

International Journal of Research in Special Education

E-ISSN: 2710-3870
P-ISSN: 2710-3862
IJRSE 2022; 2(2): 22-24
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www.rehabilitationjournals.com
Received: 22-04-2022
Accepted: 26-05-2022

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Educational considerations for students with intellectual disabilities

Manoj Kumar and Tanuja Rawal

Abstract

In the last few years, many important changes have taken place in the field of disability and continuous improvement is being brought in this area so that the persons with disabilities can be benefited at the physical, mental, social, educational and economic level. According to the RPWD Act 2016, there are 21 disabilities out of which one of the significant disabilities is intellectual disability (mental retardation) which is found in large numbers in the country. According to the Census of India-2011, the number of persons with intellectual disabilities was 1505964. To help such a large number of people, it is most important to understand their problems. A person with intellectual disability has to face many problems at the physical, mental, social, educational and economic level. The main reason for this could be their limitation in functioning, maladaptive behavior and lack of social adjustment. In addition to these issues, students with intellectual disabilities face learning difficulties that negatively affect their ability to learn in a specific educational setting. So we need to understand the educational considerations to reduce the impact of such issues.

Keywords: Intellectual Disability, RPWD Act 2016, Census of India 2011, maladaptive behavior, Social adjustment

Introduction

Intellectual disability is usually identified during childhood. It has an ongoing impact on the development of an individual. Intellectual disability can be defined as a significantly reduced ability to comprehend new or complex information, learn new skills and to cope independently including social functioning. Like all disability groups, there are many types of intellectual disabilities with varying degrees of severity. These include considerable differences in the nature, extent and functional limitations of intellectual disabilities, the causes of the disability, the individual's personal background and social environment. Some people have genetic disorders that seriously affect their intellectual, social and other functional abilities. Others with mild intellectual impairment may develop substantial life skills and are able to lead relatively independent adult lives. About 75 percent of people with intellectual disabilities are only mildly affected, with 25 percent being moderately, severely or severely affected.

Definition

Intellectual Disability is a condition of arrested or incomplete development of the mind, which is especially characterized by impairment of skills manifested during the development period which contribute to the overall level of intelligence, cognitive, language, motor and social abilities.(ICD-10)

ICD-11 uses the term intellectual developmental disorders to indicate that these are disorders that involve impaired brain functioning early in life. These disorders are described in ICD-11 as a Meta syndrome occurring in the developmental period analogous to dementia or neurocognitive disorder in later life

There are four subtypes in ICD-11:

Mild, Moderate, Severe, and Profound.

The American Association Of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD-2002) has defined intellectual disability as a disability characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning (learning, reasoning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior (social, practical skills), which covers many everyday social and practical skills which originates before the age of 18 and IQ an approximately 70 or below on.

Two areas

Intellectual functioning

Also known as IQ, this refers to a person's ability to learn reason, make decisions, and solve problems

Adaptive behaviours

These are essential skills for day-to-day life, such as being able to communicate effectively, interact with others, and take care of oneself.

Intellectual disability (ID) is a disorder defined by the presence of incomplete or arrested mental development, principally characterized by the deterioration of concrete functions at each stage of development and that contribute to the overall level of intelligence, such as cognitive, language, motor and socialization functions; in this anomaly, adaptation to the environment is always affected. (World Health Organization (WHO) Persons with Disabilities Act (PwD)-1995 has defined Mental retardation means a condition of arrested or incomplete development of mind of a person which is specially characteristics by sub-normality of Intelligence.

Definition of Intellectual Disability RPD Bill Provides an elaborate definition of Intellectual Disability which is "a substantial disorder of thinking, mood, perception, orientation, or memory that grossly impairs judgment, behaviour, and capacity to recognize reality or ability to meet the ordinary demands of life but does not include retardation which is a condition of arrested or incomplete development of mind of a person, especially characterized by sub normality of intelligence."

Intellectual Disability- Intellectual Disability (Intellectual Developmental Disorder) is a disorder with onset during the developmental period that includes both intellectual and adaptive functioning deficits in conceptual, social, and practical domains. (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)-5)

"Significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behaviour and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects a child's educational performance. (IDEA, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)

Causes of intellectual disability

Anytime something interferes with normal brain development, intellectual disability can result. However, a specific cause for intellectual disability can only be pinpointed about a third of the time.

