Skills of Special Education Teachers in Managing the Behaviour of Students with Learning Disabilities in School

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ABSTRACT

Students with learning disabilities often exhibit behavioural problems. Therefore, it is crucial for special education teachers to be knowledgeable and skilled in behaviour modification techniques to eliminate or reduce disruptive behaviours of these students. A survey was conducted to assess the relationship between level of skill. level of application and level of effectiveness for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities. A total of 60 participants were selected through purposive sampling among special educators teaching students with learning disabilities in Kuching district and Padawan district, Sarawak. The instrument was a questionnaire containing 41 items and evaluate with Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) 22. Both objectives were analyzed using Spearman correlation analysis. The findings indicated there are moderate positive correlation between level of skill and level of application for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school. As well as a strong positive correlation between level of application and level of effectiveness for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school.

Keywords: special education teacher, behaviour management, students with learning disabilities.

Introduction of Best Practices

According to the Education (Special Education) Regulations 2013 (Government of Malaysia, 2013), "student with special educational needs" is defined as a student certified by a medical practitioner, optician, audiologist or psychologist, as the case may be, whether in government service or not, as a student with visual, hearing, speech, physical, learning disabilities or any combination of disabilities. There are students with learning disabilities who exhibit disruptive behaviour.

Victoria, Dimitrios, Periklis, Evangelos, and Maria (2018), there are 24 students with learning disabilities from 1st grade until 6th grade at elementary school in Greece were observed while their behaviour was recorded during the school year of 2016 - 2017. They go in and out of the class, tended to be delinquent. 79% of students speaking without permission in the classroom with their classmates, they got out of position or indifferent to being in the classroom. Boys demonstrated 89% which is more likely to exhibit behavioural problems in comparison to girls who showed 50%. Solomon and Assegedetch, a total of 540 students from Grade 6, 7, and 8 where 449 general class students and 91 special education students and 26

teachers were the participants of the study. The findings of the study showed that boys from special education recorded 91% which is more likely to behave negatively compared to girls while boys from the general class only 74% compared to girls.

The findings of research conducted by Otsui, Niwayama, Ohkubo, Tanaka, and Noda (2022) stated that increases in challenging behaviours among elementary and junior high schools students in Japan, multiple demands on teachers' time, and a productive history of behaviour analytic services in schools led to an interest in the adoption of School-Wide Positive Behavioural Support (SWPBS) at the Tier 1 level. Research findings by Jonathan stated that Autistic children who are four to five years old are more likely to self-harm than Autistic adults. Future research were suggested to include factors and methods to overcome the problem of self-harm among Autistic students.

Terri, Kevin, Geri, Sarah, Stephen and Lisa (2014) involved 74 teenagers which is 61% boys with special needs where 71% students with learning disabilities, 15% intellectual disabilities, and 14% emotional and behavioural problems and 35 school staff from two secondary schools in the southeast of United States as the participants of the research. Studies showed peer influence, peer teasing and provocation, academic challenges and the relationship between students and teachers have an impact on their emotional and behavioural actions. Such behaviour should be curbed to prevent unwanted things from happening. Teachers need to work with parents and counsellors to help the students. Teachers need to record each student's behaviour and carefully inform the relevant parties.

According to Samantha, Vincent and Paul (2018) where 40 students and a classroom teacher at a primary school in Manchester mentioned that token economy can minimize disruptive behaviour among students and able to increase students' academic performance. Disruptive behaviour such as disorderly conduct decreased to 40%, talking in the class decreased to 40%, frequent bathroom breaks decreased to 23%, quarrelling in the class decreased to 13%, joking in the class decreased to 10%, fighting decreased to 5% and eating in the class stopped completely.

Therefore, behaviour modification proved not only can eliminate or reduce disruptive behaviour, but also can shape positive behaviour among students with learning disabilities. This scenario allows students with learning disabilities to be confident in doing the tasks given by teacher and improve in their academic and cocurricular achievements. Teachers should act as a role model where they have to equip themselves with knowledge and skills in behaviour modification, be positive, fair and calm to handle the problem of students that behaved disruptively. Teachers also have the responsibility for classroom management. The success of the teaching and learning process in the classroom depends on teaching approaches, strategies, teaching methods and techniques that are suitable according to the condition and students' needs.

