

Special Educators Perception on Using Social Story as An Intervention Strategy for Children with Autism

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed at understanding the perception of special educators working with children with autism in understanding social story. Social story is one of the strategies that help in developing appropriate behaviour among children with autism. It is one of the effective strategies used to support and develop the capabilities for children with autism. Special educators develop social story and use it in the classroom practice or in any intervention set up. The present study revealed that special educators are aware of social stories and most of them showed average understanding. Irrespective of various special education setting or inclusion the special educators are consistent in inclusion setting than in special setting. The research suggests that there is need to understand social story intervention among special educators and its implications.

Key words: *Social story, autism, special educators*

Introduction

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of American Psychiatric Association DSM 5 defined autism spectrum disorder as a neuro developmental disorder associated with symptoms that include “persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts” and “restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour interests or activities”. Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are diverse in nature. It is seen that one in 160 children are autism. The abilities and needs of people with autism vary and can evolve over time. Although the deficits bring about issues concerning social relationship, mingling with peers, getting started with communication, they learn often by imitation to some extent and by other learning experiences.

People with autism have mentalizing difficulties that is deficit in representing one own self and of others mental states (**Baron-Cohen 2000**). The theory of mind is the capacity to understand other people mental states. These states may be different form one's own states like beliefs, intentions, emotions and thoughts. Possessing this quality is considered important for everyday human social interactions and used in analysing, judging and inferring others behaviour. Often children with ASD faces limitations in dealing with social world. They may not understand the unwritten rules of the social world. Also, they may not mind read others and the nonverbal gestures people exhibit during communication like boring, not interested etc which may not be recognised. They take all words as truth.

Social understanding for children with autism have to be addressed with appropriate interventions. Social stories are learning tool to support children with autism in meaningful exchange of information between parents, professionals and people with autism. Special educators develop social stories in a classroom situation and who develop social stories are authors. Authors gather information and decide on the topic to write the social story. Social story follows guidelines called social story criteria to guide the author in the development of every story. It describes context, skill, achievement or concept according to ten criteria given. These criteria suggest the format, that is descriptive, meaningful, physically, socially, emotionally safe for the people with autism.

Apart from parents, special educators are the key person the child encounters and it is the special educator develops intervention package for the child with autism. With one-on-one interaction the special educator understands the individual child and works on for skill development. Social story address issues concerning the skill behaviour and also the problem behaviour. In an inclusion the key skills of the special educator is to understand the child's behaviour and enhance the child with autism more participative and successful in a classroom alongside the peers. Transitioning from assemble to classroom, classroom arrangement, the sensory overload like the light and sound of the classroom and the peers poses challenges to a CWA.

Learning challenges in a mainstream school need to be addressed by the teacher as CWA may have difficulty following lessons, understanding hidden rules of classroom, rules in playground. They are dependent on prompts to do their activities like activities in classroom like reading, writing, recess and taking out lunch box. Sometimes CWA exhibit inappropriate behaviours like shouting, jumping, not sitting on his place. The special teacher has to understand the reasons for the behaviour and make methods to intervene. Social stories are very useful and unobtrusive and can be used conveniently to achieve the goal.

Social stories are regarded as a positive intervention strategy and was developed by Carol Gray. It was developed to train students with ASD to learn social skills. They are written for an individual student and tailored to the need to help him or her to understand and respond appropriately in various situations. **Golzari, F., HematiAlamdarloo, G., & Moradi, S. (2015)** in an experimental study of social stories training for 30 children with autism found that half of them had social stories training, returned positive results. The study revealed the benefits as children learn selfcare and social skills, assists in understanding emotions such as anger, sadness and happiness, help them cope with changes in routine, developing relationships, make and maintaining friendships and it reinforces accepted behaviours.

In a study by **Khantreejitranon (2018)** for 5 children with autism aged 6 and 10 years showed a significant reduction of targeted inappropriate behaviour. It also demonstrated the potential benefits of using social story intervention as sole intervention to decrease the targeted inappropriate behaviour of children with autism that included violence like hitting and biting a friend, inappropriate greeting behaviour, licking his fingers, eating without spoon, not sharing with others. In this context the researcher proposed to study the understanding of social story among special educators placed in different setting.

Objectives of the study:

1. To find out the perception of special educator in understanding the concept of social story.
2. To find out the perception of special educators working in various special education setup (special school/therapy centre/clinics) in understanding the concept of social story.
3. To compare the perception of special educators working in special setup and inclusion setup in understanding the concept of social story.

Research questions

1. Is there any difference in the perception of special educators working in various special education setting (special school, therapy centre and clinics) in understanding social story?
2. Is there any difference in the perception of special educators working in special school and inclusion setting in understanding social story?

Methodology

Research design:

Survey method under descriptive research design was adopted for the study

Sample

50 special educators working with children with autism from different schools were respondents for the present study by purposive sampling.

Variables

- Type of setting (Special Education setup like special education, therapy centre and clinical setup and inclusive set up)

Research tool

A 5-point rating scale (likerts scale) on the development and usage of social story was prepared by the researcher to collect the data. The scale consists of 20 items validated against face validity with 5 points as strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree.

Data collection procedure

Informed consent was obtained prior to the collection of data. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents. The data was collected and then statistically analysed.

