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**CONSTRAINTS EXPERIENCED BY TEACHERS OF
CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: A QUANTITATIVE
INQUIRY**

**Dr. Maria Sohaib Qureshi¹, Prof. Dr. Humara Bano², Ms. Somia Yaqub³, Sabeen Ansari⁴,
Misbah Ali⁵**

¹Assistant Professor Institute of Special Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore,
maria.dse@pu.edu.pk; maria_sohaib@hotmail.com

²Director/Chairperson Institute of Special Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore
Director.ise@pu.edu.pk

³Lecturer, Department of Education Govt. College Women University, Faisalabad,
Pakistan
somiayaqub@gmail.com

⁴M. Phil Scholar, Institute of Special Education University of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan
Sabeen.yumnah@gmail.com

⁵M. Phil Scholar, Institute of Special Education University of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan
Speed3873@gmail.com

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Abstract

Teachers of children with special needs require undivided focus and attention of all their energies in planning and teaching process to make the process of learning beneficial and smooth for these children (Allam & Martin, 2021). However, there are many hindrances that make the teaching process challenging for special educationists such as lack of parental and administrative support, environmental hazards, personal limitations and colleagues' attitudes among others (Ahmed, 2021; Sikanku, 2018). The study aims to identify the constraints of teachers serving in special education institutions through a descriptive research. The population comprised teachers of special education schools in Punjab. Convenient sampling technique was used to select 200 teachers as a sample. Out of 200, 50 were teacher of children with Physical Impairment (PI), 50 were teacher of children with Visual Impairment (VI), 50 teaching to children with Hearing Impairment (HI), while 50 teachers of children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). The tool comprised a questionnaire with 38 items duly validated and piloted before formal data collection. Findings indicate that highly reported barriers by teachers of all major disabilities in Pakistan include parents and administration related barriers. No significant difference has been identified among challenges of teachers regarding their gender or the disability they were working with.

Introduction

Teaching profession is not considered merely a job but it is a profession of nobility which not only helps to develop an individual to his/her best capacities and capabilities but also subsequently shapes the fabric of the society. This makes role of teachers very influential in development and structuring of a society, nation or a country. This role and responsibility of teachers become more challenging, more demanding, more difficult and more intense when teachers have to work with students with special needs (Ahmed, 2021). Like any other student, a student with special needs has all the right to learn and develop and become a useful, independent part of society. There has been multiple laws and policies throughout world that support these rights of individuals with disabilities (Alias & Salleh, 2017).

To abide by these laws and rules it has become inevitable to modify, adapt or supplement curriculum, methodologies, environments and resources to cater the needs of these students. These are few of the challenges that make the responsibility of special educationists more demanding and more challenging (Allam & Martin, 2021). The special needs children with sensory impairments of hearing and vision can easily learn general curriculum but will need modifications in methodologies, resources or assessment procedures (Annie et al., 2015). The need of children with physical impairment might include modification and adaptations in not only methodologies, resources, assessment procedures but also environment and in some cases where brain is also effected curriculum adaptation might be required (Basit, Qureshi & Arif, 2021). Similarly, children with intellectual and developmental disabilities who have limitations of intellectual, developmental, communication or social aspects require modification, supplementations and adaptations at all levels as well as special focus on behavior modification and skill development (Alexander, 2014; Fazil, Qureshi & Tabassum, 2021).

The issues created by parents could include lack of motivation towards their child learning, uncooperative specially when intervention programs need generalization, have unrealistic goals and expectations, being critical and objecting teacher's methodology due to lack of information and understanding (Allam & Martin, 2021). Administrative constraints could be depicted in form of non-cooperation, assignment of overwork, unnecessary additional duties, multi grading and overburdened with ineffective student teacher ratios in classroom. Also biasness, favoritism, over criticism can result in demotivating the teacher which in turn effects the teaching competencies of the teachers (Ahammed, 2021; Sikanku, 2018).