Justification of Best Practices Implementation

The Ministry of Education Malaysia emphasizes discipline among students at every education level by enforcing Student Personality System (SSDM) version 2.0 by Counseling and Discipline Management Sector, BPSH. Disruptive behaviour is behaviour that does not follow the norms accepted by a society and may violate the law, ethics or religious beliefs of a society. Disciplinary issues and disruptive behaviour among students with learning disabilities should be regulated immediately to prevent it from disrupt teaching and learning process in the classroom.

Studies show that schools and teachers have influence on student behaviour. According to Haliza and Joy (2014), schools do not have the power to change social shortcomings in our society, but good intervention planning in schools can help those who encountered social troubles from dropping out of education. Discipline management among students with special needs is important to ensure that teaching and learning process of the researcher can be executed smoothly and well.

Special education teachers need to adapt teaching approaches, strategies, methods and teaching techniques to suit the conditions and students' needs in order to help teachers plan and implement teaching in the classroom. This practice will enable students with learning disabilities to understand teacher's teaching optimally. The findings of a research conducted by Manisah, Rozila and Rosadah (2014) showed that talking while the teacher is teaching, with a mean of 3.49, is the most common type of disruptive behaviour displayed by students in the classroom. The problems that practicum teachers often confronted is lack of time for behaviour modification programme and preparing teaching aids with a mean score of 3.37.

Teachers need to equip themselves with knowledge or behaviour modification skills when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities. Victoria, Dimitrios, Periklis, Evangelos, and Maria (2018) highlighted an important relationship between learning disabilities and social behaviour, students did not participate in the learning process, created class fuss, received comments from teachers, involved in problematic situations during of the breaks and often visited the Director's office to inflict relevant sanctions-penalties. The findings of research coordinated by Falilat and Florence (2022) comprised all secondary school teachers in Osun State, Nigeria with 200 teachers as the participants showed that teachers in Osun State perceived punishment on students as highly effective and no statistical difference was found in the participants responses based on age and years of teaching experience. Disruptive behaviour among students with learning disabilities should be curbed immediately and properly.

In addition, parents also play a significant role in student behaviour. Kari (2013) conducted a study on teachers who taught in seven secondary schools. Study shows that most disruptive behaviour of lower secondary school students attributed from trauma while disruptive behaviour of upper secondary school students imputed by different antecedent. Safdar, Gulap, Muhammad and Abdul (2013) found out that the type of disruptive behaviour that occurs most in secondary school is battles among friends and the main determinant of this disruptive behaviour is parents perpetually protect their children.

Objectives of Implementation

The objectives of best practice implementation are:

- 1. Identify whether there is a relationship between level of skill and level of application for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school.
- 2. Identify whether there is a relationship between level of application and level of effectiveness for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school.

Best Practices Implemented

Research Methodology

The research design chosen for Skills of Special Education Teachers In Managing The Behaviour Of Students With Learning Disabilities In School is a survey research. This survey research is appropriate because the researcher wants to obtain information about level of skill, level of application and level of effectiveness for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school. The research instrument utilized for this study is a questionnaire containing 41 items. In this study, the researcher will prepare her own questionnaire in order to ensure accurate data is collected so that the results are interpretable and generalisable. A five-point Likert scale is used to measure level of Special Education teachers' skill, application and effectiveness in addressing behaviour modification of students with learning disabilities in school. The researcher will use Cronbach's alpha to obtain reliability in this quantitative study. In this study, the researcher chose purposive sampling which include in non-probability (nonrandom) sampling focuses on special education teachers associated with the research in order to have better insights and more precise research results. The study sample consists of 60 special educators teaching students with learning disabilities in Kuching district and Padawan district, Sarawak. Data was analyzed using Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) 22 because it provides an efficient way to handle large and complex data sets and perform advanced statistical analysis.

