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RESEARCH PAPER

A Quantitative Inquiry of Life Quality and Employability of Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Enrolled in Govt. Primary Special Education Institutes of Punjab: Parents' View

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ABSTRACT

Special education substantially improves socialization, performance and productivity among students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (SWIDDs). The purpose of this investigation was to highlight the relationship between quality of life and employability among SWIDDs who are studying in Govt. primary special education institutes (PSEIs) of Punjab. Instrument was developed consisting of 36 items and adapted in line with the research paradigm using random sampling technique. All measures showed good evidence of internal consistency and construct validity with .836 coefficient alpha value. Data was gathered from 500 parents of SWIDDs. The findings suggest strong relationship between quality of life and employability. More attention from the stakeholders was recommended to improve further the quality of life and enhance employment opportunities for the SWIDDs.

KEYWORDS Employability and Quality of Life, Primary Special Education, Students with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities

Introduction

Deficits in the intellectual and adaptive skills are the signs of mental abnormality. The commencement of this abnormality is characterized by the diminishing of all major parts of human body that contribute human intelligence, such as communication, functional academics, comprehension, socialization, knowledge and motor functions etc. (Carr, & O'Reilly 2016).

Employment tends to have significant association with good mental health, self-esteem, social inclusion and improved quality of life (Louw, Kirkpatrick, & Leader, 2020). At the same-time it also provides financial support, a purpose of life, better social status and recognition which ultimately cause positive impact on life quality of SWIDDs (Evans & Repper, 2000). Whereas on its contrary, unemployment brings distress, anxiety, poverty and deteriorate one's living standard (Ridley,Rao, Schilbach, & Patel, 2020). Those who have experienced unemployment for a longer period of time feel to have no social value (Barišin, Benjak, & Vuletić, 2011).

Persons with disabilities especially intellectual disability find it extremely difficult to enjoy prestigious positions in the job market (Ali, Schur, & Blanck, 2011). They face multi-faceted challenges to find an employment. They face discrimination, negative attitudes of the employer and lack of disability-friendly atmosphere at the work stations (Mohezar, Jaafar, & Akbar, 2021).

Every day competition at the job market have made it almost impossible for the SWIDDs to retain their job position if they lose it once (Sciulli, de Menezes, & Vieira, 2012). Job market need or trend-based training in special education institutes can be very effective

to maximize employment opportunities for the SWIDDs and to improve their life quality (Maislin, 2017).

If SWIDDs receive training following market trends in special education institutes, they will have more chances of becoming employed which ultimately enhance their purchasing capacity, participation in the society and improve life quality (Maislin, 2017).

This article is an endeavor to inquire life quality and employability of SWIDDs enrolled in Govt. primary special education centers and schools of Punjab.

Literature Review

Poverty and disability are inextricably linked together. Unavailability of balance diet, improper health care facilities, lack of pure drinking water and poor working and living conditions altogether make it riskier for the poor peoples to acquire disabilities. Social discrimination, lack of quality education opportunities, unemployment, inaccessible working atmosphere are the factors among others that should be eliminated to escape poverty among persons with disabilities (Verulava, & Bedianashvili, 2021).

Yeo and Moore conducted research (2003) which indicated that poverty maximize disability ratio likewise disability expands the poverty ratio. Individuals having disabilities enlarge the figure of destitute individuals (Yeo, 2003; Palmer, 2013). They were considered a liability for the country and its economy; hence the whole scenario leads SWIDDs towards poverty (Park, & Nam, 2020).

SWIDDs less likely to attend educational institutes and complete primary special education and more likely to be illiterate than those without disabilities. Present data reveals that, one in every three children with disabilities of school age is not attending school on average, as compared to children without disabilities which is one in seven (Gbewonyo, 2017). These figures reflect poor literacy among the individuals with disabilities (Rathmann, Vockert, Wetzel, Lutz, & Dadaczynski, 2020).

Primary special education (PSE) which is an initial or early education provided to special children to comprehend basic concepts and develop certain skills to become independent and survive in the society. PSEIs offer need based adapted curriculum to prepare a special child for future educational endeavors (Gargiulo & Bouck, 2019). It provides SWIDDs a basic understanding of various adaptive and fundamental skills to use throughout their lives to live independent life and to contribute in their society. Primary special education is the first step towards making of a welfare society (Pazey, & Cole, 2013).

