

## Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Awareness of ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities

Rupal Singh<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Sanjeev Kumar Gautam<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This study investigated school teachers' understanding of neurodevelopmental disorders (ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Learning Disabilities) through in-depth interviews. A thematic analysis revealed key themes such as, awareness levels, challenges faced in practicing inclusivity, and utilized support strategies. Findings suggest that many participating teachers possessed insufficient or partial knowledge of these conditions. Additionally, the interviews highlighted significant challenges teachers encounter when fostering inclusivity in classrooms. The study also captured teachers' experiences and commonly employed strategies to support students with neurodevelopmental disorders. These findings emphasize the potential benefits of enhanced teacher training in understanding and supporting students with such conditions.

*Keywords: ADHD, Autism, Learning Disabilities, Teacher Awareness*

Neurodevelopmental disorders, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and Learning Disabilities (LD), are unarguably one of the most significant contributors to the behavioural and academic challenges encountered by children during their school years. In India, the prevalence of ADHD has been found to be much higher than the global average. Studies report the estimated prevalence of ADHD in India to be between 5%-8%, with some estimations being as high as 11% (Panicker, 2013). A systematic review and meta-analysis of the literature revealed the prevalence rates of ASD ranging between 0.09% to 0.11%. Several other studies on ASD report the estimated prevalence ranging from 1% to 1.5% in different regions of the country (Chauhan, 2019). Learning Disabilities have relatively higher prevalence rates in India than ADHD and ASD. The recent studies show the estimated prevalence rates to be ranging from 7% (Bandla, 2023) to as high as 19% (Sridevi, 2015).

### *Why is Teacher Awareness of Neurodiversity So Crucial?*

In India, the alarming underdiagnosis of neurodevelopmental disorders remains a critical challenge. Considering how often neurodevelopmental conditions go unacknowledged, attributing the child's struggles to laziness, misbehaviour, or even a lack of inherent ability,

<sup>1</sup>Post Graduate Student, Amity University, Noida, India

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Amity University, Noida, India

\*Corresponding Author

Received: April 23, 2024; Revision Received: May 24, 2024; Accepted: May 27, 2024

## **Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Awareness of ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities**

awareness is not a luxury but a necessity. With their daily observation and intuitive understanding of classroom dynamics, teachers act as the first line of defence in early identification and remediation. Teachers, with their everyday interactions and observations, are uniquely positioned to screen for subtle signs that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Awareness empowers teachers to adopt more flexible methods to accommodate diverse learning styles, attuning to fluctuating attention spans and impulsivity. Incorporating targeted interventions like phonemic awareness activities and multisensory learning strategies contributes significantly in improving reading fluency and comprehension in children with learning disabilities. Peer-to-peer support programs and social skills training have proven to increase social interaction and participation, while creating predictable routines and sensory-friendly environments in school classroom have resulted in low anxiety and stress among students with ASD. When trained teachers implement modifications like extended time for assignments, clear instructions, and frequent breaks, it facilitates improved academic performance and motivation for students with ADHD.

Raising awareness about neurodiversity among teachers encounters several challenges. Limited access to training programs along with a scarcity of resources act as strenuous obstacles. Additionally, deep-rooted societal stigma around disabilities can further create hinderances in awareness and inclusivity initiatives. Training material and support systems to provide tools for teachers for navigating the complexities of diverse learning requirements need to be developed by collaborating with special educators and resource centers. Furthermore, in order to combat stigma and promote acceptance and inclusivity, fostering open communication and dialogue within communities is instrumental. Creating a community of aware and responsive educators is not just about fulfilling an obligation, but about helping every child realize and live up to their true potential. Awareness debunks the misconception of a diagnosis being merely a label. It instead emphasizes how a diagnosis helps in recognizing individual strengths, ultimately paving the way to success.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Shetty and Rai (2014) examined school teachers' for their level of knowledge of ADHD. The study utilized a self-report questionnaire to assess their ability to identify signs and symptoms of ADHD. A total of 312 teachers from 32 primary school participated in the study. Teachers were asked if they had ever suspected ADHD in the classroom and if they reported it to a supervisor, sought family therapy, or referred to a medical professional. They were also questioned about the necessity for and willingness to attend an ADHD workshop or module. The results showed that the majority of instructors were familiar with the term ADHD. However, their awareness levels ranged from low to adequate. Only 29% of the teachers had a good level of knowledge (Shetty, 2014). David (2013), in her qualitative analysis of teachers' perspectives in relation to ADHD found that majority of teachers had no awareness of the term ADHD, but could characterize said behaviours as under 'hyperactive' or 'more/extra'.

