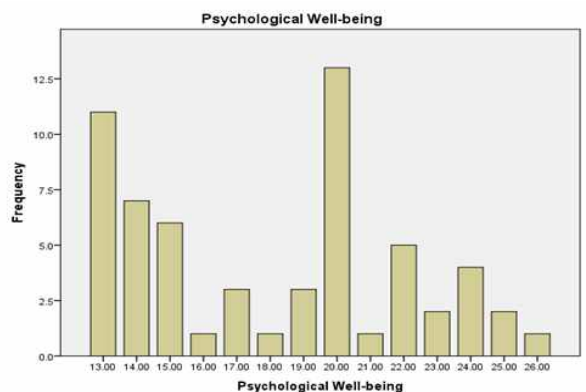


Figure. 1: Characteristics of the scores on Psychological Well-being

The levels of Psychological Wellbeing among special school teachers are found by employing the procedure of standard deviation distance from mean score. The $M+1\sigma$ and $M-1\sigma$ are calculated. As per the table 1, value of Mean for the total sample is 18.03 and SD is 4.01. Thus $M+1\sigma$ is 22.04 that can be rounded to 22 and $M-1\sigma$ is 14.02 that can be rounded to 14.

Based on these, the teachers who scored 22 or more on the Psychological Wellbeing are considered as High Group and those who scored 14 or below are considered as Low Group. The special teachers who scored in between 22 and 14 (both values excluded) are considered the average group. Then, out of the total sample (N = 60), 11 are with low score, 9 are with high score and the balance (40) are with average score. Details are given in table 3.

Table 3: High, Average and Low groups (N=60) in Psychological Wellbeing among Special School Teachers

Levels	N	Percentage
HIGH	9	15
AVERAGE	40	66.67
LOW	11	18.33

From the table 2, it can be clearly read that 15 % of total sample are with high score, 66.67 % are with average score and 18.33 % are with low scores in the psychological wellbeing. It is evidently support to state that the teachers are with different levels of psychological wellbeing. Among the average group most of the teachers have high scores than the mode (20). The score distribution supports to state that the distribution is normal or in

other word, the psychological wellbeing scores are normally distributed. It can be concluded that the psychological wellbeing among special teachers is varied. This can be further read from the figure 2.

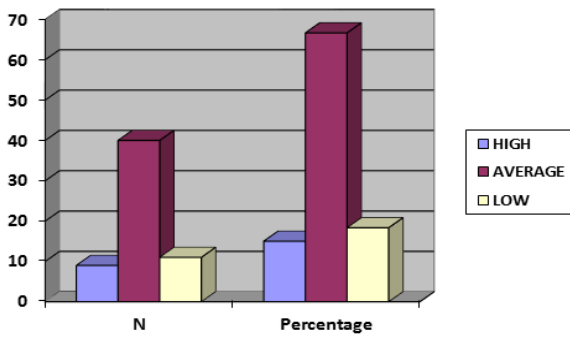


Figure 2: Psychological Wellbeing among special school teachers - high, average and low groups

Reflection

The table 2 and figure 2 clearly explains the varied distribution of psychological wellbeing among special school teachers. Normality and similarity can be seen in both of the variables work engagement and psychological wellbeing. However the percentage of teachers with high psychological wellbeing is more than that of the teachers with high work engagement. Assumption is that the teachers with high psychological wellbeing must have high work engagement. Here finds a deprivation that the percentage of teachers with high work engagement is 5% and those with high psychological wellbeing is 15%. This dissimilarity is visible in the case of lower groups also.

Tenability of hypothesis

The hypothesis posits that special school teachers are varied on their Psychological Wellbeing. The result of analyses conducted states that the values scored by special school teachers on the variable are scattered. The Mean of the distribution is 18.03, Mode is 20 and the Median is 19. This result supports to state firmly that special school teachers are varied on their Psychological Wellbeing. That means, the hypothesis, 'special school teachers are varied on their psychological wellbeing', is accepted.

Conclusion

Teachers are extremely important assets for any society as they are the one who educate the youth of society who in turn become the leaders of the next generation of people and play an important role in developing their country as a good citizen of any nation. Children with special needs require special care and individualized attention. The special education teacher plays a very critical role in the proper education of exceptional students. Unlike the regular school teachers, their profession is highly challenging as they have to meet the unique needs and demands of students with mental and physical disabilities. Hence the attitude, feelings and emotion status of a teacher is vital in managing special need students. The present study was an attempt to understand the Psychological Well Being of special school teachers. It was found that 15% of teachers were having high PWB, 18.33 % have low and 66.67 % average. Therefore, it is understood that Psychological Well Being is varied among special school teachers.

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