

A Study on Awareness about Mental Retardation among Regular School Children

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Abstract: *Mental Retardation refers to significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning resulting in or associated with concurrent impairment in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period.” Over the last few years, there have been many changes in the delivery of mental retardation services including the roles of special educator, therapist, parents and community. Integration and inclusion is turning point for mentally retarded persons to mainstream in society. There is an impending need to create a general awareness amongst the children of the regular schools about the special needs of the children with mental retardation. This awareness will help in inclusive atmosphere both in the families and in the society in general. This study will be helpful to know the extent of awareness on mental retardation among regular school children with reference to gender and severity of education. The present study will add on to research conducted on awareness on Mental Retardation among regular school children*

Key Words: *Mental Retardation, Integration, Inclusion,*

I. INTRODUCTION

“Mental Retardation refers to significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning resulting in or associated with concurrent impairment in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period.” Historically, persons with mental retardation were only looked after to meet the needs of food, clothing and shelter in asylums meant for persons with mental illness. Most of the special schools were started by parents. Over the last few years, there have been many changes in the delivery of mental retardation services including the roles of special educator, therapist, parents and community, and the management process that takes into account academics. Integration and inclusion is turning point for mentally retarded persons to mainstream in society. Also, there is an impending need to create a general awareness amongst the children of the regular schools about the special needs of the children with mental retardation. This awareness will help in inclusive atmosphere both in the families and in the society in general. It is imperative that every child should know that mental retardation is not a disease but is a condition. When the normal child realizes that a child with mental retardation

also has his own strengths and capabilities, inclusive education can be made possible to some extent. This study will be helpful to know the extent of awareness on mental retardation among regular school children with reference to gender and severity of education. The present study will add on to research conducted on awareness on Mental Retardation among regular school children. It is a known fact that special people or intellectually challenged are considered to be a social burden and are discriminated by society. In order to bring about a change in society one should also focus on the younger or upcoming generation. This study about “Awareness on Mental retardation among regular school children” has great importance in this present generation. This is probably the best time to introduce to the regular school children about mental retardation. The special education field has come a long way by developing various means and methods to help the mentally retarded child to

realize his/her full potential. This is the right time to also strive for inclusive education by creating the right awareness in a positive way.

The aim of the present study is to investigate the Awareness on Mental Retardation among regular school children. Hence the following objectives have been framed

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the extent of awareness about mental retardation among primary and high school students attending regular school.
- To compare the extent of awareness on mental retardation among primary and high school students attending regular school with respect to their gender.
- To compare the extent of awareness on mental retardation among primary and high school students attending regular school with respect to their level of education.

III. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

- ✓ There will be a no significant difference in mean scores on extent of awareness about mental retardation among regular school students with respect to their school.
- ✓ There will be a no significant difference in mean scores on extent of awareness about mental retardation among regular school students with respect to their gender.
- ✓ There will be a no significant difference in mean scores on extent of awareness about mental retardation among regular school students with respect to their level of education.

Research Design

The present study is a descriptive research study. The primary purpose of the descriptive research is to provide an accurate description or picture of the status or characteristics of a situation or phenomenon. The focus is not how to ferret out

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cause and effect relationship but rather on describing the variables that exist in a given situation and some times, on how to describe the relationship that among these variables. The aim of the present research is to find out the awareness level on mental retardation among normal school children. Therefore survey method has been used for data collection.

Sample

In present study, non probability purposive sampling will be used for selection of the sample. In this study the investigator selected purposive sampling for the selection of a sample. The sample was drawn from regular school children i.e. primary level and high school level students from Pallavi Model High school and St. Andrew's convent school, Bowenpally, Secunderabad. The total sample of this study will be 200 samples from Pallavi model high school and St. Andrews convent high school, Bowenipally, Secunderabad. The number of Non-disabled students participated in the survey were 200 subjects and taken 100 students from each school(Pallavi and St.Andrews) and out of that 50 students (25 Boys, 25 Girls) from primary level and 50 students (25 Boys, 25 Girls) from high school level.

Tool

Researcher used the GEM questionnaire developed by NIMH for the assessment on the extent of awareness about mental retardation among primary and high school students attending regular school. A close-ended questionnaire and standardized questionnaire (GEM – Questionnaire) has been used and administered on primary level students and high level students, to study the views of non disabled students towards their peers with disabilities.