PSE bring valuable transformation among SWIDDs utilizing updated teaching methodology and adapted instructions keeping in view the unique needs of every individual child. Along with some other advantages, PSEIs strive to groom adaptive skill areas of its pupils (Shogren et al., 2015). In relation to SWIDDs, the available data advocates that PSE helps in achieving desired results in several aspects of their lives, such as cognition, communication, social skills, (Hehir et al., 2016), to gain knowledge and improve academic skills such as communication, social interaction and self-determination, which improves life quality of SWIDDs and ultimately help them to settle nicely in the society by earning their livelihood through a reasonable and socially acceptable way. (Morán, Gómez, & Alcedo, 2019).

Considering these multifaceted aspects of SWIDDs which offer a broader framework for the validation and measurement of personal outcomes (Sánchez-Gómez et al., 2020). Each aspect of their life is highlighted as dominant indicators, that denote behavior and perceptions in particular situation which are supposed to be evaluated. (Gómez et al., 2020).

Material and Methods

The data was accumulated to identify the perceptions of the parents about the life quality and employability of SWIDDs**.** This descriptive research was conducted using survey research method.

Population and Sampling

Parents of SWIDDs enrolled in PSE schools and centers were the population of this study. The investigators selected (500) male and female parents using probability sampling from 9 divisions 36 districts 139 tehsils and 332 special education schools and centers of the Punjab province.

Table 1
Demographic Information

Demographic information	F	%
Gender		
Male	230	46.0
Female	270	54.0
Age		
Below 25 Years	76	15.2
26-30 Year	200	40.0
31-35 Year	218	43.6
Above 35 Year	6	1.2
Locality		
Rural	156	31.2
Urban	344	68.8
Profession		
Govt, job	97	19.4
Private job	154	30.8
Business	132	26.4
Labor	117	23.4
Qualification		
Matric	234	46.8
F.A	151	30.2
B.A	58	11.6
M.A	41	8.2
MPhil	11	2.2
Others	5	1.0
Monthly Income		
20000 to 30000	201	40.2
31000 to 60000	181	36.2
61000 to 90000	71	14.2
91000 and above	47	9.4

Table No. 1 describes the demographic information of the research which was comprised of 46% male and 54% female parents of SWIDDs. Most of the parents 40% were between 31-35 year of age, 40% of the parents were between 26-30 years old while only 1.2% were having less than 25 years of age. Moreover, 31.2% of the participants belonged to rural areas and 68.8% were the resident of urban areas of Punjab. A large number of parents 46.8% were matric while 30.2 % were F.A, just 3.2% of were having MPhil and other degrees as a matter of qualification. Furthermore, a vast number of parents 40% were earning 20000 to 30000 per month, 36.2% were earning 31000 to 60000 and there were only 9.4% parents whose monthly income was 91000 and above.

Instrument

The investigators designed an instrument based on five-point likert scale to highlight parent's understandings. The first part of the instrument contained demographic information e.g., gender, age, locality, education, profession and monthly income. The second part of the instrument comprising of 36 items about life quality and employability of SWIDDs. The expert educationist validated the instrument and its reliability was also assessed which was .836.

Results and Discussion

The gathered information was analyzed and tabulated to present the findings in the form of percentage using SPSS version 21. Descriptive and inferential statistics were also used to further analysis of the data.