As informed by Alias & Salleh (2017), prejudices form colleagues of general education, lack of collaboration, aspect of jealousy, restraining from sharing useful experiences and information, on job politics and unsupportive behaviors can also create problems in teaching and wellbeing of students. Teaching is also affected if students have personal psychological problems that might include low self-esteem, lack of motivation and interest, environmental and social burdens affecting their emotional and psychological wellbeing and people around them constantly making them feel incompetent and unacceptable in the society. Lastly, but not the least are teacher's personal constraints. These might include lack of specific qualification; for example, sometimes VI teachers are told to work with students of hearing impairment and the major barrier at that time could be communication as mostly teachers qualified in VI are not aware of sign language. The scenario could be vice versa where teacher of HI being not aware of Braille system. Can face issues in curriculum adaptations due to lack of knowledge, support or resources. Unavailability of pre-service or in-service training programs to enhance competencies, provide up to date knowledge of interventional programs so they can overcome new challenges in teaching activities. Apart from external issues the challenges could be personal or internal like family or financial problems, health issues, lack of aptitude or motivation etc. (Annie et al., 2015; Sikanku, 2018; Alias & Salleh, 2017)

Therefore, for special educationists to give their best during process of teaching and learning all these challenges and constraints must be identified so solutions can be derived to remove them. This study focuses on highlighting the major issues and challenges of teachers in teaching process that need resolving to make the process most efficient for children with special needs.

Statement of the problem

The purpose of this study was to identify the constraints experienced by teachers of children with special needs.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were:

- To find out the constraints faced by teachers of children with special needs.
- To determine the difference between constrains faced by male & female teachers of children with special needs.

- To identify the difference between the constraints experienced by teachers of children with special needs working in government or private schools.

Questions of the study

- Which type of constrains are experienced by teachers of children with special needs?
- Is there any difference between the constraints faced by male and female teachers of children with special needs?
- Is there any difference between the constraints experienced by teachers of children with special needs working in government and private schools?

Research Methodology

This research was carried out to study the constraints faced by teachers of children with special needs. It was a quantitative research. Population of the study was consisted of teachers who were teaching students with special needs working in government or private special education schools in Punjab. Sample of the study was collected through convenient sampling. Sample size was 200 teachers of children with special needs. Out of 200, 50 were teacher of children with Physical Impairment, 50 were teacher of children with Visual Impairment, 50 teaching to children with Hearing Impairment, while 50 teachers of children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The researchers developed a questionnaire based on literature to identify the barriers for teachers teaching students with special needs. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Analysis included frequency tables and inferential stat for results interpretation.

Results

Table 1. Barriers faced by teachers of students with special needs

Q. Which of the following barriers do you face as a teacher of students with special needs?					
S.No.	Statements	barriers faced by teachers of VI	barriers faced by teachers of HI	barriers faced by teachers of ID	barriers faced by teachers of PI
	Parents related Barriers				
1	uncooperative behavior of parents	65%	71%	68%	90%
2	unrealistic expectation of parents	48%	85%	88%	80%
3	unrealistic demands of parents from teachers	63%	79%	88%	92%
4	parent's objection on teachers' teaching methodology	78%	67%	78%	62%
5	parent's complains	65%	76%	94%	68%

6	parent's lack of interest in child's work	70%	80%	69%	91%
7	parent's lack of interest in parent teacher meetings	83%	86%	85%	75%
	Administration related Barriers				
8	unrealistic expectation of institute's authority	63%	74%	89%	76%
9	uncooperative behavior of institute's authority	73%	75%	79%	82%
10	Overcrowded classes	64%	75%	62%	81%
11	Children of multiple grades in one classroom	48%	10%	75%	78%
12	Additional duties assigned to teachers	67%	78%	85%	64%
13	Biasness of administration	64%	70%	62%	68%
14	Favoritism from administration	80%	73%	70%	60%
15	Lack of performance based incentive	82%	85%	80%	75%
16	limited awareness of authorities about the educational need of special children	63%	60%	62%	75%
17	Limited provision of helping material	50%	58%	61%	62%
18	Unavailability of teacher assistant	84%	82%	90%	38%
	Colleagues related Barriers				
19	uncooperative behavior of colleagues	75%	62%	75%	72%
20	Professional jealousy	78%	84%	87%	83%
21	Lack of team work	69%	88%	90%	65%
	Physical Environment related Barriers				
22	Classroom furniture's inadequacy to disability	83%	64%	70%	54%
23	White/black board's inadequacy to disability	60%	58%	40%	94%
24	Inadequate lights of classroom	40%	54%	57%	61%
25	Unavailability of need based/specific science and geographic lab according to special child's needs	75%	76%	68%	38%
	Curriculum related Barriers				
26	lack of practical/experimental activities in curriculum according the needs of children	73%	72%	82%	75%
27	lack of examples in curriculum according to special child's needs	56%	68%	81%	74%

