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RESEARCH PAPER

An Exploratory Study on the Challenges Faced by Parents during Online Teaching to Students with Intellectual Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore the challenges faced by parents during online teaching to students with intellectual disabilities on account of COVID-19 Pandemic. The objectives of the study included the exploration of behavioral, educational, technical, financial, and health-related problems faced by parents during online teaching. The phenomenological research methodology was used to explore the problem in depth with the help of parents through their lived experiences. The sample of 10 parents and 10 teachers was recruited using a purposive sampling technique. Data were analyzed by using thematic analysis after coding, generating themes for the interpretation of codes. The study revealed that the challenges during online teaching were lack of on-seat behavior of the child, No Eye Contact, distraction to other objects, and hyperactive and aggressive behavior. Teachers reported the problems they faced included difficulty in command following, frequent connectivity Issues, and the child remaining uncomfortable with the device. Major challenges parents face was the short attention span of children, difficulty concentrating on the screen activity, and clash in work-home routines. Future research studies must be conducted in the schools where the administrators are utilizing the online mode as a regular feature now.

Introduction

Online teaching mode was a blessing in disguise during the COVID-19 pandemic. Around the world, the use of this mode in spite of all its limitations, saved the time of students and their educational process continued. Due to COVID-19, online teaching modes used to teach students at home to educate students and interact with them. Schools closed due to COVID-19, and the situation forced schools to switch from traditional instruction to e-learning (Tudor, 2013).

Due to the lockdown, all special schools and service institutes shut down, so access to facilities and support services also stopped. It was difficult time to provide support services for students with intellectual disabilities. Special educational institutes made a plan to face and cope with the situation and started the provision of their services online and supported parents manage their children (Sakız, 2021). Parents, siblings, and other family members played an important role to implement the new set-up of online teaching for their children (Toquero, 2021).

Parents agreed to take steps for learning and supporting their children as well as teachers to make the online teaching successful. In Pakistan, there is some e-learning application such as Zoom, Google classroom, and WhatsApp used during online teaching

(Jahangir, 2020). These applications were not only used by the schools but the usage was on a global level. For online education and evaluation, HEC instructed the universities. According to the latest Pakistan Telecommunication Authority research (PTA, 2019; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021), approximately 36.86 per cent of the total population in Pakistan has broadband internet access in 2019.

Literature Review

In the troubled educational time in Pakistan, E-learning is cost-effective and innovative for this global crisis and we got the opportunity to develop a new system for the development of our country. Online education also becomes a great opportunity for us and it has many benefits. Firstly, Cost-effectiveness is a benefit according to Jahangir. But there were many barriers that parents and teachers faced. According to the previous data, there were four types of barriers that parents and teachers face during online learning. The first one was the personal problems, faced due to the less training and supporting facilities. Technology devices were the main part of online education but there was no expertise in technology devices and connections (Abuhammad, 2020). Most of the parents were uneducated and they could not even understand the lessons and strategies as well as technology devices and their use. The technical issue also disturbed parents continuously and makes caused irritating behavior and attitude.

Additionally, poor facility plans, mismanagement of schedule, and inaccessibility of practical work also disturbed the smooth execution of an online process. Parents got irritated from poor lesson planning and learning, the timing schedule disturbed their routines and the practice or activity work did not properly perform according to the need of students (Akoğlu & Karaaslan, 2020; Bowers, 2020).

In the previous study, several approaches were used to tackle the situation and behavior of students with intellectual disabilities during COVID-19. Parents and teachers cooperated to make plans and adjust the timetable for online learning that is adjustable for teachers, students, and parents. Parents change the setting of the room like a classroom, remove all the detractors, and create a healthy learning environment. All gadgets and resources were available for students but parents followed all the instructions that is received from the school and the class teacher (Duraku & Nagavci 2020).

Methods and Materials

Research Design

This research used phenomenological design for an in-depth study of the lived experience that the learning processes that affected students with intellectual disabilities during online learning. The study focused on the experiences of parents and teachers of children with intellectual disabilities. They shared their lived experiences in-depth about their children, all the difficulties, behavior issues, health issues, and support services during the online learning.

Sample and Sampling technique

A sample of 10 teachers and 10 parents of children with intellectual disabilities recruited using a purposive sampling technique. The sample met the inclusion criterion i.e. working experience with children with intellectual disabilities and online teaching experience at least for four months.

Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was developed with the help of related literature and a hypothetical framework. The interview guide consisted of 5 questions related to

challenges, which parents faced during online learning. The open-ended questionnaire was validated by three experts from the field of Special Education.

The Procedure of the study

The study was conducted between November to March 2022. The researcher developed an interview guide with the help of related literature and a hypothetical framework. The guide consisted of 6 open-ended questions about the challenges parents and teachers face during online teaching. Interviews were audio-recorded after Participant's permission. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

Results and Discussion

The descriptive information of the teachers, parents and students were analyzed quantitatively and the interview data was analyzed using thematic analysis.

Table 1
Demographic information of Sample

Variables	%
Gender of students	
Male	20%
Female	80%
Age of students	
5-10	30%
11-15	50%
Above 16	20%
Gender of parents	
Male	10%
Female	90%
Age of Parents	
30-40 years	32%
41-45 years	40%
Above 50 years	40%
Level of disability	
Mild to moderate	90%
Moderate to severe	10%
Gadgets used	
Mobile phones	65%
Laptop	20%
Tab	5%
Personal Computer	10%
Monthly income of parents	
35k-45k	10%
46k-55k	38%
Above 50k	70%
Teachers' Qualification	
BS	30%
MA	60%
M.Phil.	5%
Ph.D.	5%
Teachers' Experience	
Less than 1 year	10%
2-3 years	10%
3-4 years	20%
More than 6 years	60%

Teachers' monthly income	
25k-35k	10%
36k-45k	40%
46k-50k	20%
Above 50k	30%

Thematic Analysis

To analyze the data obtained from the in-depth interviews of parents and teachers, thematic analysis was used. Following are the all emerged themes are present in figure 1.
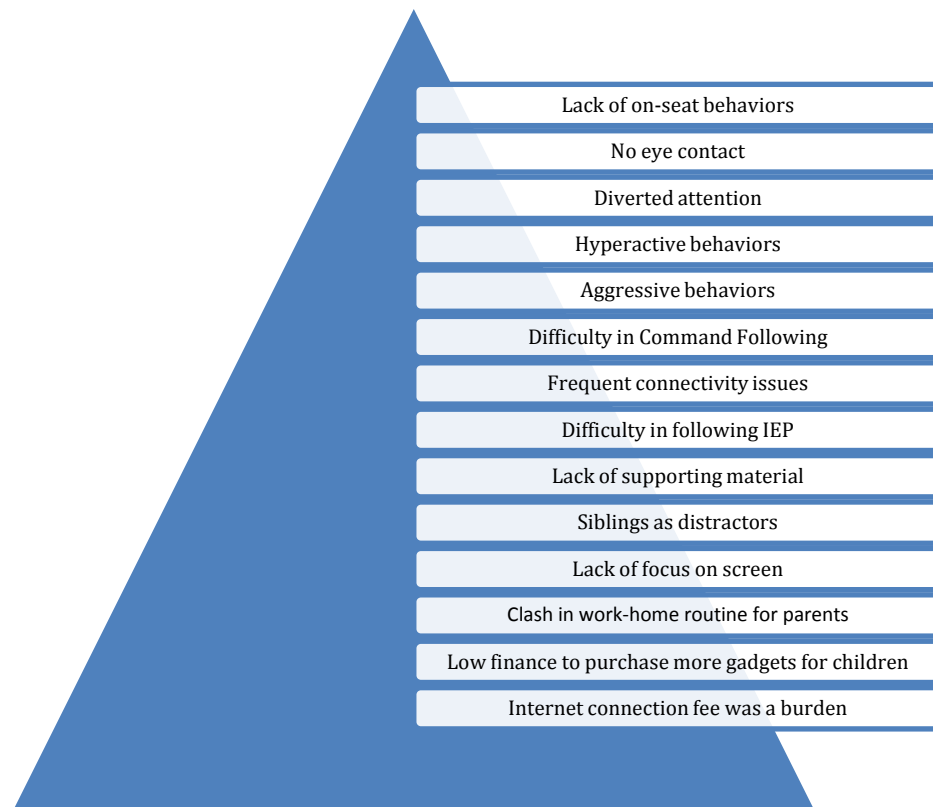

Figure 1: Themes related to challenges parents and teachers face

Findings

There are some findings of this research based on investigation:

- Parents reported the behaviors issues they faced during online teaching to students with intellectual disabilities. The issues include Lack of on-seat behavior, No Eye Contact, Detract to other objects, Hyperactive Behavior, and aggressive behavior.

