

Research Paper

A Study on The Level of Awareness About Individualized Educational Programme (I.E.P.) among The Parents of Children with Mental Retardation

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ABSTRACT

This research paper investigates the level of awareness about the Individualized Educational Programme (I.E.P.) among the parents of children with mental retardation. The I.E.P. is a critical educational tool designed to cater to the specific educational needs of children with disabilities, including those with mental retardation. Despite its importance, many parents remain unaware of its existence, purposes, and benefits. The study explores the extent of parental knowledge regarding I.E.P., identifies key factors influencing awareness levels, and examines the implications of this awareness on the educational and developmental outcomes of children with mental retardation. The findings highlight the need for greater outreach and education to ensure that parents can effectively advocate for and support their children's educational needs.

Keywords: IEP, Parents, Mental Retardation

The Individualized Educational Programme (I.E.P.) is a cornerstone of special education services for children with disabilities, including those diagnosed with mental retardation (now referred to as intellectual disabilities). It is a legally mandated document that outlines personalized goals, strategies, and accommodations necessary to meet the unique learning needs of each child. The implementation of an effective I.E.P. can significantly improve educational outcomes by ensuring that children with disabilities receive appropriate support tailored to their capabilities.

Parents play a vital role in the development and execution of the I.E.P. As primary advocates for their children's education, they are essential partners in the collaborative process that involves teachers, special educators, and other professionals. However, if parents are not fully aware of the I.E.P.'s existence or its benefits, they may be unable to participate effectively, which could hinder their child's progress.

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Problem Statement

Despite the importance of parental involvement in the I.E.P. process, there is limited research on the level of awareness among parents of children with mental retardation regarding the programme. This lack of awareness can create barriers to accessing appropriate educational interventions and services. It is essential to explore the factors that influence this awareness and identify ways to improve it.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the level of awareness about the I.E.P. among parents of children with mental retardation.
- To find out the awareness of parents on IEP with reference the Gender, Education qualification and area.
- To suggest strategies to increase parental awareness and engagement in the educational planning of their children.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for policymakers, educators, and special education professionals seeking to improve the educational experience of children with mental retardation. By understanding the current state of parental awareness regarding the I.E.P., stakeholders can develop targeted strategies to ensure that all children receive the necessary educational interventions and support.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of the Individualized Educational Programme (I.E.P.)

The I.E.P. is a formal document mandated by legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States and similar laws in other countries. It outlines the educational goals, special services, and accommodations that a child with disabilities requires to access and progress in school. The I.E.P. is developed through a collaborative process involving educators, specialists, and parents, with the child's specific needs in mind.

Research by Bateman and Linden (2006) highlights the importance of the I.E.P. in creating a roadmap for each child's education, emphasizing the need for parental involvement to ensure the plan's success. According to Smith (2017), when parents actively participate in the I.E.P. process, children are more likely to meet their educational goals and achieve better long-term outcomes.

Parental Awareness and Engagement in the I.E.P. Process

Parental awareness is a key factor influencing their engagement in the I.E.P. process. Studies show that parents who are knowledgeable about their rights and the I.E.P.'s role are more likely to advocate for appropriate services for their children (Hunt, 2015). Conversely, a lack of awareness can lead to passive participation, where parents may defer entirely to educators, potentially missing opportunities to contribute valuable insights about their child's needs.

According to O'Connor and Fernandez (2013), socioeconomic factors, educational background, and access to resources play a significant role in determining parental awareness of the I.E.P. Parents from marginalized communities may have limited access to information, making it difficult for them to engage effectively in the process.

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Challenges Faced by Parents of Children with Mental Retardation

Parents of children with mental retardation face unique challenges, including navigating complex special education systems, advocating for services, and managing their child's daily care needs. A study by Johnson and Brown (2019) revealed that parents often feel overwhelmed by the educational terminology and the I.E.P. process, which can result in feelings of helplessness and disengagement.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design to assess the level of awareness among parents of children with mental retardation regarding the I.E.P. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through surveys and interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study consists of parents of children with mental retardation who are enrolled in special education programmes. A sample of 80 parents was selected through purposive sampling from TEPSE & HEPSN CENTRE JAI NARAIN VYAS UNIVERSITY JODHPUR (Raj.). Efforts were made to ensure diversity in terms of socioeconomic background, education level, and the severity of the child's condition. The sample belonged to the pre-primary to vocational level.