Vanitha (2023) attempted to test the effectiveness of information videos to improve autism awareness in teachers in Bangalore. The sample comprised of 60 primary teachers who were administered with structured knowledge questionnaires to assess their level of awareness. A pretest-posttest design was implemented to compare if information videos improved the level of awareness among the participants. Findings showed that 63.3% teachers had inadequate knowledge of autism in the beginning; and it was after the video assisted

## **Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Awareness of ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities**

teaching program that 66.6% teachers had gained adequate knowledge (Vanitha, 2023). Tiwari and John (2017) went a step ahead to evaluate the knowledge and training on autism among special educators in Karnataka. Forty-seven participants were assessed about their general awareness of ASD, classroom behaviours, etc. Majority of participants had prior experience with autism. Despite being special educators, and having prior exposure to children with autism, the participants showed poor level of awareness about ASD, classroom behaviours displayed by such children and educational programming for their needs. The impact of various variables in influencing the level of awareness and attitude towards autism is also considerable (Tiwari, 2017).

Shari and Vranda (2015) examined the knowledge of primary school teachers in identifying children with learning disabilities. The sample comprised of 200 teachers from over 16 schools in Bangalore, who completed the Knowledge Questionnaire on Learning Disabilities (Padmavathy and Lalitha, 2009). The findings revealed that only 5% of teachers had a sufficient level of awareness (Shari, 2015). Jolly and Chacko (2021) compared the level of knowledge of learning disability between private and government school teachers. A total of 100 teachers (50 from private, and 50 from government schools) were sampled. The findings showed moderately adequate level of knowledge among the participants, with private school teachers having more knowledge than government school teachers (Jolly, 2021).

Teaching students with ADHD presents a distinct set of challenges that teachers face every day. According to Khan et al. (2019) and Kern et al. (2015), teachers face challenges when working with ADHD children, such as children not paying attention to instructions, excessive talking, impatience and difficulty sitting still, running around etc. (Khan, 2019). They struggle with waiting for their turn and engage in unnecessary conversations. Hence, teachers are not only required to address the immediate disruptions but also to create a supportive space where these students can thrive academically despite the hurdles (Kern, 2015). According to Johnstone et al. (2021), while teachers understand the value of individualization, they frequently lack the time and resources to successfully execute it. Autistic children might have trouble with both verbal and nonverbal communication, limiting their capacity to communicate needs, comprehend instructions, and participate in social interactions. In addition to this, traditional techniques may not accommodate the different learning styles of children with LD. Lopes et al. (2018) conducted a study that found inadequate access to training and resources for utilizing multi-sensory techniques and assistive technologies. Hence, obstructing inclusive learning environment.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The aim of the present research was to explore school teachers' understanding of neurodiversity in a classroom.

#### ***Objectives:***

- Assess the current level of awareness among school teachers about ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities.
- Identify the challenges faced by teachers in addressing the unique needs of students with ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities.
- Identify the strategies and methods teachers utilize for ensuring inclusivity in classrooms.

## Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Awareness of ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities

### **Sample:**

The sample comprised of 10 female school teachers. The participants were sampled using simple random sampling. Teachers from both government and private schools were interviewed. The age range of the participants was 27-58 years. The participants had varied years of experience and taught students of different ages and grades.

### **Description of the tool:**

For the purpose of data collection, in-depth interviews were utilised. The interviews were semi-structured and an interview schedule was designed to use as a guide through the process of questioning. The interview schedule was designed keeping in mind the variables that needed to be explored. A total of ten questions were included in the interview schedule, centering which the interview was conducted. However, due to its semi-structured nature, more questions relevant to the context of the participant's answers were also asked, along with some probing questions.

### **Procedure:**

The participants were interviewed individually. Teachers were contacted via phone calls and given a briefing about the nature and the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained. A convenient time was agreed upon for conducting the interview, which was conducted online over Zoom. The online interview was recorded and then transcribed. Confidentiality of personal and institutional details was maintained throughout the process.

### **Analysis:**

The transcribed data was subjected to qualitative analysis. For this purpose, Atlas.ti was used. The analysis employed open coding to identify key themes and concepts. Recurring tropes in the transcripts were acknowledged as themes and sub-themes. An index comprising of these central themes was created, organizing and synthesizing data before presenting it in a network format. This organized network sought to consolidate, classify, and provide context for the data, enabling a better comprehension and elucidation of the studied issues.