Impact of Best Practices Implemented

Demographic Factors

The demographic factors involved in this study are gender, age, teaching experience, teaching experience in the field of Special Education, academic qualifications, subject of specialization, type of school, experience attending behaviour modification courses or training. Findings of demographic factors are shown in the table below.

| | Table 1 | | | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------|------------|--|--|--|
| Findings of demographic factors | | | | | | |
| TITLE | CATEGORY | FINDINGS OF THE STUDY | | | | |
| | | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE | | | |
| Gender | Male | 25 | 41.7% | | | |
| | Female | 35 | 58.3% | | | |
| Age | 21 – 30 years old | 9 | 15.0% | | | |
| | 31 – 40 years old | 29 | 48.3% | | | |
| | 41 – 50 years old | 17 | 28.3% | | | |
| | 51 – 60 years old | 5 | 8.3% | | | |
| Teaching Experience | Below 5 years | 9 | 15.0% | | | |
| | 6 – 10 years | 18 | 30.0% | | | |
| | 11 – 15 years | 19 | 31.7% | | | |
| | 16 – 20 years | 10 | 16.7% | | | |
| | Above 20 years | 4 | 6.7% | | | |
| Teaching experience in | Below 5 years | 16 | 26.7% | | | |
| the field of Special | 6 – 10 years | 17 | 28.3% | | | |
| Education | 11 – 15 years | 21 | 35.0% | | | |
| | 16 – 20 years | 5 | 8.3% | | | |
| | Above 20 years | 1 | 1.7% | | | |
| Academic qualifications | Diploma | 5 | 8.3% | | | |
| | Bachelor | 44 | 73.3% | | | |
| | Master | 11 | 18.3% | | | |
| Subject of specialization | Special Education with Visually Impaired | 7 | 11.7% | | | |
| | Special Education with Learning Disabilities | 42 | 70.0% | | | |
| | Others | 11 | 18.3% | | | |
| Type of school | Primary school | 60 | 100% | | | |
| Experience attending | Ever | 32 | 53.3% | | | |
| behaviour modification courses or training | Never | 28 | 46.7% | | | |

1. Identify whether there is a relationship between level of skill and level of application for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school

Table 2

| students with learning disabilities in school | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------------------|--------|-------------|--|--|--|--|
| Correlations | | | | | | | | |
| | | | Skill | Application | | | | |
| Spearman's rho | Skill | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .644** | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | | | | |
| | | N | 60 | 60 | | | | |
| | Application | Correlation Coefficient | .644** | 1.000 | | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | | | | |
| | | N | 60 | 60 | | | | |

Spearman's correlation table to examine the relationship between level of skill and level of application for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between level of skill and level of application for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school.

Ha1: There is a significant relationship between level of skill and level of application for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school.

A study was conducted to examine level of skill and level of application for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school using Spearman correlation analysis. The results show a moderate positive correlation between the score of level of skill and level of application where the value of r = 0.644 and sig = 0.000, p < .01. r² = 0.41 where 41% is caused by level of special education teachers' skill score, 59% by other undetectable factors. The results have shown that hypothesis (Ho1) is rejected.

2. Identify whether there is a relationship between level of application and level of effectiveness for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school

| Table 3Spearman's correlation table to examine the relationship between level of applicationand level of effectiveness for special education teachers when managing thebehaviour of students with learning disabilities in school | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|-------------------------|-------------|---------------|--|--|--|
| Correlations | | | | | | | |
| | | | Application | Effectiveness | | | |
| Spearman's rho | Application | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .813** | | | |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | | | |
| | | N | 60 | 60 | | | |
| | Effectiveness | Correlation Coefficient | .813** | 1.000 | | | |

Sig. (2-tailed)

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Ν

60

.000

60

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between level of application and level of effectiveness for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school.

Ha2: There is a significant relationship between level of application and level of effectiveness for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school.

A study was administered to examine level of application and level of effectiveness for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school using Spearman's correlation analysis. The results show a strong positive correlation between level of application and level of effectiveness where the value of r = 0.813 and sig = 0.000, p < .01. $r^2 = 0.66$ where 66% is due to level of special education teachers' application score, 34% by other undetectable factors. The results have shown that the hypothesis (Ho2) is rejected.

