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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE IMPACT OF COMPUTER TRAINING IN THE COMPETENCIES OF MILD MENTALLY CHALLENGED INDIVIDUALS

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ABSTRACT

Work brings dignity to human beings. Vocational rehabilitation gives them independence in social and emotional life. The present research has focused on the impact of computer training in the competencies of mild mentally challenged adults. The sample of this study consisted of 6 mild mentally challenged adults from Ernakulam district, Kerala. Intervention has been given for the duration of one year. The tools employed for the assessment include Behavioral Assessment Scales for Adult Living – Mental Retardation (BASAL –MR) and personal data sheet. One pre test (base line) score and three follow up scores were noted. The results in BASAL MR part A indicate that the training helps to enhance the competencies of the participants and is sensitive even within the period of three months, both over all as well as within each domain.

INTRODUCTION

Work is an essential element in the social life of human beings. Work is fundamental to the dignity of a person. Dignity is not only conferred by one's ancestry, family life or education, but also comes from work. We eat and support our families through work. We can own a fortune, but if we don't work, our dignity plummet. It gives one the ability to maintain oneself, one's family, and to contribute to the growth of one's own nation. Vocational training is essential in the rehabilitation of mentally challenged people. It gives growth in their personal, social, emotional and work related skills. According to Persons with Disability Act, 1995 (Equal opportunities, Full participation and protection of Rights) the three per cent of vacancies in governments shall be reserved for the people with disabilities. As of now, mentally challenged individuals are not covered in this three per cent. Sivakumar (2004) attempts for a brief review of the vocational training practices in selected countries and the current status of the same in India. Rao and Sivakumar (2004) designed a study to emphasize that in order to provide and expand a systematic vocational training and placement for persons with mental retardation, there is a need to pay attention to vocational climate, more beneficial functional training for employment success in special schools. Dutta (2004) describes the problem of mentally challenged in India and urges the efforts be made to integrate the mentally challenged into society. Integration of the retarded child into his or her own family, early detection and intervention, support in early and later childhood and in adolescence and total integration into society through marriage are discussed. Conditions under which the mentally challenged should be allowed to marry and have children are present. There is a changing scenario in the field of vocational training in India. It starts with an extended evaluation in terms of individual, family and community and asses the strengths and weaknesses of respective areas. As a consequence of this there will be a job survey for the individual in that community. The job survey will identify the suitable work available for the disabled persons in that community. The next phase is job analysis and it includes core work area, work behavior and work related skills. Next step is the job negotiation. The methods of vocational training are planned after the successful job negotiation with the employer (Mukhopadhyay, 2010).

The aim of the present study is to analyze the impact of computer training in the competencies of mild mentally challenged adults and the exploration of the impact of their rehabilitation. Thus the problem under investigation is entitled as "Impact of vocational training in the competencies of mentally challenged adults and their rehabilitation". Vocational training is the systematic training, by which an individual acquire such skills and behaviors which are necessary for particular vocation. Competencies are the ability of an individual to do a job properly. It is the capacity, skill or ability to do something correctly or efficiently. In the present study, competencies include personal care and appearance, food management, household tasks and responsibility, community and leisure, sexuality, work, social communication and functional literacy. Mentally challenged individuals: American Association on Mental retardation defines "Mental retardation refers to substantial limitations in present functioning. It is characterized by significantly sub average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the following applicable adaptive skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure and work. Mental retardation manifests before age 18. In the present study the term mentally challenged is used, because the term mental retardation has a negative connotation in common language. Rehabilitation is defined as a process of restoring the handicapped individual to the fullest physical, mental, emotional, social and vocational usefulness for which he is capable.

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Hypotheses of the study

- Computer training has significant impact on the competencies of mild mentally challenged adults.

