



Occupational Stress Related Coping Strategies Adopted by Special Educators in Inclusive Classroom

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ABSTRACT

The empirical study highlights at examining the occupational stress related coping strategies adopted by special educators in inclusive classroom. Inclusive education is an idea in the field of education. It means that persons with disabilities or persons who need special care can learn in schools together with people who do not have special needs. However, inclusive education may make special aid, care or knowledge for persons with disabilities difficult if enough reasonable accommodation is not given. At this juncture, the teachers working in inclusive education need to be competent to handle children with special needs. Because of their commitment and competence they are under pressure and experience stress in inclusive educational settings. Occupational Stress is a term refers to ongoing stress related to workplace. It is a physical or psychological disorder associated with an occupational environment and manifested in symptoms such as extreme anxiety, or tension, or cramps, headaches, or digestion problems. Sometime the stress also acts as a motivator to the individual to strive for excellence. It is a pressure experienced by the responsibilities assigned in their duty. Such pressure is highly experienced by the teachers working in the inclusive schools with diverse group of learners. In the present study the investigator aimed to study the occupational stressors and the coping strategies of special teachers with special reference to inclusive education. Explorative cum experimentation was adopted in the present study. To collect the quantitative data, the occupational Stress and occupational stress related coping strategies tool was developed by investigators. The investigator designed stress related coping strategies focusing on physical well being, psychological well being, emotional well being and social well being. Stress related Coping Strategies were designed and adopted by the investigator for a period of 4 weeks and its effect was assessed. The study result shows that the special teachers experience occupational stress and the designed Stress related coping strategies were found to be effective. The study evinced the need to incorporate the coping strategies to reduce the occupational stress among teachers to implement inclusive education successfully. It is a need of an hour to incorporate the coping strategies in the teacher education curriculum which in turn develop the pre service teachers to get prepared to face the challenges of inclusive education.

KEYWORDS : Occupational Stress, Coping Strategies, Inclusive Education

Introduction

The present educational scenario gives importance to the recognition and appreciation of diversity among students. This further goes ahead to bring out inclusive growth of the students in an inclusive classroom. The change to equal access to education as a matter of right and not as a privilege brought out the concept of inclusion. The concept of inclusion is gaining momentum, and in depth analysis is warranted to find out the coping strategies to reduce the stress factors to implement inclusion successfully. It is very essential to explore the occupational stressors of teachers and to implement necessary coping strategies to enhance the academic achievement of the children with special needs in inclusive set up. The Inclusive Coping Strategies will make the teachers to develop better insight to reduce their occupational stress and the ways and means to improve performance and core intelligences of the diverse group of children in inclusive schools. The present study also aimed in this direction to identify the professional stress with special reference to Inclusive Education and suggest some coping strategies to the teachers.

Need for the Study

Teaching is considered as an important occupation with high responsibilities and commitments and the role played by teacher is very important in the scenario of education. Teachers play a diversified role inside and outside of the inclusive class room. A class room is considered as a miniature society representing different types of pupils with difference in abilities and disabilities. It is therefore, the duty of the teacher to provide learning experience suited to all types of children to achieve better outcome and all round development of the child. It is very essential that teacher should be aware about the suitable teaching approaches and theories to provide suitable learning environment for a heterogeneous group of learners. Several studies have been undertaken to study the teachers' roles and responsibilities in an inclusive schools. Some studies have also been carried out to find out the stressors and coping strategies of teachers in inclusive

schools. Antoniou, Alexander-Stamatios et.al (2009) investigated the specific work related stressors affecting special educational needs teachers in Greece and the coping strategies applied by them. The results identified five key stressors loading mainly onto the domains of working conditions, work load and organizational problems which appear to have an impact on teachers of special educational needs students in Greece. Platsidou, Maria and Agaliotis, Joannis (2008) studied the burnout, job satisfaction and Instructional Assignment-related Sources of Stress in Greek Special Education Teachers. The results indicated that the teachers reported average to low levels of burnout. They reported moderately high levels of satisfaction with their job, the principal, and the school organization as a whole. They also reported average satisfaction with work conditions and low satisfaction with prospects of promotion and pay. Four factors were identified on the job related stress factors: teaching in a multi-category classrooms, programme organization and implementation, assessment of students, and collaborations with other special education experts and parents. Forlin, Chris (1996) questioned inclusion – Is it stressful for teachers. The researcher involved 225 regular primary school teachers and 42 principals in Western Australia found that the inclusion of a child with a mild intellectual disability significantly increased the educator's appraisal of stress severity. Forlin, Chris (1998) investigated the ways in which Australian regular class teachers cope during inclusive education and the specific issues which are stressful for them. The study was undertaken in primary schools in Queensland, Australia, during 1997. The discussion with the teachers focused on aspects of inclusion that regular class teachers found stressful and the ways in which they coped with the difficulties they encountered, the availability and usefulness of support structures, and the benefits obtained. The top four stressful issues included teacher accountability for the child's educational outcomes, the child physically attacking others, obtaining funding, and reduced ability to teach other students. Effective coping strategies were maintaining a sense of humour, making a plan of action and following it, and discussing the situation with specialist

personnel. Forlin, Charis (2001) identified the potential stressors for regular class teachers in inclusion. Source of stress included their perceived competence, their concern that the education of the majority of students not be affected, and the behaviour of the child with disabilities.