The most common causes of intellectual disability are

- Genetic disorders such as Down syndrome and fragile X syndrome
- Problems during pregnancy including alcohol or drug use, malnutrition, certain infections
- Problems during childbirth such as premature labor, lack of oxygen during childbirth
- Infections like meningitis, whooping cough, or the measles
- Severe head injury, malnutrition, exposure to toxic substances such as lead
- Many times the cause is unknown

Classification of Intellectual Disability

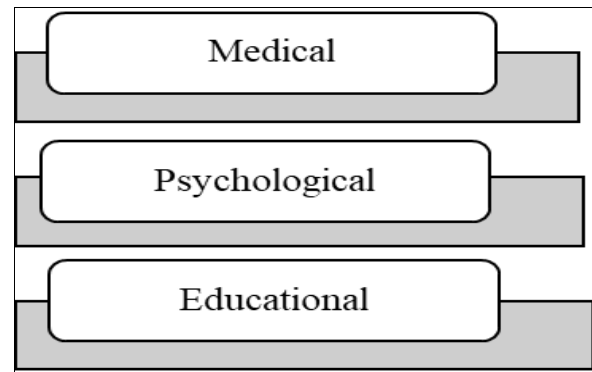


Fig 1: Classification of Intellectual Disability

Medical classification

- The medical classification of I.D. based on causes. The common causes are follows:
 - Infections and intoxication
 - Trauma and physical agent
 - Metabolism and nutrition
 - Gross brain diseases
 - Unknown prenatal influences
 - Chromosomal abnormality
 - Gestational disorder
 - Psychiatric disorder
 - Environmental influences
 - Other influences

Psychological classification

Psychological Classification of I.D. is based on the IQ level of a person. The psychological classification is as follow

Mild mental retardation

The person with mild mental retardation has an IQ range from 50-55 to 69 IQ.

Moderate mental retardation

The person with moderate mental retardation has an IQ from 35-40 to 50-54 IQ.

Severe mental retardation

The person with severe mental retardation has an IQ 20-25 to 35, their mental age up to 4 to 6 years.

Profound mental retardation

The person with profound mental retardation has IQ range is below 20. Mental age is below 4 years. They always need supervision and needs.

Educational classification

The educational classification of mental retardation is based on the educational needs of the child. Under educational classification

Educable mental retardation

Those persons with mental retardation who can be educated in the basic functional literacy are called educable. Those individuals who possess IQ 50 to 70 come under educable mental retardation.

Trainable mental retardation

Those persons with mental retardation who can be trained in certain semi-skilled or under skilled jobs are called trainable. They have an IQ range of 20 to 49.

Custodial mental retardation

Those who have to be totally taken care off for all their needs are called custodial because they are under custody. They have an IQ range below 20.

Educational considerations

A student with intellectual disability can perform better in school with individualized help available in the form of special education and relevant services. The level of help and support needed for the student will depend upon the degree of intellectual disability.

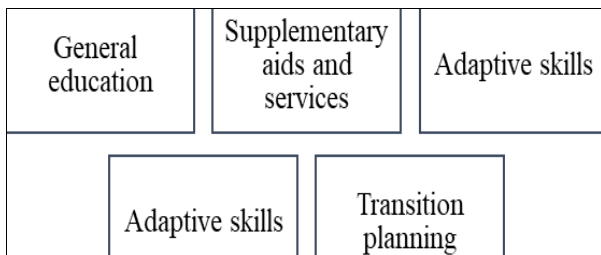


Fig 2: Educational Considerations

General education

The involvement of students with intellectual disabilities in general education curriculum is crucial so that they can make progress same as students without disabilities. As per the RTE, 2009, a student cannot be denied education in age-appropriate general education classrooms solely because he or she needs modifications to be made in the general education curriculum.

Supplementary aids and services

Students with ID need supports in the classroom which includes making accommodations appropriate to the needs of the student. It also includes providing Supplementary aids and services that may include instruction, personnel, equipment, or other accommodations that enable children with disabilities to be educated with non-disabled children to the maximum extent appropriate. Parents and educators must know what accommodations are helpful to students with intellectual disabilities. Thus this needs to be discussed while planning IEP for students.

Adaptive skills

Adaptive skills are the skill which are needed to live, work, and play in the community. These skills can be enhanced by both teachers and parents at home and school. Some of these skills include communication with others, taking care of personal needs such as dressing, bathing, going to the bathroom etc., health and safety, home living (to set the table, cleaning the house, or cooking dinner etc., social skills such as manners, knowing the rules of conversation, getting along in a group, playing a game etc., reading, writing, and basic math. These skills also help them in the workplace as they get older.

Transition planning

It is important for families and schools to plan early for a student's transition into the world of adulthood. Because intellectual disabilities affect the way a person learns new information and skills, the sooner transition planning begins, the more likely a student can be accomplished before leaving secondary school. Transition planning for students with disabilities must begin when they turn 16 which is many times criticized by the IEP teams who feel that it's important for these students to begin earlier than that.

Conclusion

The education of students with intellectual disabilities depends primarily on proper placement decisions. School personnel must make appropriate curriculum modifications and plan for the student's transition to adulthood by identifying the severity of the disability. Teaching strategies are also very necessary to influence the knowledge of the students which leads to improvement in academic performance and success in later life. In addition, there is a need to change the physical learning environment to ensure a safe learning environment that is least distracting to the student.

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