Table 2
Mean Scores of the Sub-Scales

Sub-scale	N	Mean	SD
Improving quality of life (IQL)	500	24.5960	4.64930
Provision of learning opportunities (PLO)	500	23.8680	4.30856
Parental involvement (PI)	500	22.0620	3.59332
Enhancing socialization skills (ESS)	500	17.2540	3.65352
Employability	500	16.880	4.32524
Special Education Infrastructure (SEI)	500	15.2860	3.01968
Pre-vocational skills for career opportunities (P-VS)	500	14.6840	4.63758
Provision of educational facilities (PEF)	500	12.3460	2.06077

Table No.2 showing the mean values of the sub-scales about the quality of life and employability of SWIDDs. The mean value of IQL $\bar{x}$ = 24.596 depicts the highest average score, PLO $\bar{x}$ = 23.8680, PI 22.0620. Whereas, the mean value of PEF $\bar{x}$ = 12.3460 is the lowest value in average as compared to ESS $\bar{x}$ = 17.2540, employability $\bar{x}$ = 16.880 SEI $\bar{x}$ = 15.2860 and P-VS $\bar{x}$ = 14.6840. The above results describe that parents of SWIDDs are concerned about the PEF, P-VS, SEI and ESS. These areas of special education services require major improvements for the sustainability of SWIDDs.

Table 3
Significant difference about sub-scales based on the Gender

Sub-scales	Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
IQL	Male	230	24.2870	4.48046	-1.373	498	.170
	Female	270	24.8593	4.78095	-1.380	493.463	.168
ESS	Male	230	17.3652	3.54714	.628	498	.530
	Female	270	17.1593	3.74570	.631	492.429	.529
PLO	Male	230	24.1087	4.33543	1.153	498	.249
	Female	270	23.6630	4.28290	1.152	483.532	.250
P-VS	Male	230	14.4000	4.18732	-1.265	498	.207
	Female	270	14.9259	4.98418	-1.282	497.909	.200
SEI	Male	230	15.2522	2.85407	-.231	498	.817
	Female	270	15.3148	3.15889	-.233	496.260	.816
PEF	Male	230	12.4391	1.99196	.933	498	.352
	Female	270	12.2667	2.11808	.937	493.126	.349
PI	Male	230	22.1043	3.43212	.243	498	.808

	Female	270	22.0259	3.73112	.245	495.049	.807
Employability	Male	230	24.2870	1.67448	.696	198	.231
	Female	270	24.8593	1.87351			

Table No.3 shows no substantial variance between the perceptions of male and female parents of SWIDDs about the sub-scale IQL (t=-1.373, df=498, p=.170), ESS (t=.628, df=498, p=.530), PLO (t=-1.153, df=498, p=.249), P-VS (t=-1.265, df=498, p=.207), SEI (t=-.231, df=498, p=.817), PEF (t=.933, df=498, p=.352), PI (t=..243, df=498, p=.808), Employability (t=.696, df=498, p=.231) based on their gender.

Table 4
Significance difference about sub-scales based on Locality

Sub-scales	Locality	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
IQL	Rural	156	24.3141	4.81101	-.913	498	.362
	Urban	344	24.7238	4.57550	-.896	286.453	.371
ESS	Rural	156	17.0064	3.63406	-1.020	498	.308
	Urban	344	17.3663	3.66205	-1.023	301.712	.307
PLO	Rural	156	23.2756	3.96692	-2.077	498	.038
	Urban	344	24.1366	4.43435	-2.166	332.227	.031
P-VS	Rural	156	14.6346	3.91867	-.160	498	.873
	Urban	344	14.7064	4.93436	-.174	371.292	.862
SEI	Rural	156	15.2628	2.92732	-.115	498	.908
	Urban	344	15.2965	3.06478	-.117	312.500	.907
PEF	Rural	156	12.1282	2.08750	-1.594	498	.112
	Urban	344	12.4448	2.04394	-1.581	293.964	.115
ITP	Rural	156	21.4231	3.58498	-2.694	498	.007
	Urban	344	22.3517	3.56466	-2.688	298.073	.008
Employability	Rural	156	24.3141	4.81101	-.913	498	.362
	Urban	344	24.7238	4.57550	-.896	286.453	.371

Table No.4 describes no substantial variance between the thinking of parents of SWIDDs about the sub-scale IQL (t=-.913, df=498, p=.362), ESS (t=-1.020, df=498, p=.308), P-VS (t=-.160, df=498, p=..873), SEI (t=-.115, df=498, p=.908), PEF (t=-1.594, df=498, p=.112), Employability (t=-.913, df=498, p=.362) except PLO (t=-2.077, df=498, p=.038) and ITP (t=-2.694, df=498, p=.007) where the perceptions of the participants differ significantly from each other.