The concept of inclusion is gaining momentum and in depth analysis is warranted in to find out the coping strategies to reduce the stress factors to implement inclusion successfully. It is very essential to explore the stressors of teachers and necessary coping strategies to enhance their performance to handle children with special needs in inclusive set up. The strategies will make the teachers to develop better insight to reduce their occupational stress and the ways and means to improve their teaching competency and core intelligences of the diverse group of children in inclusive schools. The present study also aimed in this direction to identify the professional stress coping strategies for special teachers working in inclusive educational set up.

Title of the Study

“Occupational Stress Related Coping Strategies Adopted by Special Educators in Inclusive Classroom”

Objectives of the Study

1. To develop a tool and to identify the occupational stress of special educators working in inclusive classroom
2. To find out the effectiveness of stress related coping strategies to the special educators experiencing occupational stress in an inclusive classroom

Hypotheses of the Study

1. The designed stress coping strategies are effective to reduce the occupational stress of special educators working in inclusive classroom
2. There exist significant difference in the mean scores of stress of special educators working in inclusive classroom control and experimental group of pre and post assessment

Methodology

Explorative cum Experimental method is adopted in the study. 40 teachers were selected using simple random sampling techniques and their level of stress assessed. The designed stress related coping strategies was implemented and post test was done. The raw data were scored and subjected to analysis and interpreted below.

Results and Discussions

Mean and Standard Deviation and Correlated 't' value of Special Educators Occupational Stress of Control Group and Experimental Group at Pre and Post Assessment

The objective was to compare the occupational mean scores of special educators of control and experimental group at Pre and post assessment. The data were analyzed with help of correlated 't' test and results were given in table.

Table 1: Occupational Stress Related Coping Strategies Mean and Standard Deviation and Correlated 't' value of Special Educators of at Pre and Post Assessment of control group

	No.	Control Group		
		Mean	SD	t value
Pre test	20	77.4	8.9	0.8@
Post test	20	77.2	8.8	

From the above table it is evident that the correlated 't' value on the pre and post assessment scores of control group with regard to occupational stress of special educators ('t' value- 0.8) is not significant at 0.05 level which shows that there is no significant difference between pre and post assessment of control group special educators in their occupational stress. Therefore formulated hypothesis, “there is no significant difference in the mean scores of occupational stress for special educators working in inclusive classroom control group of pre and post assessment” is accepted.

Mean and Standard Deviation and Correlated 't' value of Special Educators Occupational Stress of Experimental Group at Pre and Post Assessment

	No.	Experimental Group		
		Mean	SD	t-Value
Pre test	20	77.3	8.7	14.32**
Post test	20	42.3	7.6	

In the table the obtained correlated 't' value of the pre and post assessment scores of experimental group special educators with regard to occupational stress is ('t' value-14.32) were found to be significant at 0.01 level. It means that the experimental group differs significantly in their occupational stress scores before and after implementation of Stress related Coping Strategies. Therefore formulated hypothesis, “there exists significant difference in the occupational stress mean scores of pre and post assessment of experimental group special educators working in inclusive setup before and after implementing the Stress related Coping Strategies” is accepted.

It revealed that decrease in the occupational stress mean score from pre test to post test of experimental group special educators is due to the effect stress related coping strategies implemented in the present study. Further, Even though there exist significant difference in the mean scores of control group when it is compared with experimental group it is evident that the experimental group have markedly reduced their occupational stress than the control group which showed the effectiveness of the stress related Stress related Coping Strategies implemented in this study.

Conclusion

The findings of the study suggested that the implementation of stress related coping strategies could significantly reduce the occupational stress of special educators working in inclusive educational set up The present study will be a lime light for providing more stress coping training programmes to reduce the occupational stress and try to improve working condition in inclusive school. Special educators working in inclusive school settings set back in their work situation when there is too much demand and over expectations of the job in inclusive classroom. It is very essential to explore the stress of special educators and necessary coping strategies to enhance the teaching competence and their performance to handle the children with special needs in inclusive set up. The present study will help the special educators to develop better insight on stress coping strategies to reduce their stress and the ways and means to improve teaching competencies and core intelligence to handle the diverse group of children in inclusive schools.

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