## **RESULTS**

**Table 1: Frequency of key themes**

<b>THEMES</b>	<b>SUB-THEMES</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>
AWARENESS	Knowledge of Symptoms	82
	Knowledge of Etiology	9
	Knowledge of Prevalence	11
	Misinformation and Misconceptions	18
CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS	Behavioural Problems	5
	Classroom Challenges	15
	Dismissive Parents	12
	Limited Training and Knowledge	22
	No Experience with Neurodivergent Students	7
	Resource Constraints	4
	Stigma	4
COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION	Consultation with Specialists	15
	Parent-Teacher Communication	18

**Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Awareness of ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities**

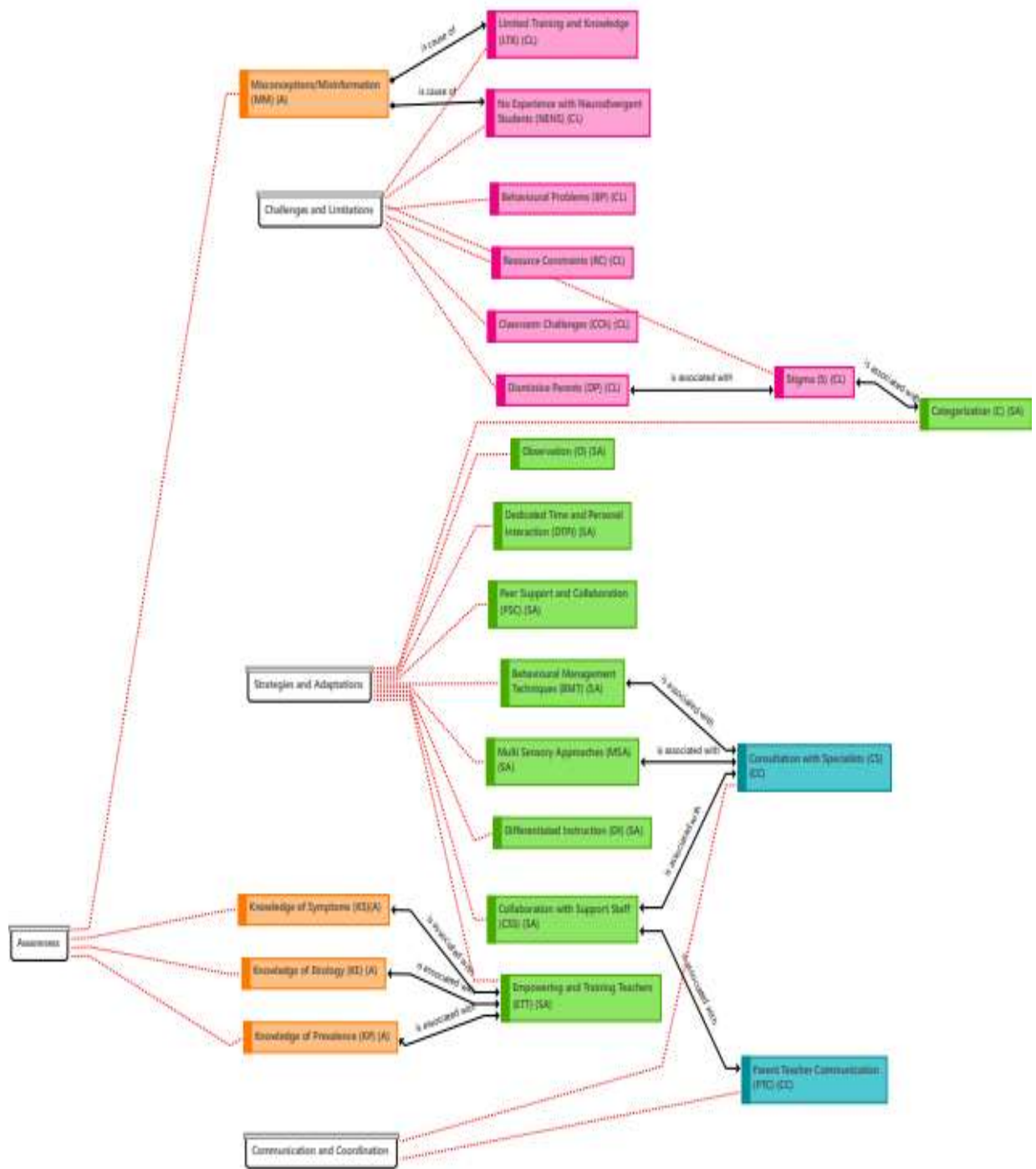
<b>THEMES</b>	<b>SUB-THEMES</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>
STRATEGIES AND ADAPTATIONS	Behavioural Management Techniques	9
	Categorization	2
	Collaboration with Support Staff	23
	Dedicated Time and Personal Interaction	19
	Differentiated Instruction	21
	Empowering and Training Teachers	13
	Multi-sensory Approaches	26
	Observation	7
	Peer Support and Collaboration	15
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>357</b>