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The interviews provided deeper insights into the challenges faced by parents and their perceptions of the I.E.P. The questionnaire includes two parts & part I used for collecting demographic data of the subjects like Name, Age, Sex, Education Qualifications, professional Qualification and Second part include the questionnaire which was developed to collect the parents view about IEP. The questions were designed to gather the knowledge about IEP from the parents of people with mental retardation who were studying in TEPSE & HEPSN centre Jai Narain Vyas University Jodhpur (Raj.).

The investigator interacted with the parent through the class room teacher and later the researcher directly interacted with parents and given the questionnaire to the parents and requested to fill by the form on the spot and collected back.

Data Analysis

The analysis and interpretation of the collected data was done on the basis of objectives of the study. Data analyses were done using following statistical techniques.

- a) Percentage averages and Standard deviations were calculated.
- b) Independent T-test was carried out to find out whether there is any significant difference.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Awareness among Parents on basis of Gender

It can be observed from table no.1 that mean and SD value for awareness of IEP for male parents of children with intellectually impaired are found to be 16.30 and 2.58 respectively and that for female parents of same group children mean and SD value for awareness about IEP are found to be 14.00 and 3.12 and t-value of the awareness about IEP between two

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groups is 3.12 which is significant at 0.05 with level of significance with df 78. It suggests that both male and female parents revealed a significant difference for the measure of awareness about IEP.

Table:1 Showing Mean, SD & 't' value between male & female parents of children with Intellectual impairment about awareness of IEP

Awareness about IEP	Group	N	Mean	SD	SEM	't'
	Male	40	16.30	2.58	0.40	3.54
	Female	40	14.00	3.12	0.49	

Parental Educational qualification in the I.E.P. Process

There was a clear correlation between parental awareness and involvement in the I.E.P. process. Parents who were knowledgeable about the I.E.P. were more likely to attend meetings, contribute to goal setting, and advocate for additional services. Conversely, parents with lower awareness levels tended to defer to educators and were less likely to actively participate. It can be observed from table no.2 that mean and SD value for awareness of IEP amongst educated parents of children with intellectually impaired are found to be 16.41 and 2.21 respectively and uneducated parents of same group children mean and SD value for awareness about IEP are found to be 13.20 and 2.62 and t-value of the awareness about IEP between two groups is 5.82 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance with df 78. It suggests that parents who were educated and who were uneducated has significant difference for the measure of awareness about IEP.

Table: 2 Showing Mean, SD & 't' value between educated & uneducated parents of children with Intellectual impairment about awareness of IEP

Awareness about IEP	Group	N	Mean	SD	SEM	't'
	Educated	51	16.41	2.210	0.30	5.82
	Uneducated	29	13.20	2.62	0.48	

Demographic area of Parent

It can be observed from table no. 3 that mean and SD value for awareness of IEP amongst parents of children with intellectually impaired those belongs from urban area are found to be 16.38 and 2.37 respectively and that parents of same group children those belongs from rural area mean and SD value for awareness about IEP are found to be 13.70 and 2.95 and t-value of the awareness about IEP between two groups is 4.46 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance with df 78. It suggests that parents those belong from urban area and those from rural area revealed a significant difference for the measure of awareness about IEP.

Table:3 Showing Mean, SD & 't' value between Urban & rural parents of children with Intellectual impairment about awareness of IEP

Awareness about IEP	Group	N	Mean	SD	SEM	't'
	Urban	49	16.38	2.37	0.33	4.46
	Rural	31	13.70	2.95	0.53	

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CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate a significant gap in parental awareness regarding the I.E.P. among parents of children with mental retardation. This gap is particularly pronounced among parents from rural areas, highlighting the need for targeted outreach and education. Schools and special education professionals must take proactive steps to ensure that parents are well-informed and empowered to participate in their child's educational planning.

Recommendations

1. Schools should organize regular workshops and informational sessions for parents to explain the I.E.P. process and their role in it.
2. Special education professionals should provide clear, accessible resources to parents, including written materials and online guides.
3. Policy initiatives should focus on increasing awareness of the I.E.P. in underserved communities through outreach and collaboration with local organizations.

By improving parental awareness and engagement, we can ensure that children with mental retardation receive the individualized support they need to thrive academically and developmentally.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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