28	Inappropriate or no adaptation of curriculum	58%	65%	65%	62%
29	Inappropriate curriculum that put emphasis on quantity of content while ignore the quality	76%	85%	62%	96%
30	Unavailability of models, dioramas, sample materials	61%	80%	65%	59%
	Students related Barriers				
31	Students' lack of interest in the study	66%	71%	95%	60%
32	Hopelessness of special students	48%	35%	60%	50%
33	Low self-esteem in special students	63%	76%	62%	78%
	Personal constraints				
34	Pre-service training	47%	54%	60%	38%
35	In-service training	43%	75%	67%	30%
36	Lack of competence in using braille, sign language, task analysis or other methods appropriate to disability	40%	42%	43%	32%
37	Low self-esteem of teachers	45%	40%	33%	22%
38	Lack of motivation of teachers	20%	42%	50%	32%

Table 1 indicates barriers or challenges faced by teachers of students with visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual disability and physical impairment. All the barriers reported in the table are faced by majority of the teachers irrespective of the disability they are working with. The barriers which didn't represent much challenging state for some teachers were multigrade issue in case of HI teachers (10%) and VI teachers (48%), unavailability of teacher assistant and relevant materials for students with reference to PI teachers (38%), challenge of feeling of hopelessness in students in VI and HI students (48%) and (35%) respectively, in-service training issues for VI teachers (43%) and PI teachers (30%). Also lack of competence in methodology appropriate to the disability VI (40%), HI (42%), ID (43%) and PI teachers (32%), low self-esteem VI (45%), HI (40%), ID (33%) and PI (22%) and lack of motivation VI (20%), HI (42%), ID (50%) and PI (32%) were the barriers not reported challenging by majority of the teachers working with the 4 mentioned disabilities.

Table 2 t-test statistics based on teacher's gender

	Gender of respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t.	Sig.
mean	Male	71	1.7602	.20118	.02388	-.104	.917
	Female	129	1.7636	.22866	.02013		

Table 2 depicts the independent sample t-test result indicating no significance difference between mean scores of teachers based on their gender. The value of t is -.104 where p is .917 >.05. Therefore, there is no significance difference in challenges or barriers faced by special educationists on the basis of their gender.

Table 3 t-test statistics based on teachers’ school type

	school type of respondent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t.	Sig.
mean	Public	142	1.7279	.20516	.01722	-3.416	.014
	Private	58	1.8466	.22985	.03018		

Table 3 depicts the independent sample t-test result indicating significance difference between mean scores based on their type. The value of t is -3.416 where p is .014 < .05. Therefore, there is a significance difference in challenges or barriers faced by special educationists working in public or private institutes.

Table:4 ANOVA statistics based on students disability

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.016	3	.005	.108	.955
Within Groups	9.510	196	.049		
Total	9.526	199			

POST HOC (Tukey HSD) for Multiple Comparisons

(I) Disability type	(J) Disability type	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
VI	HI	-.01789	.04406	.977	-.1321	.0963
	PHC	.00526	.04406	.999	-.1089	.1194
	MRC	-.00947	.04406	.996	-.1236	.1047
HI	VI	.01789	.04406	.977	-.0963	.1321
	PHC	.02316	.04406	.953	-.0910	.1373
	MRC	.00842	.04406	.998	-.1057	.1226
PHC	VI	-.00526	.04406	.999	-.1194	.1089
	HI	-.02316	.04406	.953	-.1373	.0910
	MRC	-.01474	.04406	.987	-.1289	.0994

	VI	.00947	.04406	.996	-.1047	.1236
MRC	HI	-.00842	.04406	.998	-.1226	.1057
	PHC	.01474	.04406	.987	-.0994	.1289

Table 4 indicates that by using One Way ANOVA test, difference in challenges or barriers of teachers based on their students’ disabilities is calculated. The value of F is.108 where p is .955 > .05 indicating that there is no significant level of difference in barriers or challenges faced by teachers working with different disabilities.

Discussion

Teaching children with special needs itself is a very demanding and challenging job but it becomes even more challenging when the hindrances and barriers are not merely related to personal constraints of the special needs child. These other challenges could range from personal constraints of a teacher to challenges imposed by environment, administration, parents of the child, lack of resources, supports or aids and non-collaboration from colleagues or others part of the teaching process.