**Table 2: Consolidation of Themes**

	<b>P 1</b>	<b>P 2</b>	<b>P 3</b>	<b>P 4</b>	<b>P 5</b>	<b>P 6</b>	<b>P 7</b>	<b>P 8</b>	<b>P 9</b>	<b>P10</b>	<b>Total</b>
Behavioural Management Techniques	*	1	*	1	1	*	1	3	2	*	9
Behavioural Problems	*	*	*	1	2	*	*	1	1	*	5
Categorization	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	1	*	1	2
Classroom Challenges	*	1	3	*	2	3	1	1	1	3	15
Collaboration with Support Staff	3	1	1	1	3	1	1	5	3	4	23
Consultation with Specialists	*	2	1	*	2	*	7	2	1	*	15
Dedicated Time and Personal Interaction	2	3	*	1	4	2	2	1	2	2	19
Differentiated Instruction	4	2	2	1	3	4	1	2	*	2	21
Dismissive Parents	*	*	*	*	3	*	2	*	1	6	12
Empowering and Training Teachers	*	*	*	*	1	*	9	3	*	*	13
Knowledge of Etiology	2	2	1	*	*	*	1	2	1	*	9
Knowledge of Prevalence	*	2	1	*	1	2	*	4	*	1	11
Knowledge of Symptoms	9	12	4	5	6	5	8	11	7	15	82
Limited Training and Knowledge	*	4	5	6	1	4	1	1	*	*	22
Misconceptions/Misinformation	2	4	1	5	1	3	1	*	1	*	18
Multi Sensory Approaches	*	2	2	1	6	4	6	4	1	*	26
No Experience with Neurodivergent Students	*	*	*	2	*	3	*	1	1	*	7
Observation	1	1	*	*	1	*	2	1	*	1	7
Parent Teacher Communication	1	1	2	1	2	2	6	1	1	1	18
Peer Support and Collaboration	*	1	2	*	3	*	2	6	*	1	15
Resource Constraints	*	*	1	*	1	2	*	*	*	*	4
Stigma	*	*	*	*	2	*	1	*	*	1	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>357</b>

# Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Awareness of ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities

*Figure 1: Network of Key Themes and Sub-themes*



## DISCUSSION

The transcribed data revealed a collection of themes which include: Awareness, Challenges and Limitations, Strategies and Adaptations, and Communication and Coordination. Further, sub-themes were also identified in each key theme.

## Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Awareness of ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities

### *Awareness*

1. **Knowledge of symptoms:** The analysis of interview transcripts revealed a concerning lack of in-depth understanding regarding neurodevelopmental disorders among the participating teachers. While some identify partial characteristics of these conditions most displayed a gap in precise knowledge. Notably, several teachers relied on interviewer's prompts to fully recognise the symptoms. A significant portion of the participants lacked familiarity with the official diagnostic terminology associated with the disorders, despite demonstrating partial recognition of symptom manifestations. Similar findings were reported by David (2013) where majority of teachers had no awareness of the term ADHD, but could characterize their behaviours as 'hyperactive' or 'extra' (David, 2013).
2. **Knowledge of Etiology:** While teachers exhibited a limited grasp of diagnostic criteria for neurodevelopmental disorders, they demonstrated somewhat better understanding of potential causes and risk factors. Genetics emerged as the most frequently sighted cause followed by factors like malnutrition and pregnancy complications.
3. **Knowledge of Prevalence:** Teachers exhibited a decent awareness of the prevalence of neurodevelopmental conditions within their classrooms. Learning Disabilities were reported as the most frequently encountered condition, with estimates of 3-4 students in a class of 30-40. This was followed by ADHD with teachers reporting 1-2 students per class of 30. Autism Spectrum Disorder appeared to be the least frequently encountered, with estimations of 1-2 students in a larger group of 90 to 100 students.
4. **Misconceptions and Misinformation:** The study identified prevalent misconceptions about neurodevelopmental disorders among teachers. These misconceptions stemmed from two primary sources: preconceived notions lacking evidence and misinterpretations of diagnostic terminology. For example, some participants mistakenly viewed ADHD as 'attention seeking' behaviour while others held inaccurate beliefs about the underlying causes of these conditions. These findings align with Gini et. al.'s (2021) research which documented similar endorsements of neuromyths among educators regarding neurodevelopmental disorders (Gini, 2021).

### *Challenges and Limitations*

1. **Behavioural Problems:** Challenges included students who were easily frustrated and prone to disruptive outbursts potentially endangering themselves and others. This aligns with Hodgetts' (2013) findings on aggression in children with ASD (Hodgettes, 2013). Additionally teachers reported difficulties with focus and distractibility which disrupted classroom flow and impacted other students. These findings mirror Guerra et al.'s (2017) research on ADHD which highlighted similar disruptions to instruction and learning (Guerra, 2017).
2. **Classroom Challenges:** The primary concern was the difficulty of balancing individualised attention for neurodivergent students with the demands of covering a comprehensive curriculum. Teachers also expressed difficulty in maintaining patience with student behaviour including disobeying instruction and slow comprehension despite repeated explanations. These challenges echo Kern et al (2015) findings regarding impatience in attentiveness and difficulty staying seated in students with ADHD (Kern, 2015).

## Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Awareness of ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities

3. **Resource constraints:** Teachers reported additional challenges due to limited access to specialised resources included a lack of specially designed learning kits and tools, and support staff like counsellors. These concerns were particularly pronounced in government schools where teachers emphasise the shortage of school counsellors and special educators.
4. **Dismissive Parents:** Teachers reported difficulty in collaborating with parents of neurodivergent children. Similar to Lalvani's (2014) findings, some parents displayed a resistance in acknowledging learning differences (Lalvani, 2014). This hindered efforts to advocate for support and interventions leading to frustration on both sides. Stigma associated with disabilities may also play a role as parents expressed concerns about labels and societal judgement.
5. **Limited Training and Knowledge:** Teachers' limited awareness of neurodevelopmental conditions reflects a lack of comprehensive training programmes. This aligns with Das et al. (2013) who while investigating preparedness of teachers in context to inclusive education reported that 70% of participating teachers lacked training in special education (Das, 2013). Participants of the present study attributed the knowledge gaps to inadequate training and a focus on basic qualifications rather than inclusivity practises.
6. **No Experience with Neurodivergent Students:** A concerning number of participants reported no prior experience with children exhibiting symptoms of ADHD, Autism or Learning Disabilities. Some were aware of such children but hadn't directly interacted with them in the classroom. This lack of exposure aligns with Das et al (2013) who found that 70% of teachers lacked experience with disabilities (Das, 2013). Without firsthand experience, teachers may struggle to recognise how symptoms manifest in a classroom setting, potentially mistaking them for disinterest, disobedience, or simply not understanding the material.
7. **Stigma:** Disabilities continue to carry a social stigma impacting children with neurodevelopmental disorders. These children may not always appear to be on par with their peers leading to stereotypes and judgement from the wider community. Currie and Szabo (2020) found similar experiences with parents reporting social isolation and disconnection from parents of typically developing children (Currie, 2020). Stigma can manifest in bullying from classmates due to lower grades or impaired social communication.

### *Strategies and Adaptations*

1. **Differentiated Instruction:** Many participants employ differentiated instruction methods to support neurodivergent students. Common approaches include providing specialised practice materials, activities emphasising real-world application and incorporating examples to enhance understanding. Teachers reported using engaging activities and additional tasks to maintain focus and minimise distractions. Furthermore, some schools utilise alternative assessment methods like simplified mock tests and rubrics tailored to individual needs. Controversially, some schools offer exemptions from complex subjects like math and science.
2. **Multi-sensory Approaches:** Teachers leverage multisensory approaches to promote inclusivity and cater to diverse learning styles. Visual aids like charts, diagrams, colourful materials, and educational videos are commonly used to enhance comprehension and memory. Beyond visuals, some teachers incorporate manipulators like toys, blocks, and activity rooms as well as movement-based learning through sports and drama. Using flashcards, rhythmic learning through



## Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Awareness of ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities

music and kinesthetic aids also feature in these strategies. Alenizi (2019) found improved learning outcomes when students connected sensory motor experiences with learning materials (Alenizi, 2019).

3. **Behaviour Management Techniques:** Teachers reported employing various positive behaviour management strategies to maintain discipline and engagement. A common approach involves offering praise and appreciation even for small accomplishments or attempts to participate. This aligns with Kintzinger (2023) who emphasises the importance of affirmation, validation, and praise when fostering inclusivity with autistic children (Kintzinger, 2023). Participants in the present study also utilise a system of reinforcements or incentives such as stickers, smileys, candies, to encourage participation and positive academic behaviour.
4. **Peer Support and Collaboration:** Participants emphasise the importance of instilling empathy and sensitivity towards peers with neurodevelopmental disorders. They encourage students to celebrate milestones, validate achievements, and offer support as ‘study buddies’ which can improve self-esteem, academic performance and create a more accepting peer group. This aligns with Manohar et al (2024) who highlight the importance of not only sensitising neurotypical students but also creating opportunities for interaction with neurodiverse peers (Manohar, 2024).
5. **Dedicated Time and Personal Interaction:** Participants highlighted the crucial role of dedicated time and personalised interaction in improving the academic and social functioning of neurodivergent students. Teachers reported making a conscious effort to build rapport with these students fostering a sense of trust and comfort that encourages them to share their problems. Open communication allows teachers to tailor their teaching methods to individual needs. Strong relationships also facilitate closer monitoring of students’ progress.
6. **Collaboration with Support Staff:** Recognising the value of expert support, teachers reported frequently collaborating with school staff to develop effective strategies for students with neurodevelopmental disorders. This collaboration often involves seeking guidance from supervisors, in-school counsellors or special educators. The presence of shadow teachers or classroom aides was also highlighted by participants. These support staff provide additional one-on-one assistance addressing academic challenges, managing personal needs during the school day (meals, bathroom breaks etc.) and offering overall support. This aligns with Sebatin (2019) who observed the crucial role shadow teachers play in providing academic and psychological support to students with ASD throughout the school day (Sabatin, 2020).
7. **Empowering and Training Teachers:** Participants emphasised the need for regular training programmes and workshops to equip teachers with knowledge and skills to support neurodivergent students. Several reported gaining valuable insights into common childhood conditions through school organised workshops. These capacity building programmes can significantly enhance teachers’ effectiveness as mentors and facilitators. A review of professional development in special education highlighted that workshops, coaching sessions and online courses can lead to positive changes in both teacher effectiveness and student outcomes (Adhikari, 2020). Furthermore, participants expressed the desire for more flexibility in their approach and methodologies. This autonomy would allow them to tailor interventions to meet the specific needs of each student.
8. **Categorization:** Schools often categorise students with specific needs under designations like SEN (Special Educational Needs) or CWSN (Children With

## Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Awareness of ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities

Special Needs). Such classifications can unlock certain accommodations such as exemptions from specific subjects, additional exam time, or access to specialised resources. Initiatives like India's centrally sponsored Samagra Shiksha scheme provides a framework for functional and formal assessments, Individualised Educational Plans and dedicated resource support.

9. **Observation:** Teachers identified observation as a crucial first step in identifying potential neurodevelopmental conditions. This involves close monitoring of students behaviour and learning difficulties. By fully observing how students interact with the classroom environment and identifying areas of difficulty, teachers can gather valuable information to inform further assessments or interventions.

### Communication and Collaboration

1. **Parent-Teacher Communication:** Effective communication with parents emerged as a critical strategy for supporting neurodivergent students. Teachers aim to understand a child's medical background through discussion with parents while also soliciting feedback on their experiences at home. This collaborative approach allows for the development of shared strategies that effectively address the child's needs. Teachers highlighted the importance of parent education and counselling. By encouraging parents to seek professional guidance from counsellors, psychologists, or medical professionals, they can become better equipped to meet their child's specific needs. This aligns with Josilowski & Morris's (2019) findings which demonstrated that collaboration between parents and teachers of students with ASD led to improvements in both academic performance and social adjustment (Josilowski & Morris, 2019).
2. **Consultation with Specialists:** Teachers frequently emphasise the importance of consulting specialists for formal diagnosis. This involves referring parents to medical professionals such as doctors, psychologists, or psychiatrists, as well as behavioural therapists for comprehensive assessments. Teachers collaborate with specialists to integrate their suggestions into lesson plans and teaching methodologies. This ensures targeted intervention that directly address a student's specific needs. Campbell et al (2023) suggest that collaboration between therapists and teachers in designing physical, social, and learning environments can facilitate successful participation for all children (Campbell & Cheryl Missiuna, 2023).

### CONCLUSION

The objective of the present study was to investigate school teachers' level of knowledge regarding neurodevelopmental disorders. A qualitative approach was adopted involving in-depth interviews for data collection. Thematic analysis was conducted to analyse the transcribed data. Insufficient knowledge, classroom challenges, behavioural problems and difficulties with parent collaboration were some of the prominent themes. Despite these obstacles teachers utilised various strategies to promote inclusivity. The findings highlight the need for enhanced teacher training, improved access to resources, and stronger partnerships between school, families and specialists. By investing in these areas schools can create more inclusive learning environments that empower all students to succeed.

### *Future Implications*

This research emphasizes the need for revamped teacher training in recognizing and supporting students with ADHD, Autism and Learning Disabilities. The future holds promise for comprehensive training programs, fostering collaboration between educators

## **Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Awareness of ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities**

and specialists and utilizing technology for personalized learning. Early identification through teacher observation can lead to timely intervention, while policy changes can ensure adequate resources and support staff. By addressing these areas schools can create a truly inclusive environment where all students, regardless of neurodiversity, have the opportunity to flourish.

### ***Limitations***

- The study had a small sample size, including 10 female teachers. This may not represent the experiences of all teachers, especially male teachers.
- Simple random sampling was used as a selection method. The teachers who volunteered may be more interested or aware of the neurodevelopmental conditions than the general population of teachers.
- This is a cross-sectional study, capturing a snapshot in time. Considering the longitudinal impact of teacher training or interventions on student outcomes could be valuable.