METHOD

Sample

The present study was carried out with Six mild mentally challenged individuals (adults) chosen from Cottolengo Institute of Differently Abled (CIDA) at N. Paravoor, Ernakulum District, Kerala. The sample was selected randomly from the group of participants of computer course at CIDA. The subjects were between 19 to 22 years. The samples were matched in Religion and Socio economic status. Persons with co morbid epilepsy, sensory deficit, other psychiatric disorders and physical problems were excluded. All were having the disability certificate from medical board. The aptitude tests were held before selection.

Intervention procedure

The curriculum of computer theory classes were modified and presented according to their level. The teacher student ratio was one is to five. Duration of the course was one year; evaluation and parents meeting were conducted monthly. During the first two month teachers introduced computer software and hardware to students. In the third and fourth month, the curriculum concentrated on word pad and note pad. In the fifth and sixth month, they were trained in power point. In the next three months the main emphasis of the training was photo shop. Page maker was taught in the next month. The last two month the training dedicated on corel draw (software programming). The multidisciplinary team of teachers, psychologist, vocational trainers and social workers evaluated the final outcome by using Behavioural Assessment Scales for Adult Living-Mental Retardation (BASAL-MR).

Steps

1.The base line assessment was conducted.
2.The students come into acquaintance with the computer and electronic media.
3.Train the participants as per the curriculum.

The training was scheduled from 9.30 am to 3.30 p.m.5days per week; during morning session theory classes and practical sessions in the afternoon. The multidisciplinary team of teachers, psychologist, vocational trainers and social workers evaluated the final outcome and progress in their training and personality development by the use of Behavioural Assessment Scales for Adult Living-Mental Retardation (BASAL-MR). In accordance with the final evaluation, decision has been made for placement and extension of training.

MATERIALS

1) Behavioral Assessment Scales for Adult Living – Mental Retardation (BASAL –MR): is the assessment scale developed by Reeta Peshawaria, D. K Menon, don Bailey, Debra Skinner, Rahul Ganguly and Ch. Rajshekar of National Institute of Mentally Handicapped in 2000. It has been developed for use with adult persons having mental retardation. BASAL –MR can be used as a curriculum guide for training adults in work settings, home and community living and training in personal independence. The scale is divide in to two part A and part B. Part A includes 8 domains and they are personal care and appearance, food management, household tasks and responsibility, community and leisure, sexuality, work, functional literacy and social communication. Part A assesses the competencies of mentally challenged individuals. Part B assesses and evaluates challenging behaviors of adults with mental retardation.

2) Personal data sheet is prepared for the purpose of the study. It includes identification data, demographic data, childhood history, school history, play, sexual history, family history, home environment, social environment, physical examination, medical board report, interview report and observation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Case I: The Score on Personal care and Appearance in base line, First, Second and third assessment was 62, 65, 68 and 68. In the domain Food management the result in four levels were 59, 62, 64 and 66. In the third domain of household tasks and responsibility, the results were 45, 48, 52 and 52. In the fourth domain of community and leisure, the scores were 58, 58, 64 and 64. The individual's scores were 55, 60, 60 and 65 in the fifth domain. In the domain of work he scored 62, 66, 66 and 68. In functional literacy, he improved and scored 65, 68, 68 and 68. In the domain of social communication the individual has scored 65 at baseline and consequently and in other 3 assessment scored 70. The overall results show the positive impact of training in the competencies of all the developmental areas. The results of the client demonstrate an overall progress from baseline assessment to third assessment.

Case II: The scores on personal care and appearance, he scored 58 in pre-test and post-tests. In the food management he scored 53, 53, 55 and 56. In the household tasks and responsibility, he scored 50, 53, 53 and 53. In the domain of community and leisure, he scored 41, 41, 42 and 42. In community and leisure domain the individual had made a slight progress from baseline to third assessment and it was 41, 41, 42 and 42. In the domain of sexuality the individual did not make any progress. In the domain of work, he made a progress and results were 39, 41, 41 and 44. In the domain of functional literacy, his scores were 22, 22, 23 and 24. In the domain of social communication, individual had made a slight progress and results are 49, 50, 51 and 52. The overall results show the changes from pre-test to post test scores indicating that the training is so effective in the development of competencies of the individual in most of the domains under study.

