

SPECIMEN FORMAT FOR THESES OF MONTH

Faculty : **School of Home Sciences**

Department : Human Development

Branch/ Area: : Autism

Sub Subject Heading: : -

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Title of the thesis : Parent's Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice on Pre-requisite Skills for Children with Autism and its Influence on Parents Mental Health and Self-efficacy - A Sensitization Study

(i) In Roman Script -

(ii) In roman Script -

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Name of Supervisor : Dr. Ramya Bhaskar

Designation of Supervisor : Asst. Professor

Centre/department/school in which research was conducted : School of Home Science, Department of Human Development

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Abstract within 300 words:

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex neurodevelopmental condition that requires continuous and intensive care, with parents playing a vital role in supporting their child's development. Parents act not only as primary caregivers but also as facilitators of learning and socialization, making them key partners in intervention processes. However, limited parental awareness and inconsistent application of developmental strategies at home may reduce the effectiveness of interventions. Therefore, the present study focused on assessing the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) of parents of children with autism regarding pre-requisite skills, which include social, communication, and self-help abilities essential for learning, independence, and future vocational development. The study also examined parents' mental health and self-efficacy, as parenting a child with ASD can lead to high stress levels and reduced confidence in caregiving abilities.

The study was conducted in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, with 143 parents from five special schools who consented to participate. An action-based cross-sectional design with purposive sampling was adopted. Tools included a self-developed socio-demographic profile and a 35-item Likert scale each for knowledge, attitude, and practice regarding pre-requisite skills. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha showed strong internal consistency (0.94 for knowledge, 0.84 for attitude, and 0.79 for practice). Validity was confirmed through Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Standardized tools such as the Mental Health Inventory (MHI) and the Early Intervention Parents Self-Efficacy Scale (EIPSES) were also used.

Baseline results indicated average to low parental knowledge, unfavorable attitudes, and low to average practice levels related to pre-requisite skills. Parents also reported poor mental health and moderate to low self-efficacy. A sensitization programme was implemented with 30 parents in the experimental group and 30 in the control group. Paired t-test results showed significant improvements in knowledge, attitude, and practice, with small to medium effect sizes. Repeated measures ANOVA indicated that improvements were largely sustained across follow-up assessments. The programme also produced significant improvements in parental mental health and self-efficacy. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of structured parent sensitization programmes that

combine skill-based knowledge with psychosocial support, promoting better developmental outcomes for children with ASD and enhancing parental resilience.

i) Major objectives :

- To explore the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices (KAP) of parents on the pre-requisite skills of children with autism
- To assess the levels of Mental health (MH) and Self-efficacy (SE) of parents of children with ASD
- To examine the influence of knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) of parents on pre-requisite skills on their mental health (MH) and self-efficacy (SE)
- To conduct the sensitization programme for parents on pre-requisite skills, mental health, and self-efficacy, and assess its effectiveness.

ii) Hypothesis:

- H₀₁ - Parents of autistic children have lower levels of knowledge, unfavorable attitudes, and lower practices on pre-requisite skills
- H₀₂ - Parents of autistic children have poor mental health status and lower self-efficacy
- H₀₃- Parents' knowledge, attitudes, and practices do not influence mental health and self-efficacy
- H₀₄. Socio-demographic markers do not determine parents' knowledge, attitudes, and practices on pre-requisite skills, mental health, and self-efficacy
- H₀₅. Sensitizing parents do not improve their KAP on pre-requisite skills, mental health and self-efficacy.

iii) Methodology:

The study was conducted in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. Out of the 16 special schools shortlisted for the present study, only 5 schools accepted to be a part of the research, and 143 parents of children with autism consented to participate. The study followed an action-based cross-sectional design by adopting a purposive sampling technique. The study was also approved by the Institutional Human Ethics Committee of the University (approval No. IHEC/19-20/HD/46). For the present study, four assessment scales were chiefly used, such as

a self-developed tool to elicit socio-demographic profile of parents of children with autism, which includes the gender of parents, qualification, occupation, family income, number of siblings, types of family, and area of residence. A Department of Human Development and Family Studies in the School of Human Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Likert scale consisting of 35 items each was developed by the researcher to assess the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) of parents towards pre-requisite skills. The items covered the aspects of scheduling, attention, socialisation, self-control, self-advocacy, safety, communication, and imitation. The tool was tested for reliability and validity. Face validity and content validity were done, and the feedback and suggestions from subject experts were considered and incorporated to further refine the scales. The reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha reliability test, with scores of 0.94 for knowledge, 0.84 for attitude, and 0.79 for practice, showing an excellent, very good, and good reliability of the scales, respectively. Validity was tested using principle component analysis (PCA) where the sampling adequacy was also found to be adequate for KAP with 0.760, 0.846, and 0.645, respectively and Bartlett's test of Sphericity showed the significant level with cumulative percentage of 69.240 for knowledge, 69.652 for attitude, and 69.201 for practices, which were in the acceptable ranges. Standardised tools such as Mental Health Inventory (MHI) by Jagdish and Srivastava 2005, and Early Intervention Parents Self-Efficacy Scale (EIPSES) by Guimond, Wilcox, & Lamorey 2008, were utilized to assess parents' mental health and self-efficacy.

iv) Findings:

Findings of the study revealed that parents of children with autism had average to low levels of knowledge, unfavourable attitudes, and low to average levels of practice regarding pre-requisite skills. Parents also reported poor to very poor mental health and average to low self-efficacy, indicating emotional strain and limited confidence in managing the demands of raising a child with ASD. A sensitization programme was implemented with 30 parents in the experimental group and 30 in the control group. Paired *t*-test results showed significant improvements in the experimental group's knowledge, attitude, and practice scores compared to the control group, with small to medium effect sizes. Repeated measures ANOVA indicated that the improvements were largely sustained during follow-up assessments conducted after 10 days and one month, although slight declines suggested the need for continued reinforcement. Similarly, significant improvements were observed in parental

mental health and self-efficacy in the experimental group compared to the control group, with medium effect sizes. Follow-up analysis also demonstrated that these improvements were mostly maintained over time. Overall, the sensitization programme was effective in enhancing parents' knowledge, attitudes, practices, mental health, and self-efficacy. The findings highlight the importance of structured parent-focused training programmes that combine skill-based awareness with psychosocial support.

Examiners

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