Behaviour modification skills help special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school. The findings of the study show that most special education teachers have attending behaviour modification courses or training. This study is not in accordance with Linda, Sonia, Kathy and Robert (2020) that included 80 teachers teaching Preparatory to Gred 3 from seven primary schools in Queensland, Australia as participants. This study mentioned no evidence of lower teaching quality for beginner teachers 0 - 3 years of teaching experience, but some evidence of a decline in teaching quality for teachers with 4 - 5 years of teaching experience. This study is not in line with the study of Agnes, Henry and John and Samson (2015) which stated that only 6.4% of teachers attended behaviour modification seminars. This research is parallel with Kristina, Katreena, Jennifer and Joe (2019) study where 82 preservice teachers training to teach students in kindergarden to Grade 6 (primary-junior stream) or Grade 4 to 10 (junior-intermediate stream) at University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada proved that preservice training can productively affect the immediate attitudes and skills of teachers for teaching students with emotional and behavioural problems in a regular classroom context. This research is in parallel with Nathan, Janet and Brian (2020) stated disconnect between current requirements of teacher preparation programme and adequate teacher training to manage and dealing with students' behaviour will contributes to teacher attrition, racial disproportionality in discipline actions and an overdependence on punitive and inefficacious behaviour support practices. So, it is crucial for special education teachers to attend courses or training related to behaviour modification in order to handle the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school effectively.

Level of special education teachers applying behaviour modification when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school has a moderate positive correlation with level of skills possessed by a special education teacher. Skills in behaviour modification enable teaching and learning process to be carried out steadily and smoothly. This study is parallel with Pihla, Minna and Maritta (2019) research involved 16 participants where 8 teachers or special education teachers and 8 classroom assistants in one Finnish comprehensive school in Southwest Finland stated teaching personnel needed better knowledge about circumstance affecting students' behaviour and about good practices to apply with students in challenging situations. The result shows that the teaching personnel lacked of skill needed to anticipate and recognize students' moods. This research is not in accordance with Siew Nee Cheng and Hasnah Toran (2022) where 12 Special Education Integration Programme (SEIP) teachers from Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak were interviewed resulted limited knowledge in managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities. Among practices entangled are initiate a good relationship with students, establishing a good relationship with parents, and applying both positive and negative reinforcement. This study is in line with Suparno, Hermanto, Sukinah, Wening, Ade, Galih, Dewi and Mumpuniarti (2022) comprehend 109 special education teachers from Yogyakarta, Indonesia revealed that teachers were more favourably toward problem-focused coping (PFC), attempts made to minimize the behaviour problems among special needs students are intimacy control and assigning students to do a task or activity. Most of the teachers would calm the children down by giving comfort through physical touch and individual approach. Therefore, special education teachers need to equip themselves with knowledge or behaviour modification skills by participating in courses or training.

Level of special education teachers' effectiveness when handling the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school has a strong positive correlation with level of special education teachers applying the skills they have learned. Level of special education teacher effectiveness in dealing with student behaviour problems includes using positive reinforcement through token economy technique and modeling while negative reinforcement such as time out, extinction, satiation as well as punishment or fines to minimize students exhibit disruptive behaviour. The findings of this study are in line with Narges, Somaye, Mohammad and Mahmood (2015) showing the effectiveness of tangible reinforcement which is the economic token technique proved can improve academic achievement of students with intellectual disabilities in Tehran. Likewise, Breanne, Adele, Jennifer and Frank (2014) showed that positive and negative reinforcement is effective in solving Gavin's disruptive behaviour which is self-injured and lan being aggressive and property-damaging behaviour is in line with this study. The findings of this research supported by Kade, Paul, Ross, Cade, Howard, Debra, and Joseph (2019) study where 65 elementary school teachers and 239 students across Kansas, Tennessee, and Utah in United States showed the engagement and disruptions of students at risk were more sensitive to teacher praise and reprimand than the behaviour of their typical peers using structural equation modeling. This study is also in accordance with Elizabeth and Erin (2020) where results manifested a variety of punishmentbased procedures have evolved in decreased challenging behaviour among students and the results were indicated across age, diagnosis, target behaviour and treatment type. This research is in parallel with Samantha, Vincent and Paul (2018) focused on 40 students and a classroom teacher at a primary school in Manchester stated the use of token economy in decreasing disruptive behaviour was very effective and was proved able to increase students' academic performance. Hence, a variety of behaviour modification confirmed to be effective when managing behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school.