### **REFERENCES**

- Alenizi, M.A. (2019). Effectiveness of a Program Based on A Multi-Sensory Strategy in Developing Visual Perception of Primary School Learners with Learning Disabilities: A Contextual Study of Arabic Learners. *International Journal of Educational Psychology*, 8(1).
- Bandla, S. et al. (2023). Prevalence of specific learning disorders in school children in a South Indian city. *Archives of Mental Health* 24(2).
- Becker, S. P., Garner, A. A., Tamm, L., Antonini, T. N., & Epstein, J. N. (2019). Honing in on the social difficulties associated with sluggish cognitive tempo in children: Withdrawal, peer ignoring, and low engagement. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 48(2).
- Campbell, W. et al. (2023). Partnering for Change: collaborating to transform occupational therapy services that support inclusive education. *Frontiers In Public Health*, 11(1).
- Chandrasekharan, E., Kumar, S., & Sharma, T. (2015). Inclusion of children with disabilities in India: Challenges and possibilities. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 3(4)
- Chauhan et al. (2019). Prevalence of autism spectrum disorder in Indian children: A systematic review and meta-Analysis. *Neurology India*, 76(100).
- Cornoldi, C. et al. (2016). Attitudes of Primary School Teachers in Three Western Countries Toward Learning Disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 1–12.
- Currie, G. & Szabo, J. (2020). Social isolation and exclusion: the parents' experience of caring for children with rare neurodevelopmental disorders. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 15(1).
- Das, A.K. et al. (2013). Inclusive Education in India: Are the Teachers Prepared? *International Journal of Special Education*, 28(1).
- Das, J., & Desai, S. (2016). Inclusive Practices for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in India: Challenges and Possibilities. *Journal of Educational and Developmental*
- David, N. (2013). ADHD In Indian Elementary Classrooms: Understanding Teacher Perspectives. *International Journal of Special Education*. 28(2).
- DuPaul, G. J., & Power, T. J. (2009). ADHD in elementary school children. In T. E. Brown (Ed.), *ADHD comorbidities: Handbook for ADHD complications in children and adults* (pp. 55–68). American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc.

## **Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Awareness of ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities**

- Geary, D. C., Bailey, D. H., Littlefield, A., Wood, P., Hoard, M. K., & Nugent, L. (2009). First-grade predictors of mathematical learning disability: A latent class trajectory analysis. *Cognitive development*, 24(4).
- Gini, S. et al. (2021). Neuromyths about neurodevelopmental disorders: misconceptions by educators and the general public. *Mind, Brain, and Education* 15 (4).
- Guerra, F. et al. (2017). Examining Teachers' Understanding of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 17(4).
- Hodgetts, S., Nicholas, D., & Zwaigenbaum, L. (2013). Home Sweet Home? Families' Experiences With Aggression in Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 28(3),
- Johnstone, C., Bolt, P., & Grisham, K. (2021). Inclusive school communities: Teachers' understandings and practices of differentiation for children with learning difficulties. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 25(8).
- Johnston, C., Mash, E. J., Miller, N., & Ninowski, J. E. (2012). Parenting in adults with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). *Clinical Psychology Review*, 32.
- Jolly, R. & Chacko, C.M. (2021). Knowledge Regarding Learning Disability among Primary School Teachers. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(2).
- Joshi, M., Jain, S., & Kumar, U. (2019). Challenges faced by teachers in inclusive education in India: A case study of Delhi schools. *International Journal of Social Science and Education*, 8(4).
- Josilowski, C.S.& Morris, W. et al. (2019). A Qualitative Exploration of Teachers' Experiences with Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder-Transitioning Adjusting to Inclusion: Impacts of the Home and School Collaboration. *The Qualitative Report*, 24(6).
- Kappen, M.J. (2010). Inclusive Education: Programmes and Provisions. *Journal on Educational Psychology*, 4(1).
- Kern, A., Amod, Z., Seabi, J., & Vorster, A. (2015). South African foundation phase teachers' perceptions of ADHD at private and public schools. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 12(3).
- Khan, K. et al. (2019). The Effectiveness of Web-Based Interventions Delivered to Children and Young People With Neurodevelopmental Disorders: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 21 (11).
- Kinzinger, R. (2023). Teaching Strategies for Autistic Students. *Canadian Journal of Autism Equity*, 3(1).
- Kocsis, J. (2016). Primary Teachers' Knowledge about Learning Disabilities. Nipissing University.
- Kumar, S. (2023). Teacher Training and Professional Development in Special Education: Assessing the impact of professional development programs on teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. *Global International Research Thoughts*, 11(1).
- Lalvani, P. (2014). The Enforcement of Normalcy in Schools and the Disablement of Families: Unpacking Master Narratives On Parental Denial. *Department of Teaching and Learning Scholarship and Creative Works*. 134.
- Latouche, C., & Gascoigne, T. (2019). Teachers' knowledge and experiences of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in Ontario elementary schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(8).
- Lopes, D. L., Melo, C. E., & Fernandes, S. S. (2018). Implementing AAC: Teachers' training needs and perceptions in inclusive classrooms. *International Journal of Language & Communication Skills*, 7(4).