- The problems parents face in managing the classes included Difficulty to follow IEP, Additional efforts to engage, Lack of supporting instructional material, Poor eye hand coordination, Short attention span, Difficulty to holding objects or performs activity independently, Difficulty in providing direction instructions, Diversion to siblings, Difficulty to concentrate on screen activity, Difficulty in managing time for classes, Clash in Work-home Routine, and Less educated parents.

- The institutional support parents received were capacity building workshops, continuous support for online classes, counseling and guidance, crucial part of Planning, and provision of supporting material. The role parents play during online classes were providing reinforcement, Continues encouragement and motivation, Arrangement of material, Involvement in all learning activities, and crucial part for children' learning.

- The technical issues faced by parents were low finance to purchase more gadgets for children, internet connection fee as a burden, and low socio-economic status, electricity issue, and informal home environment.
- Children' physical and mental health affected during online classes as reported by their parents. The children had low immunity, suffered from seasonal viral disease, and faced overall Mental stress.

This study reported on the experiences of ten parents of online teaching with an intellectual disability during the COVID-19 lockdown period in Lahore. Six themes were identified i.e. availability of gadgets and internet connection, electricity issues, work –home routines, attention deficit and hyperactive behavior, environmental distraction and financial issues. The findings of this study provide various views regards to the experiences of parents and teachers of intellectual disable students.

Participants reported that students have behavioral issues such as lack of on-seat behavior, eye contact and aggression in front of the screen and did not interact with teachers in the presence of parents. The positive point of this experience was that parents were fully trained and spent more time with children and managed their behavior through learning techniques. Therefore, it may be helpful to manage a child's routine and even work in all areas to improve their studies (Abuhammad, 2020).

Parents' training and workshops helped them to understand the online teaching mode and the use of assistive devices for the online process. Counselling sessions motivated the parents by helping to release their mental stress about children with IDs. Pre-planning activities guided the parents about the material, setting of devices, saving and secure sitting plan according to the online session. The parents, especially mothers utilized their COVID-19 break; to give more time and attention to the children with IDs. At the same time, some parents did not properly cooperate with teachers and even they did not attend the classes or respond to teachers (Sakız, 2021).

Parents especially mothers highlighted the fear for their children about their health issues and excessive use of mobile phones after online classes. Excessive use affected their health they become weak and have headaches continuously. Sometimes they got exhausted and hyperactive with parents and siblings at home and hurting own self. The financial issue was discussed because mostly children belong to low socioeconomic status and afford more than one gadget and children in one family where two or more. It was difficult for parents to attend all children's classes at the same time and manage it. The lack of gadgets caused barriers in online teaching and it affected the student's performance and their performance getting down day by day (Toquero, 2021). Internet connectivity issue and electricity issue is one of the main barriers which disturbed online sessions. It was disturbing to both parents and teachers to create hurdles in the learning process. Poor internet connection and error caused to break the flow of teachers delivering instructions and detract students during class (Akoğlu & Karaaslan, 2020; Bowers, 2020).

Conclusion

In a nutshell, parents and teachers both face challenges during online teaching mode. Parents reported the issues to include Lack of on-seat behavior, No Eye Contact, Detract from other objects, Hyperactive Behavior, and aggressive behavior. The development and implementation of IEP were the common challenges parents and teachers face. Though some of the institutes were providing support material but not all. Distraction during online classes was a common reason between parents and teachers. Mothers played their major role during online classes but they faced a clash in the work-home Routine. Parents also managed the financial crises. Overall, both parents and teachers faced challenges during the online classes due to the lockdown period.

Recommendations

There are some recommendations for this study to control the challenges and smooth teaching.

- Educational organizations may conduct training sessions for parents and teachers from the experts and train them for online teaching platforms properly. Tutorial videos were provided to both parents and teachers about the updated features of the online teaching platform and its use. Counselling sessions should be conducted to motivate and encourage the parents to further the learning process.
- Financial support may provide to parents who have low socioeconomic status and fulfil their academic needs. Electronic gadgets should provide online teaching and guidance about their usage. Experts and teachers should teach instructional and supporting material alteration and modification to the parents of children with IDs.
- Electronics market should provide special discount offers for the gadgets, which use for education purposes.
- Internet connected devices and companies should cooperate with institutions for improving online teaching systems. They should offer discounted packages for students with good network speed.

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