Description of the Tool

The NIMH – GEM questionnaire has 30 items divided into 3 sections namely general information (G), etiology (E), and management (M). The items are stated in the form of a statement and the respondent is expected to indicate whether he/she agrees with the statement or no. If the respondent agrees with the statement he/she is expected to answer by making a circle with pen/pencil on "yes". If the respondent does not agree with the statement, he/she is expected to encircle "no". The items are jumbled up. There are 11 items in the category of general information, 9 items on etiology and 10 items on management aspects. Items 1 to 11 identify misconceptions related to general information on mental retardation, item 12 to 20 on etiology and item 21 to 30 on management of mental retardation. NIMH – GEM questionnaire was prepared in three languages English, Hindi, and Telugu. To each question, the subjects were expected to respond by giving options of 'Yes' or 'No'. For each response of 'Yes' a score of '1' and for each 'No' response a score of '0' was assigned. The questionnaire enclosed in appendix.

Procedure of data collection

Approval to conduct the research was initially obtained from the Vice Principles, Head Mistresses of Pallavi model high school and St. Andrews convent high school. Data was collected by giving questionnaire to primary level and high level classes students in Pallavi and St.Andrews schools.

All the students of primary level classes (50) were seated in one room and high level classes (50) were seated in another room. The questionnaire, Pencil, and Eraser were given by hand with necessary instructions and purpose of the study was explained to the students. They filled the questionnaire in the presence of the investigator and asked to go through each item carefully and to respond to each item. Sufficient time was given to the students to fill the questionnaire. The collection of questionnaire was completed with in 4 days. The filled in forms were collected from the students to analyze the data with appropriate statistical measures. The administration of the tool took between 25 and 30 minutes in

Table -1 Question wise views of primary level and high level Non-Disabled Students towards mental retardation

Sl. No.	Questions	Yes	No
1	The problem of mental retardation is found only in children	16 (8%)	184(92%)
2	Individual differences exist among mentally retarded persons	142 (71%)	58 (29%)
3	Mental retardation is an Infectious disease	168 (84%)	32 (16%)
4	Some of the persons with mental retardation can be as energetic as normal persons.	150 (75%)	50 (25%)
5	Persons with mental retardation are able to manage themselves to some degree.	171 (85.5%)	29 (14.5%)
6	Mental retardation is mental illness	53 (26.5%)	147 (73.5%)
7	Persons with mental retardation can be fully cured	109 (54.5%)	91 (45.5%)
8	Most of the mentally retarded individuals can become capable of helping other persons in simple tasks	151 (75.5%)	49 (24.5%)
9	As the mentally retarded child grows up he would gradually become normal	138 (69%)	62 (31%)
10	Persons with mental retardation usually remain unhappy	147 (73.5%)	53 (26.5%)
11	The problem of mental retardation does not exist in our society	153 (76.5%)	47 (23.5%)
12	The condition of mental retardation may not always be transmitted from parents to children but can also be caused by factors during pregnancy, after birth, during childhood or adolescence.	178 (89%)	22 (11%)
13	Mental retardation is due to fate or Karma	152 (76%)	48 (42%)
14	Children suffering from fits may not suffer from mental retardation	111 (55.5%)	89 (44.5%)
15	A child with mental retardation is born due to the sins of parents	155 (77.5%)	45 (22.5%)
16	Mentally retarded individuals are disobedient	135 (67.5%)	65 (32.5%)
17	Mental retardation is due to black magic or spells	171 (85.5%)	29 (14.5%)
18	Mental retardation is caused as an effect to Lunar eclipse at the time of pregnancy or birth of the child.	137 (68.5%)	63 (31.5%)

Sl. No.	Questions	Yes	No
19	Accidents, high fever, fits, causing brain damage in childhood may cause mental retardation.	177 (88.5%)	23 (11.5%)
20	Malnutrition in pregnant women can cause mental retardation	123 (61.5%)	77 (38.5%)
21	Medicines only can cure mental retardation	113 (56.5%)	87 (43.5%)
22	The mentally retarded individuals require continuous training to learn various simple activities.	173 (86.5%)	27 (13.5%)
23	Marriage can cure a persons with mental retardation	166 (83%)	34 (17%)
24	Many of the persons with mental retardation are capable of looking after their basic needs.	131 (65.5%)	69 (34.5%)
25	Traditional healers, poojaris can cure mentally retarded persons	155 (77.5%)	45 (22.5%)
26	The only solution to the problem of mentally retarded person is to put him in a residential school/hostel	148 (74%)	52 (26%)
27	Involvement of the parents is essential in the training of the child with mental retardation	175 (87.5%)	25 (12.5%)
28	Mentally retarded individuals with not improve without any amount of training	118 (59%)	82 (41%)
29	A mentally retarded individual can become as capable as a normal individual.	72 (36%)	128 (64%)
30	Love alone will not benefit a mentally retarded individual	135 (67.5%)	65 (32.5%)

From the above table, indicates the percentages on the level of awareness on mental retardation among normal school children, from the table we can observe that 98.5% are aware of mental retardation. We can infer that most of the items got positive awareness on mental retardation. Among the students, the level of awareness is high on mental retardation and very less number of students are not aware of mental retardation. As above table there is common that 197/200 sample giving same type of response except item number first, sixth and twenty ninth items got less than 40% positive response.