Findings and discussion

Based on the objectives of the study the findings and discussion were carried out.

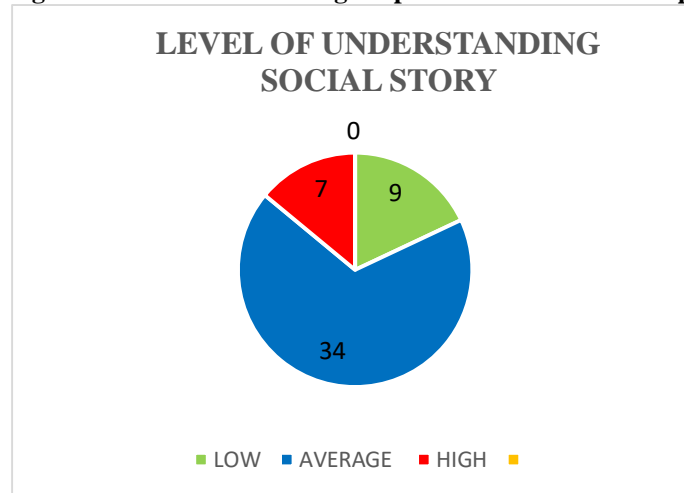
Objective 1. To find out the perception of special educator in understanding the concept of social story.

Variable Name	Number of samples	Minimum score	Maximum Score	Maximum Obtainable Score	Mean	SD
Perception of special educator towards understanding the concept of social story	50	46	100	100	77.82	11.56824

Levels	Scores	Number of Students	Percentage
Low	0-66	9	18.00

Average	67-88	34	68.00
High	89-100	7	14.00

Graph 1 Showing the level of understanding of special educators in concept of social story



From the table 1 it is evident that 68% (n= 34) of special educators showed average level of understanding the concept of social story. 14% (n= 7) of special educators showed high level of understanding and 18 % (n= 9) of special educators showed low level of understanding social story. Though special education training provides knowledge on intervention strategies for autism and social story is one of the effective strategies to be used with autism. The low level of understanding may indicate that the social story interventions are not been used in the classroom practice.

Objective 1. To find out the perception of special educators working in various special education setup (special school/therapy centre/clinics) in understanding the concept of social story.

Table 2 showing the perception of special educator working in various special education setup (special school/therapy centre/clinics) in understanding the concept of social story.

VAR00002

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Therapy centre clinics	4	76.5000	9.88264	4.94132	60.7745	92.2255	65.00	87.00
special school	8	75.0000	12.16553	4.30116	64.8294	85.1706	60.00	100.00
Total	30	77.2667	12.38167	2.26057	72.6433	81.8901	46.00	100.00
Total	42	76.7619	11.90165	1.83646	73.0531	80.4707	46.00	100.00

ANOVA

VAR00002

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	32.752	2	16.376	.111	.896
Within Groups	5774.867	39	148.074		
Total	5807.619	41			

From table 2 it is inferred that the f value .111 is not significant at 0.05 % (p value is more than 0.05 i.e.,.896.) which indicates that there is no significant difference among the perception of special educators working in special setups (special schools, therapy centre, clinic) in understanding the concept of social story.

Objective 3 To compare the perception of special educators working in special setup and inclusion setup in understanding the concept of social story.

Table 3 showing the perception of special educators working in special setup and inclusion setup in understanding the concept of social story.

Group Statistics

	VAR00004	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
VAR00003	special setting	42	76.7619	11.90165	1.83646
	inclusion	8	83.3750	8.07001	2.85318

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.252	.269	-1.501	48	.140	-6.61310	4.40659	-15.47315	2.24696
Equal variances not assumed			-1.949	13.603	.072	-6.61310	3.39311	-13.91058	.68439

The calculated t is significant at 5% in a two tailed test with 0.072 ($p < 0.05$) and hence the null hypothesis is rejected. The results infers that there is a significant difference among special educators working in special set up and inclusive set up in understanding social story. Considering SD score, the score is 8.07001 for inclusion indicates that the scores are clustered near the mean which means that special educators in inclusion setting whose perception on social story are consistent. Whereas the SD of 11.90165 in special setting indicates that scores are scattered and variability is high conveys that special educator working in special setups perception on social story are not consistent. Specialised interventions and different intervention strategies are present in special setting and the child is attended individual. However, **Reed, P., Osborne, L. A., & Waddington, E. M. (2012)** carried out research to compare the impact of mainstream and special school placement on the behaviour of children with autism spectrum disorders with total sample of 140 children with autism where 54 from mainstream school and 86 from special schools were present. The study found that children with autism in special schools are making greater gains in the area of behavioural problems of conduct and hyperactivity relative to children in mainstream school.

Conclusion

Social story is an evidence-based intervention strategy that is implemented in the teaching of children with autism. Children with autism benefit greatly with social story intervention for development of skills behaviour and decreasing problem behaviour. Social stories enhance social skills like greeting people, respecting others, turn taking among children with autism. It is essential for special educators to have an understanding about social story and the implementation of it in a classroom practice. The study revealed that special educators showed average level of understanding about social story. Special educators in different settings have similar understanding about social story. In comparing with special setting with inclusion, the special educators in inclusion are consistent in the understanding.

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