Thus, special education teachers need to be knowledgeable and boosted behaviour modification skills by associate themselves in courses, training or workshops as well as through reading scientific materials on students' behaviour modification. The application of new behaviour modification skills can guarantee the effectiveness of teachers manipulate disruptive behaviour among students with learning disabilities in schools, while also allowing teachers to gain more knowledge, skills, and experience in dealing with their behaviour.

Summary and Recommendations

The findings of the study show a moderate positive correlation between level of skill and level of application for special education teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school. Behavioural Management is a compulsory course for students major in education at universities. Ministry of Education through State Department of Education, District Education Office and school administrators need to ameliorate in-service courses, establish modules and strategize workshops associated to behaviour modification from time to time so that teachers can obtain new knowledge and skills in behaviour modification and utilize it for students with learning disabilities.

Level of special education teachers' application has a strong positive correlation with level of special education teachers' effectiveness in dealing with behavioural problems among students with learning disabilities in school. Behaviour modification is substantial, allowing teaching and learning process to be executed efficiently with ultimate students' involvement in activities regulated in the classroom. Every teacher, especially special education teachers, need to be knowledgeable and skilled in addressing behaviour of students from diverse categories and level of disabilities. Behaviour modification module is essential to manipulate student behaviour problems readily and affluently. The application of behaviour modification skills using proper methods and approaches determines level of special education teachers' effectiveness in maneuvering the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school.

Parents trust and optimistic when they ascertained teachers' competence to contend with behavioural problems among students with learning disabilities. The sharing of knowledge and collaboration of parents or guardians with teachers in modifying students' behaviour programme through discussion which is involvement of both parties in determining negative behaviour that needed to be altered, affiliation in performing behaviour modification interventions using appropriate approaches and evaluate whether students still immerse in disruptive behaviour after the intervention.

Students with learning disabilities will be able to handle their own behaviour well. Students manage to concentrate on teaching and learning process conducted by teacher in the classroom. Students can also socialize with teachers and friends. This is tectonic as students with learning disabilities will evolve skills in cooking, sewing, gardening, music, art and others. Therefore, they can work, support themselves and take good care of their own welfare without depending on their parents. Socialization with the community and living independently is significant for a meaningful life as recommended by the Ministry of Education Malaysia. In order to

achieve this goal, students with learning disabilities need to be trained to manage their own behaviour adeptly.

Level of special education teachers' skills in behaviour modification determines level of application and level of effectiveness of teachers when managing the behaviour of students with learning disabilities in school. Special education teachers need to have knowledge in event recording, time recording, systematic time sampling and master behaviour modification skills to productively manage negative behaviour among students with learning disabilities. Efficacious behaviour modification will create a conducive atmosphere that enable teaching and learning process to be imposed smoothly with maximum students' entanglement in activities conducted in the classroom. Special education teachers need to persistently facilitate themselves with new knowledge and skills related to behaviour modification and utilize significant approaches and strategies to fascinate students' attention to learn.

Through enhancing in-service courses or workshops on topic of behaviour modification, special education teachers will be better fortified to curb disruptive behaviour of students with learning disabilities. Collaboration between chromatic disciplines such as parents, community, non-governmental organisations (NGO), Department of Social Welfare and medical experts is momentous in special education to surmount the behavioural problems of students with learning disabilities. The cooperation, collaboration and affiliation of prismatic agencies can strengthen and improve the development of students with learning disabilities, save costs and replete the burden on all parties encompassed.

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