The condition of mental retardation may not always be transmitted from parents to children but can also be caused by factors during pregnancy, after birth, during childhood or adolescence is twelfth item of the questionnaire has 89% of awareness levels. Follows nineteenth item of the questionnaire, Accidents, high fever, fits, causing brain damage in childhood may cause mental retardation has 88.5% children’s awareness.

Majority of the questions are got positive responses from children on the extent of awareness on mental retardation. The problem of mental retardation is found only in children is first item of the questionnaire has 8% of positive responses and 92% negative responses are got. Following the sixth item also got 26.5% positive responses and 73.5% negative responses that Mental retardation is mental illness. And the twenty ninth item also got 36% positive responses and 64% negative responses that, A mentally retarded individual can

become as capable as a normal individual. From the above table we can understand that majority of the students in normal school are aware of mental retardation and very few are not aware of mental retardation.

Table -2: Comparison of mean scores of awareness on mental retardation among normal school children with respect to their school.

Null Hypothesis – 1 There is no significant relationship between levels of awareness on mental retardation among normal school children with respect to their schools.

N = 200

School	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Z – test
St. Andrews	100	18.92	3.265	Z-test= 7.31
Pallavi	100	22.31	3.299	

**P<0.01 , HS

Table – 2 indicates the mean scores of awareness levels with respect to the schools of normal school children. It is observed from the table that the mean scores of Pallavi model high school (22.31) and mean score of St. Andrews convent high school (18.92). The standard deviation of St. Andrews school is 3.265 and Pallavi school is 3.299. The calculated Z – test value is 7.31, which is greater than the table value and highly significant at (p<0.01). Which indicates that there is highly significant difference between level of awareness on mental retardation among two normal schools. The study suggested that there is a significant change in the awareness on mental retardation among normal school children with respect to their schools. The ‘z’ value at p<0.01 proves that null hypothesis is rejected.

Table – 3: Comparison of mean scores of awareness on mental retardation among normal school children with respect to the gender.

Null Hypothesis – 1 There is no significant difference between levels of awareness on mental retardation among normal school children with respect their gender N = 200

Gender	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Z – test
Male	100	20.97	4.011	Z-test= 1.36
Female	100	20.26	3.317	

P>0.05 , NS

Table – 3 indicates the mean of awareness level on mental retardation with respect to the gender. It is observed from the table that the mean 20.97 of male have high awareness on mental retardation and female have mean 20.26 have high awareness on mental retardation among normal school children. The standard deviation of male is 4.011 and female is 3.317. To see whether there is any significant difference between levels of awareness to the gender Z – test was calculated. The calculated Z – test value is 1.36, which is lesser than the table value and not significant at (p>0.05).

The null hypothesis for the objective – 2, of the study suggested that there is a no significant difference between the awareness on mental retardation among regular school children with respect to their gender. Already the study of

Gupta investigated that there was no difference in the awareness on mental retardation with respect to their gender. The finding of the study presented that there is no significant difference in the awareness on mental retardation among normal school children with respect to their gender. The mean score of male students is 20.97 which are not much better than the female students mean score which is 20.26.

Table – 4: Comparison of mean scores of awareness on mental retardation among normal school children with respect to the level of education.

Null Hypothesis – 3 There is no significant difference between levels of awareness on mental retardation among normal school children with respect their level of education.

N = 200

Level of Education	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Z – test
Primary level classes	100	20.81	3.653	Z-test= 0.74
High level classes	100	20.42	3.731	

P>0.05, NS

Table – 4 indicates the mean of awareness level on mental retardation with respect to the level of education. It is observed from the table that the mean 20.81 of primary level classes have high awareness on mental retardation and high level classes have mean 20.42 have high awareness on mental retardation among normal school children. The standard deviation of primary level classes is 3.653 and high level classes are 3.731. Therefore, to see the significant difference between level of awareness to the level of education Z – test was calculated. The calculated Z – test value is 0.74, which is lesser than the table value and not significant at (p>0.05). This indicates that there is no significant difference between levels of awareness on the level of education of the normal school children. The differences in mean between awareness level of primary level classes and high-level classes may be due to chance factor.