Table 5
Difference about PSE services based on the profession of parents

Sub-scale	Profession (I)	Profession (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	F	df	P
IQL	**Govt. job**	Private job	.14955	2.234	3	.803
		Business	.31514		496	
		Labor	-1.07278		499	
	Private job	Govt, job	-.14955	2.234		.032
		Business	.16558			
		Labor	-1.22233*			
	Business	Govt, job	-.31514	2.234		.019
		Private job	-.16558			
		Labor	-1.38792*			
	Labor	Govt, job	1.07278	2.234		.019
		Private job	1.22233*			
		Business	1.38792*			
ESS	**Govt, job**	Private job	.38646	2.330	3	.413
		Business	.15378		496	
		Labor	-.75434		499	
	Private job	Govt, job	-.38646	2.330		.011

		Business	-.23268			
		Labor	-1.14080*			
	Business	Govt, job	-.15378	2.330		.752
		Private job	.23268			
		Labor	-.90812*			
	Labor	Govt, job	.75434	2.330		.051
		Private job	1.14080*			
		Business	.90812*			
PLO	**Govt, job**	Private job	-.98159	3.080	3	.005
		Business	-1.40042*		496	
		Labor	-1.67451*		499	
	Private job	Govt, job	.98159	3.080		.410
		Business	-.41883			
		Labor	-.69292			
	Business	Govt, job	1.40042*	3.080		.015
		Private job	.41883			
		Labor	-.27409			
	Labor	Govt, job	1.67451*	3.080		.005
		Private job	.69292			
		Business	.27409			
P-VS	**Govt, job**	Private job	.02236	.989	3	.970
		Business	-.09669		496	
		Labor	-.86087		499	
	Private job	Govt, job	-.02236	.989		.970
		Business	-.11905			
		Labor	-.88323			
	Business	Govt, job	.09669	.989		..876
		Private job	.11905			
		Labor	-.76418			
	Labor	Govt, job	.86087	.989		.177
		Private job	.88323			
		Business	.76418			
SEI	**Govt, job**	Private job	.46425	.506	3	.237
		Business	.37551		496	
		Labor	.25430		499	
	Private job	Govt, job	-.46425	.506		.237
		Business	-.08874			
		Labor	-.20996			
	Business	Govt, job	-.37551	.506		.354
		Private job	.08874			
		Labor	-.12121			
	Labor	Govt, job	-.25430	.506		.541
		Private job	.20996			
		Business	.12121			
PEF	**Govt, job**	Private job	.32106	1.474	3	.229
		Business	.22149		496	
		Labor	-.16856		499	
	Private job	Govt, job	-.32106	1.474		.053
		Business	-.09957			
		Labor	-.48962			
	Business	Govt, job	-.22149	1.474		.421
		Private job	.09957			
		Labor	-.39005			
	Labor	Govt, job	.16856	1.474		.053
		Private job	.48962			
		Business	.39005			
PI	**Govt, job**	Private job	.80848	1.283	3	.083
		Business	.20783		496	
		Labor	.19870		499	
	Private job	Govt, job	-.80848	1.283		.083
		Business	-.60065			
		Labor	-.60978			
	Business	Govt, job	-.20783	1.283		.665
		Private job	.60065			
		Labor	-.00913			

	Labor	Govt, job	-.19870	1.283	.687
		Private job	.60978		
		Business	.00913		
Employability	**Govt, job**	Private job	-.26563	.869	.636
		Business	-.39550		
		Labor	-.91065		
	Private job	Govt, job	.26563	.869	.636
		Business	-.12987		
		Labor	-.64502		
	Business	Govt, job	.39550	.869	.495
		Private job	.12987		
		Labor	-.51515		
	Labor	Govt, job	.91065	.869	.126
		Private job	.64502		
		Business	.51515		

Table No. 5 highlights multiple comparison of professions. The results indicate no significant change between the perceptions of parents on the basis of different professions about the sub-scale IQL. Since (f= 2.234, df= 496, P= .803). However, (f= 2.234, df= 496, P= .032) highlights that parents doing private job and labor have different understanding about IQL. Similarly, the thinking of parents who have their own business does not match with parents who are laborers (f= 2.234, df= 496, P= .019). Like-wise the believes of parents working are laborer significantly opposite from the parents doing business and private jobs (f= 2.234, df= 496, P= .019).

