Knowledge of Autism Among Pre School Teachers

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Abstract
The present study aimed to assess the Knowledge of Autism among Pre –School teachers.

Objectives:

a. To describe the socio-demographic characteristics of pre-school teachers.
b. To assess the knowledge of Autism among preschool teachers.

The researcher adopted Non Experimental descriptive method for the study. Sample comprised of 30 Pre School teachers. Setting for the study was Selected Pre schools of Pune city. Sampling technique used for the study was random sampling technique.

After obtaining permission from the concerned authority and informed consent from the samples, the investigator administered the tool. The tool was divided into two sections:

Section I: Demographic proforma of the sample
Section II: Self administered structured Knowledge questionnaire on Autism.

Data collected were analyzed and interpreted in terms of objectives of the study by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Major findings:
On the basis of frequency and percentage wise distribution of knowledge about Autism in Pre School teachers, it was found that the majority (96.7%) of pre school teachers had poor knowledge and only (3.3 %) preschool teachers had average knowledge.

Based on these findings recommendations were given for future research.

Key words: Knowledge, Pre School teacher, Autism

Introduction
Karande 2006, Meyer et.al; 2007, Paterson et.al; 2007 & Medelsohn & Schaefer 2008 Autism is a neurodevelopment disorder characterized by restricted, repetitive, stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests and activity. Autism is a polygenetic disorder with a heritability index of 0.90.

Cowley 2000 and Committee on children with disabilities 2001 ‘Due to increased public awareness about Autism, availability of more educational and medical resources, propaganda in media coverage about the families and affected individuals, availability of training and educational information for physicians, psychologist, health team members, the prevalence rate has increased.’

Gallese 2007 and Zalla et.al, 2011 Autistic individuals are relatively unable to understand the intention of other person’s action.

Siegel 2004 & Stone et.al; 2004 Modified checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT) is a screening tool for use in children aged 24 months. Twenty three items all based on parental report. Specificity 87% and sensitivity 99%. Efficient for use in a primary care setting.
Diagnosis of Autism can be made between two – three years of age (Stone et al; 1999 and Charman & Baird 2002) With language delay more severely affected children usually present in the preschool years (Rapin 1997).

There is currently no known ‘cure’ for Autism. Various types of therapies are available applied behavioral analysis, Treatment and education of Autistic and related communication handicapped children (TEACCH), Speech and language therapy, Social skill therapy, Sensory integration, Occupational therapy and Pharmacotherapy.

When treating children with autistic are to lessen associated deficits and family distress and to increase quality of life and functional independence (1)

**Need for the study**

Though the number of autistic children in the world is quite substantial, yet the levels of awareness about autism is still very low, especially in developing countries like India. Early identification of Autism is important because early intervention services may be more effective in children with Autism than in children with other developmental disabilities (Lipkin & Schertz, 2006)

Poon et.al; 2010 Early and appropriate intervention can ensure that many children with Autism can be mainstreamed.

The alarming proportion by which it is rising can make India the most populous country in the world having such neurological disorder. Focus of the study is to assess the knowledge about Autism among pre-school teachers

**Statement of the problem**

'A study to assess the Knowledge of Autism among Pre School Teachers in selected Schools of Pune city.'

**Operational definitions**

1. **Knowledge:** Refers to the Verbal responses of the pre school teachers as measured by the knowledge part of the structured questionnaire on Autism.

2. **Autism:** Child marked by the problem with impairment in communication, social interaction and by restricted and repetitive behavior and odd responses to the environment who is studying in preschool.

3. **Preschool teachers:** Teachers who teaches and provide care to children between three to five years of age in pre schools of Pune city.

**Aim**

Aim: The study focused on the Knowledge of Autism among pre- School teachers.

**Research methodology**

The researcher adopted Non Experimental descriptive method for the study. Sample comprised of 30 Pre School teachers. Setting for the study was Selected Pre schools of Pune city. Sampling technique used for the study was random sampling technique.

**Inclusion Criteria:**

a. Preschool teacher who teaches three to five years old children in pre schools.

b. Pre school teacher who can read and understand English/Hindi/Marathi.

**Exclusion Criteria:**

a. Pre School teachers who will be on leave at the time of data collection.

**Research tool and technique**

A self administered structured knowledge questionnaire on five domains of Autism used. These areas has selected after extensive literature review and consultation with experts of concerned discipline.
Description of tool: Tool divided in two parts

Part I: Demographic Proforma of the sample

Part II: Self administered structured questionnaire on Autism.

Section I: It consisted of information on selected demographic variables like the Age, Gender, education, educational role, teaching experience, Autism Training attended and have you come across with Autistic child before.

Section II: This section consisted of self administered knowledge questionnaire that comprised of total of sixty (60) – item questions in five domains on knowledge of Autism such as meaning, causes, sign and symptoms, diagnosis and Management.

Method of data collection:

After obtaining permission from the concerned authority and informed consent from the samples, the investigator administered the tool.

Major findings:

Section I- Sample characteristics

Table: Frequency and percentage distribution of demographic variables of preschool teachers.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>No of cases</th>
<th>Percentage (n=30)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 – 30</td>
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<td>56.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.33</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>16.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
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<td>Post graduate</td>
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<td><strong>Teaching experience (Yrs)</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>≥ 5</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td><strong>Training attended related to Autism</strong></td>
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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Come across with Autistic child before</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>83.33</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Section II: Findings related to the Knowledge of Autism among pre-school teachers.

Fig: Level of Knowledge in Preschool teachers

On the basis of frequency and percentage wise distribution of knowledge about Autism in Pre School teachers, it was found that the majority (96.7%) of preschool teachers had poor knowledge and only (3.3 %) preschool teachers had average knowledge.

Conclusion
The present study revealed the preschool teachers had considerably poor knowledge (96.7%) regarding Autism. The enhancement in knowledge is greatly required on all the aspects of Autism.

References