. The results are indicating that the students have more awareness on mental retardation. The difference was found with the students awareness on mental retardation with reference to schools. These results reveals that level of education and gender among normal school children has no impact on students awareness level on mental retardation. When null hypothesis for the given study are fixed and out of them null hypothesis number one was highly significant and nul hypothesis was rejected. The other null hypothesis 2 and 3, that the null hypothesis were accepted and the research hypothesis were rejected. This means that the familiarity with the persons with mental retardation is an important factor influencing acceptance of disable persons and their extent of awareness on mental retardation among normal school children. Other factors such as gender and level of education of the students had not seen significant difference on the awareness on menatl retardation among normal school children. According to the findings of this study, gender, class and level of education has no impact on students awareness level on mental retardation among normal school children. Regarding the questions except item number first, sixth and twenty ninth got below 50% positive responses towards the awareness on mental retardation. Therefore, it is

recommended that proving students familiar with the persons with special needs have more extent of awareness on menatl retardation among normal school children.

Educational Implications and suggestion of the study

The present study seems to have made an attempt to study the extent of awareness on mental retardation among normal school children with respect to schools, gender and level of education. However, it is needless to say that it require further refinements. Findings of the present study throws lighth into hitherto ignored areas of practicabilty of education for the mentally retarded children in normal school. The primary implications for practice from this research synthesis derived from the consistent finding that children who are studying in normal school have more extent of awareness on mental retardation. The more extent of awareness on mental retardation creates friendliness and acceptance in the school and also in the society and also willingness to accept the child with disability as their classmates , willingness to help the child with disability in studies, and to extend support to the child with disability when the teased by other. The present study opens a new channel for further research on the problems of extent of awareness on mental retardation. The present study can be used as a source of information to special schools, inclusive schools and authorities in the field of inclusive education. The finding of the study suggests that there is need for promoting awareness on mental retardation among normal schools and other institutions

IV. SUMMARY

The majority of the research studies conducted on the extent of awareness on mental retardation among general public, parents, anganwadi workers, teachers, school and etc., and also conducted studies on associated conditions of mental retardation. Some of the studies given results are as follows Relationship between Children’s attitudes toward and their Social acceptance of mentally retarded peers. Children were significantly more negative in their affective responses toward children with Down syndrome, and kindergarten children were more positive in their evaluations of such children. Retrospective analyses showed that training in inclusion philosophy was related to more inclusive, empowering attitudes among staff members. The results are generally supposed that parents of retarded children are better informed about the retarded condition than parents of normal children. There were no studies conducted on children’s awareness on mental retardation and therefore the present study is taken up to find out the extent of awareness on mental retardation among normal school children.

The sample consists of 200 students of two normal schools. Descriptive method was used for the study. The sample was drawn from St. Andrews convent high school and Pallavi model school. The standardized questionnaire was used to find out the level of awareness on mental retardation among normal school children. The questionnaire consists of two parts and part A deals with demographic data of the students of normal school. This includes the information on students’ age, gender, class, school, religion, and family income. Part B intends to find out the level of awareness on mental retardation and it consists of 30 questions.

The data was collected by administering questionnaire to students of normal school. The data collected was analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). To find out the level of awareness on mental retardation among normal school children, item analysis was done for each item. Chi square was carried out to find out whether there is any significant relationship between the level of awareness on mental retardation and gender, level of education and school of normal school children.

V. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The result of the study indicated that:

- There is a significant difference between the awareness levels of two schools towards mental retardation among normal school children. This is due to the familiarity of the school that, Pallavi model high school was adjacent to NIMH and also having inclusive education set up that may create more awareness levels on mental retardation than St. Andrews convent high school.
- There is no significance difference between the awareness level of boys and girls towards mental retardation among normal school children. Equal opportunity creates holistic development in awareness and also knowledge so, there may be no significance difference between the gender of the children.
- There is no-significance difference between the awareness levels of primary level classes' students towards mental retardation among normal school children when compared with high level classes' students. This due to the friendliness and familiarity of the students with disabled children with respect to their level of education.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study revealed that a substantial number of students are aware of mental retardation, however very few number of children are not aware of mental retardation. As all we know that the children are the pillars of the country. They are great contributing factors in every area. Area of rehabilitation of disabled cannot be exemption. The children can bring the great changes in near future. According to this study, it is revealed that children are much aware about the mental retardation. It is therefore, the government and voluntary organizations should come forward to take the responsibility to educate children with special needs in normal schools. Government at State and Central level expected to be more vigilant, we have PWD Act (1995) which provides equal opportunity, protection or rights and full participation of disabled. However, until the beneficiaries and the children are not aware of it, real rehabilitation cannot take place. Hence, the Government should make such a policy to children in the rehabilitation, it should be very clear to find out the sources and awareness Programmes i.e. the programme of attitudinal change, acceptance of the disability and contribution for the rehabilitation.

To conclude we can say that if the children have positive attitudes and proper awareness towards disability the holistic rehabilitation is possible. This is the present need of our nation to pay equal attention to all fields.

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