It is evident that parents doing Govt. job have similar perceptions with the parents of other professions with respect to ESS (f= 2.330, df= 496, P= .413), similarly parents running their own have no significant difference with the feelings of parents having other professions (f= 2.330, df= 496, P= .752), but on its contrary parents doing private jobs think significantly different from the parents who have other source of earning livelihood (f= 2.330, df= 496, P= .011), the same case is with the parents working as laborer because they also have significant difference in their opinions as compared to the parents engage other sources of earnings (f= 2.330, df= 496, P= .051).

The results suggest that parents doing private jobs have no significant difference in their opinions just like the parents of other professions with respect to PLO (f= 3.080, df= 496, P= .410). Hence, the feelings of parents doing Govt. jobs are significantly different from the parents doing private jobs, business and labor (f= 3.080, df= 496, P= .005). Whereas, the parents having their own business have significantly different opinions as compared to the parents of all other professions (f= 3.08, df= 496, P= .015), likewise the parents of labor community have different thinking from the parent of other professions (f= 3.08, df= 496, P= .005).

As far as P-VS is concerned the believes of parents of different professions either they are in Govt. job, private jot, business or labor are the same (f= .989, df= 496, P= .970). The results also indicate that all the parents have similar opinions with each other even having different professions with regard to SEI (f= .506, df= 496, P= .237).

While on the other hand a significant difference was noticed in the understanding of parents with respect to the sub-scale PEF as the understanding of parents doing private jobs was unlike with the parents doing labor (f= 1.474, df= 496, P= .053) however, there was noticed no significant difference in the thinking of parents doing business with the perceptions of parents having engaged in other sort of professions (f= 1.474, df= 496, P= .684). Moreover, all the parents with different sources of income have no significant difference in their believes for the sub-scale PI (f= 1.283, df= 496, P= .665). Likewise, parents manifest similar opinions about employability based on their professions (f= .869, df= 496, P= .636).

Table 6
Difference about PSE services based on the qualification of parents

Sub-scale	(I) Qualification	(J) Qualification	Mean Difference (I-J)	f	df	P
employability	**Matric**	F.A	-.30815	1.320	5	.495
		B.A	.00368		494	.995
		M.A	-1.50052*		499	.041
		MPhil	-1.97280			.139
		Others	.97265			.618
PI	**Matric**	F.A	-.96420*	2.708	5	.010
		B.A	-1.06970*		494	.041
		M.A	-.95112		499	.115
		MPhil	-.50544			.646
		Others	2.78547			.084
PEF	**Matric**	F.A	-.17105	1.285	5	.426
		B.A	.10949		494	.717
		M.A	-.06671		499	.848
		MPhil	-.88267			.165
		Others	1.69915			.068
SEI	**Matric**	F.A	-.48919	.969	5	.121
		B.A	-.13454		494	.761
		M.A	-.18585		499	.716
		MPhil	-.80225			.390
		Others	1.70684			.212
P-VS	**Matric**	F.A	-.84743	`1.561	5	.080
		B.A	-.56631		494	.404
		M.A	-1.71013*		499	.029
		MPhil	-1.80769			.206
		Others	.99231			.635
PLO	**Matric**	F.A	-.19511	1.125	5	.664
		B.A	.26127		494	.679
		M.A	-1.52720*		499	.037
		MPhil	-1.12587			.397
		Others	.29231			.881
ESS	**Matric**	F.A	-.63854	1.831	5	.093
		B.A	-.37946		494	.477
		M.A	-.37315		499	.545
		MPhil	-.34654			.758
		Others	3.81709*			.021
IQL	**Matric**	F.A	-.52312	.745	5	.282
		B.A	-.66608		494	.330
		M.A	-.61309		499	.437
		MPhil	-2.18959			.128
		Others	.26496			.900