## **Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Awareness of ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities**

- Manohar, H., et al. (2024). Experiences of Parenting an Autistic Individual During Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood in the Indian Context: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 10(10).
- Menon, S. (2016). Awareness on Learning Disabilities among Elementary School Teachers. *Asian Journal of Education and Training*, 2(2).
- Milburn, C., Kos, J., & Williamson, P. (2019). Learning and behaviour challenges in mainstream primary schools: Teachers' experiences and support needs. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(5).
- Mohr-Jensen, N., Larsen, P. B., & Petersen, P. B. (2019). Teachers' and school leaders' knowledge, attitudes and practices towards autism spectrum disorder in Danish schools. *European Journal of Special Education*, 34(3).
- Rao, S., Kumar, K., & Singh, K. (2018). Awareness and knowledge of teachers about learning disabilities in primary schools of Delhi. *International Journal of Educational Research and Technology*, 11(8).
- Ronson, K. (2021). Primary School Teachers' Knowledge of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.
- Sabatin, I.M. (2020). The Role of Shadow Teacher in Improving Autistic Students Ability in Learning. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 7(9).
- Sahu, A., Bhargava, R., Sagar, R., & Mehta, M. (2017). Clinical and academic profile of children with specific learning disorder-mixed type: An Indian study. *Journal of Mental Health and Human Behaviour*, 22(2).
- Sarkar, S. (2015). A study of knowledge and awareness of teachers and parents regarding learning disabilities among school children in Delhi. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*.
- Shari, M. & Vranda, M.N. (2015). Knowledge of Primary School Teachers in Identifying Children with Learning Disabilities. *Disability, CBR and Inclusive Development*. 26 (3).
- Shetty, A & Rai, S. (2014). Awareness and Knowledge of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders Among Primary School Teachers in India. *International Journal of Current Pharmaceutical Review and Research*. 6 (9).
- Shroff, H. P., Hardikar-Sawant, S., & Prabhudesai, A. D. (2017). Knowledge and misperceptions about attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) among school teachers in Mumbai, India. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 64(5).
- Singh, J., & Agrawal, S. (2018). Knowledge of teachers regarding common learning disabilities in primary schools of urban and rural areas. *Indian Journal of Special Education*, 7(2).
- Singh, J., Singh, N., & Sharma, Y. (2017). Management of challenging behaviours in children with learning disabilities: Perceptions and practices of teachers. *International Journal of Special Education*, 32(2)
- Sonuga-Barke, E. J., et a. (2010). The quality of life of children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder: a systematic review. *European child & adolescent psychiatry*, 19(2).
- Sridevi, G., George, A.G., Sriveni, D., & Rangaswami, K. (2015). Learning disability and behavior problems among school going children. *Journal of Disability Studies*, 1(1).
- Tiwari, S., & John, J. (2017). Special educators' knowledge and training on autism in Karnataka: A cross-sectional study. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 59(3).

## **Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Awareness of ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities**

- Vanitha, N. (2023). Effectiveness of information videos regarding autism among primary school teachers at selected rural schools of Bangalore. *International Journal of Nursing Education and Research*, 11(3).
- Venkata, J. A., & Panicker, A. S. (2013). Prevalence of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in primary school children. *Indian journal of psychiatry*, 55(4).
- Vincent, J. & Ralston, K. (2019). Trainee teachers' knowledge of autism: implications for understanding and inclusive practice. *Oxford Review of Education*.
- Warren, A., Buckingham, K., & Parsons, S. (2020). Everyday experiences of inclusion in primary resources provision: The voices of autistic pupils and their teachers. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*. Advance online publication.
- West, J., Taylor, M., Houghton, S., & Hudyma, S. (2005). A Comparison of Teachers' and Parents' Knowledge and Beliefs About Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). *School Psychology International*, 26(2)
- Bharat, Rahul & Qazi, Uzaina & Yadav, Tribhuvanesh & Niranjana, Sanjay & Jaiswal, Seema. (2022). A study of Current Interventions for Autism Spectrum Disorder in India. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*. 10.
- Frigerio, A. (2014). Italian Teachers' Knowledge and Perception of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). *International Journal of School & Educational Psychology*. 2(2).
- Jones, N. (2015). Teachers' Perceptions of Autism Spectrum Disorder: An Analysis of the Relationship Among Teachers' Knowledge, Exposure, and Attitudes.
- Baglama, B., Yıkmış, A. & Demirok, M. (2017). Special Education Teachers' Views on Using Technology in Teaching Mathematics. *European Journal of Special Education Research*.
- Washburn, E. K., Binks-Cantrell, E. S., & Joshi, R. M. (2014). What do preservice teachers from the USA and the UK know about dyslexia?. *Dyslexia (Chichester, England)*, 20(1).

### ***Acknowledgment***

The author(s) appreciate all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

***How to cite this article:*** Singh, R. & Gautam, S.K. (2024). Towards a More Inclusive Classroom: A Qualitative Exploration of Teacher Awareness of ADHD, Autism, and Learning Disabilities. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(2), 2656-2669. DIP:18.01.231.20241202, DOI:10.25215/1202.231