Case III: In the domain of personal care and appearance, the scores of baseline assessment and 1st assessment were 62 and scores of 2nd and 3rd assessment were 72. In the domain of food management, the individual has scored 61, 62, 72 and 74. In the domain of household tasks and responsibility the individual has scored 65, 65, 75 and 75. In the domain of community and leisure the individual has scored 67, 67, 71 and 71. In sexual domain, the individual has scored 43, 43, 47 and 47. In the domain of work, the individual has made a progress and results are 65, 65, 69 and 73. In the domain of functional literacy, the individual has scored 66, 66, 72 and 72. In the domain of social communication the individual has made a progress from 55, 66, 66 and 67. The individual has made a progressive development in his competencies especially in personal care and appearance, food management, household tasks and responsibility, community and leisure, work and functional literacy. The results show a highly significant change from pre-test to post test scores indicating that the training was so effective to enhance the competencies of the participant.

Case IV: In the domain of personal care and appearance the individual scored 56, 61, 62 and 63. In the domain of food management, the individual scored 33, 35, 46 and 49. In the domain of household tasks and responsibility, the scores of the individual were found 22, 23, 29 and 34. In the domain of community and leisure, the results of the individual were 54, 56, 59 and 59. In the domain of sexuality, the results of the individual were 52, 52, 54 and 54. In the domain of work, the individual scored 52, 52, 54 and 54. In the domain of functional literacy, the individual has scored well and results were 58, 61, 64 and 64. In the domain of social communication, the results of the individual were 39, 39, 45 and 45.

The overall results indicate that the training was effective to develop the competencies.

Case V: In the domain of personal care and appearance, the subject has scored 70, 72, 72 and 72. In the domain of food management, the results of the subject are 65, 70, 70 and 70. In third domain, household tasks and responsibility, the individual scored 68, 70, 72 and 72. In the domain of community and leisure, the individual scored 65, 68, 68 and 72. In the domain of sexuality, the individual results were 48, 50, 52 and 55. In the domain of work, the individual scored 60, 65, 68 and 72. In functional literacy, the individual scored 48, 52, 52 and 58. In the domain of social communication, the individual scored 65, 65, 68 and 70. The scores of BASAL-MR part A indicates that the competencies of the individual have made progress through computer training. The results show a highly significant change from pre-test to the post-test scores and it indicates that the training facilitate competency development change over time even within three months of intervention programme.

Case VI: In the BASAL-MR part A, in the domain of personal care and appearance, the scores of the individual are 70, 70, 72 and 72. In the domain of food management, the scores of the individual are 65, 67, 67 and 70. In the domain of household tasks and responsibility, the individual scored 66, 67, 67 and 68. In the domain of community and leisure, the scores of the individual are 65, 66, 66 and 67. In the domain of sexuality, the individual has scored 53, 55, 55 and 55. In the domain of work, individual scored 70 in baseline assessment and 72 in other three assessments. In the domain of functional literacy, the individual scored 55, 56, 57 and 57. In the domain of social communication, the scores of the individual are 68, 68, 70 and 70. The results indicate that the computer training was effective in the competencies development of the individual.

Conclusion

The present study assesses the impact of computer training in the competencies of mild mentally challenged adults. It can be concluded that computer training is effective in increasing the competencies and modifying the behaviors of the mentally challenged adults.

To conclude, the finding of the present study strongly recommends that vocational training is pivotal for the rehabilitation of the mentally challenged adults and so that they can become independent in their social, personal, emotional life and in employment. Right from the very beginning, there is an effective role of parents, teachers and vocational instructors to promote the cardinal points of sustainable development in the area of disability management. The vocational training is essential aspect for the vocational rehabilitation of mentally challenged adults to reach their potential and overcome the barriers of mainstreaming. The study opens the path for research in vocational rehabilitation, so that many of these individuals can be well placed after the training.

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