The findings of current study highlighted seven major barriers that effect the teaching process and make the job even more difficult and challenging. These include lack of parental and administrative cooperation, environmental deficiencies, personal constraints, curriculum adaptations issues, colleagues’ attitudes and students’ insecurities. The barriers most reported by the teachers which are imposed by parents and making the teaching task further challenging include their uncooperative behavior, unrealistic expectation, irrational demands from teachers, objection on teachers’ teaching methodology, over complaining and lack of motivation towards their child learning. This is in line with the studies of Alexander (2015), Alias & Salleh (2017) and Ahammed (2021), who reported that teachers working with students of various disabilities find great difficulty due to lack in parental cooperation, their disinterest in child’s learning, over or unrealistic expectations and questioning teacher’s methodologies due to lack of understanding and awareness.

In terms of administrative challenges, the findings also revealed that most of the teachers reported barriers caused by administration which include unrealistic expectations and uncooperative behavior of institute’s authority, overcrowded and multigrade classes, biasedness and favoritism from people in authority, lack of provisions in form of materials, resources or support, overwork with lack of praise and incentives. However, teachers working with HI and VI students don’t feel much burdened due to strength of the class or multigrade system as these students don’t require special one on one attention during lectures. The similar challenges are also highlighted in studies of Ahammed (2021), Alias & Salleh (2017), Alexander (2015), Sikanku, (2018) and Allam & Martin, (2021), who informed about lack of resources, aids and other support materials and personals, lack of cooperation from administration, extra duties, overcrowded classes, multigrade classrooms and unfair dealings of administration.

Apart from administration, the barriers created due to colleagues or co-workers that are reported by the most of the teachers in this study include uncooperative behavior of colleagues, lack of team work and professional jealousy. Similar findings are also reported in studies by Alexander (2015), Allam & Martin, (2021) and Alias & Salleh (2017), who informed that teachers working with students of special needs face prejudices from colleagues of general education, non-collaborative attitudes, jealousy, restraining from sharing useful experiences and information, and unsupportive behaviors.

The findings of this study also highlighted the challenges of teaching due to student's personal psychological or emotional problems which involves student's low self-esteem, lack of interest in the study and feeling of hopelessness which is also indicated in other studies by Alias & Salleh (2017), Ahammed (2021) and Annie et al., (2015) who highlighted environmental and social burdens that affect students' emotional and psychological wellbeing and how people around them constantly making them feel incompetent and unacceptable in the society.

With reference to physical environment the challenges reported in this research include inadequate or inappropriate structure and furniture, lighting issues and unavailability of need based labs, resource rooms etc. The studies of Alexander (2015), Allam & Martin, (2021), Alias & Salleh (2017) and Sikanku, (2018) report the similar deficiencies of physical environment in educational setups causing barriers in teaching and learning process.

The challenges related to curriculum faced by teachers like, lack of practical/experimental activities, examples in curriculum according the needs of special children, unavailability of required materials to teach curriculum (models, dioramas etc.) and inappropriate curriculum adaptation and division are highlighted in this study are also in line with researches of Allam & Martin, (2021), Alias & Salleh (2017), Alexander (2015) and Ahammed (2021) where challenges of curriculum adaptations and modification with required materials is still reported as a hindrance in teaching process.

The reported challenges in this study also include personal challenges of teachers involving competence issues due to qualification barriers, unavailability of training programs to improve competencies and to be up to date with latest instructional methodologies, low motivation and low self-confidence. However, most of the teachers didn't find these barriers as challenging and informed that these issues are generally taken care of specially availability of training programs and also they don't experience lack of confidence or motivation at personal level while working with these children.

The findings of this study also informed that these challenges have no significant difference with respect to gender and disabilities teachers are working with. However, the challenges vary significantly when there is a difference in educational setups i.e. private and public setups.

Conclusion

The teachers working with children with disability face multiple challenges in teaching process. The study highlighted these challenges under seven main issues. These challenges are internal as well as external. However, external challenges like issues of administration, parental demands and

attitudes, colleagues non corporation, physical environment inadequacy, curriculum shortfalls and students' personal issues are more challenging as compared to teachers' personal shortfalls. Of all the challenges one of the most reported challenge in teaching process by all teachers of four disabilities (VI, HI, ID, PI) is barrier caused by parents' attitudes. Challenges of administration, curriculum, physical environment, workplace politics and student's personal limitations were also reported by majority of the participants. Therefore, to improve the teaching process and abilities of the teachers it is necessary that these challenges and barriers are removed or lessened as much as possible.

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