Table No. 6 presents multiple comparison about PSE services based on education of the parents. The results indicate that those parents who are just matric have significant difference in their perceptions about employability as compared to parents whose qualification in M.A (f= 1.320, df= 494, P= .041). Similarly, thinking of the parents who are F.A is also different about PI as compared to parents with higher qualifications (f= 2.708, df= 494, P= .010). However, parental perceptions are the same about PEF (F= 1.285, df= 494, P= .426) and SEI (f= .969, df= 494, P= .121). Whereas, parents having master degree manifested a significant difference in their believes about P-VS (f= 1.561, df= 494, P= .029) as compared to parents with other different qualifications. Likewise, parents having sixteen year of education displayed huge difference in their understanding about PLO (f= 1.125, df= 494, P= .037) as compared to parents with other level of education. The same difference of perceptions was found between the parents who have some other degrees of qualification about ESS (f= 1.831, df= 494, P= .021) whereas, no significant difference was found in the opinions of parents about IQL (f= .745, df= 494, P= .282) based on their different educational level.

Table 7
Difference between predictor and dependent variable

Model 1	Sum of Square s	df	Mean square	f	P	R	R Squar e	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Regression	2049.714	1	2049.714	116.836	.000[a]	.436[a]	.190	.188	4.18850
Residual	8736.678	498	17.544						
Total	10786.392	499							

a. Predictors: (constant), PVSCO
b. Dependent variable: IQL

Coefficients

Unstandardized Coefficients			Standardized Coefficients			95% Confidence Interval for B	
Model	**B**	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**P**	**Lower Bound**	**upper Bound**
(Constant)	18.179	.623		29.201	.000		
PVSC0	.437	.040	.436	10.809	.000		

a. Dependent Variable: IQL

Table 7 describes significant predictive relationship (f=116.836, df=498, P=.000) between constant variable which is pre-vocational skills for career opportunities and the dependent variable improving quality of life as a result of primary special education services in the special schools of Punjab to the SWIDDs.

Discussion

SWIDDs require a life-long support in education, health services, employment, and social inclusion. It has been well documented that SWIDDs often face difficulties in obtaining and maintaining jobs, resultantly experience poor quality of life (McConkey, R. & Mezza F. 2001).

Primary special education is a prerequisite for the development of SWIDDs. The key objective of the primary special education is to improve adaptive skills, socialization, communication and functional academics among special children so that they may avail different job-related opportunities in the job market. It is pertinent to mention that from the above objectives, the role, importance or relevance of primary special education towards improving life quality and enabling SWIDDs to become economically independent can never be underestimated.

Thus, PSEIs imply a comprehensive approach for the betterment of SWIDDs that focused on teaching skills that enhance job opportunities and resultantly improves their quality of life (Muntaner, 2013; Sánchez-Gómez et al., 2020).

Conclusion

It was concluded that no significant change found between the understandings of parents based on their gender, location and education about the sub-scales. Parents with different professions have almost same kind of perceptions, hence parents doing private jobs and labor have significantly different perceptions about the sub-scales based on their professions.

It was also concluded that there is a significant predictive relationship between constant variable which is pre-vocational skills for career opportunities and the dependent variable improving quality of life. Furthermore, the study concluded that primary special education significantly improves the life quality of SWIDDs and enhances employment opportunities for them.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the conclusions

1. The special education department should upgrade and modify the infrastructure and related services in the domain of provision of educational facilities, pre-vocational skills for career opportunities, special education infrastructure, and enhancing socialization skills so that development of SWIDDs may be ensured after the completion of their school life.

2. Special education teachers should revise and update the curricula of adaptive skills especially communication, self-care, home living, functional academics and socialization for the betterment and independent living of SWIDDs.

3. Extra-curricular activities which are very much important for the motivation and social competencies of SWIDDs should be redesigned under the latest trends of the society.

4. Specialized training and interactive seminars should be arranged by the schools for the capacity building of the parents and to cater the psycho-educational needs of their SWIDDs.

5. As employability is highly related with the pre-vocational & vocational training and one of the essential elements of sustainable development, so up-to-date skills and training meeting the market requirements should be imparted to the SWIDDs.

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