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## Enhancing significant role of paraprofessionals in enabling Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme among of students with intellectual disabilities in inclusive classroom settings in Idukki district of Kerala

**Fr. Baiju Thomas and Dr. S Logesh Kumar**

### Abstract

The current research work is titled “Enhancing the significant role of paraprofessionals in enabling samagra shisha Abhiyan (SMSA) scheme among of students with intellectual disabilities (SwIDs) in inclusive classroom settings in Idukki district of Kerala”. The role of a paraprofessional in an inclusive classroom can be demanding in today’s context. The main purpose of this study was to understand the vibrant role of paraprofessionals in executing the SMSA scheme for supporting students with SwIDs in the Idukki district of Kerala. Paraprofessionals often represent the prime support system for special education students and are nucleus members of special education instructional teams. Paraprofessionals can aim to progress their knowledge and skills, talents, and expertise throughout their professions. A total of 50 paraprofessionals were selected for the current study’s survey. The research employs a descriptive survey framework to assess the role of paraprofessionals in the incorporation of the SMSA scheme in inclusive classroom settings for students with intellectual disabilities. This study act as an indication for all paraprofessionals planned to advance their occupations. This research will show how paraprofessionals can work effectively in an inclusive classroom, provide practical and appropriate support to students, manage relationships with teachers and students, and help in the creation of student friendships. The role of the special education paraprofessional is to assist the teacher in making better use of the teacher’s abilities and knowledge. The major findings of this study reveal that Paraprofessionals are average aware of the SMSA Scheme and the current school scenario agrees that the SwIDs and their related Para-professionals have an average degree of supply of equipment or other materials. Under the direction and support of the instructor, paraprofessional’s aid in the execution of the individualized education plan. Paraprofessionals supporting SwIDs desired customized training relating to behavior management and instructional implications in inclusive classroom settings.

**Keywords:** Paraprofessionals, samagra shiksha abhiyan, inclusive setting, and SwIDs

### Introductions

This study aimed to set up what paraprofessionals’ role concerning the implementation of the Samagra Shisha Abhiyan scheme and to come up with a model to improve such implementation in mainstream secondary schools around inclusive classroom settings in the Idukki district of Kerala. Teachers and paraprofessionals are academic associates who collaborate to provide each child with the best learning program available. The role of both the special education paraprofessional is to facilitate the teacher in making better the use of the teacher’s abilities and knowledge. The teacher has to be a replica in the classrooms. Inclusion is a strategy of meeting and reacting to the various needs of all children, youth, and adults by growing involvement in learning, cultures, and societies, as well as decreasing separation from and within learning (UNESCO, 2009) <sup>[1]</sup>. Paraprofessionals have been one of the most common ways for SwDs to be supported in general education classrooms in school systems (Broer, Doyle, & Giancreco, 2005) <sup>[2]</sup>. Paraprofessionals have also been reported to have roles that include providing clinical assistance, integrating and updating resources, aiding with personal care, and fostering interaction with peers and teachers (Broer *et al.*, 2005; Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000) <sup>[2, 4]</sup>. Across both special education and general education, paraprofessionals are a valuable resource. They perform a variety of functions in the classroom to ensure both teachers and students (Hughes & Valle-Riestra, 2008) <sup>[10]</sup>. Paraprofessionals are frequently considered as the primary support group for special education students (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012) <sup>[5]</sup> and are an essential part of the interior special education academic team (Giangreco, Suter, & Doyle, 2010) <sup>[6]</sup>.

Social and behavioral support, student monitoring, personal care support, and facilitating teacher-planned teaching were one of the key roles of responsibilities described by paraprofessionals themselves (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012) [5]. The most of paraprofessionals' expertise about educating and handling students is likely to emerge from watching and collaborating with teachers (Jones *et al.*, 2012) [11]. Paraprofessionals play a significant role in early intervention and school services. Paraprofessionals' roles and responsibilities have grown along with the need for enhanced academic supports for diverse learners, and they are identified by various names and occupation titles. Paraprofessionals should be part of a group that acknowledges that all students have the opportunity to learn. The certified paraprofessionals should be specialized in teaching and learning principles that promote scaffolding and supports, encouraging flexibility, information gathering, and student involvement strategies. This is due to paraprofessionals getting little or no training work placement. To ensure that paraprofessionals deliver direct teaching to the student, teachers must ensure that the learning environment and content are prepared and organized for the SwIDs. To perform all of these functions, teachers must train paraprofessionals on the intricacies of the program, assess student performance, and keep a close eye on the efficacy with which paraprofessionals use teaching practices in inclusive classrooms.

### **The Role of the paraprofessional**

The team can consider that a student requires a paraprofessional to facilitate the classroom teacher and the student as they prepare. Learning assistants, also regarded as paraprofessionals, are vital members of the educational team. When a paraprofessional is assigned to an instructor or classroom to support students with special needs, they must have been seen as a service for all students. This promotes and inspires the teacher to take responsibility for every student in the classroom. Paraprofessionals who take on their full-time careers with little or no practice are often unprepared to teach children with special needs, which is frequently their primary responsibility. Accordingly, they are more visible in schools and classrooms where students with serious or multiple disabilities are incorporated into mainstream education classes (Giangreco *et al.*, 1997) [8]. This career development process allows paraprofessionals to engage in educational activities that build on one another, become more oriented well over time, and are adapted to the paraprofessional's work situation or career plans. It also offers an opportunity for the teacher and all students to obtain additional guidance and encouragement. Moreover, with the increasing and increasing use of paraprofessional assistance in special education, they need more specialty care education targeted at addressing the needs of children and families (Carroll 2001) [3]. Paraprofessionals are frequently used in schools to offer internal and external services to students with various disabilities. In special education, paraprofessionals play a significant role, especially in providing services to students with intellectual disabilities. Paraprofessionals cooperate with other experts in the classroom to provide greater service to students. The amount of research currently being conducted on this topic has increased as the number of paraprofessionals in conventional school settings continues to rise and

paraprofessional assignments have become more educational. When paraprofessionals are appropriately assisting students with both their educational and behavioral growth, they must recognize their limits and the context of their work. If a paraprofessional is required to know how to better carry out his or her duties without any clear guidelines, the reliability and adequacy of the paraprofessional's work may benefit.

### **Paraprofessionals met the following criteria**

1. Provide special education students with programs for at least half of the school day.
2. For at least 6 months, they worked as paraprofessionals together under the guidance of special education teachers.
3. As personal care aides or educational helpers, incorporate uniquely planned instruction following the students' IEP.
4. Willing to
  - i) Take part in the study.
  - ii) Sign the mandatory agreement form.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study is important because it has the potential to affect progress in the area of special education as a whole, as well as long-term social change at the local level. Students with intellectual disabilities will make sufficient progress when paraprofessionals provide educational assistance with the implementation of SMSA schemes. Therefore, the study entitled: "Enhancing the significant role of paraprofessionals in enabling Samagra Shisha Abhiyan (SMSA) scheme among of students with intellectual disabilities (SwIDs) in inclusive classroom settings in Idukki district of Kerala".

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To find out the awareness of the Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme (SMS) for students with intellectual disability among Paraprofessionals working in an inclusive classroom setting in the Idukki district of Kerala.
2. To find out the availability of the Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme implemented for students with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive classroom setting in the Idukki district of Kerala.

### **Research questions**

1. What is the awareness of the Samagra Shisha Abhiyan scheme (SMSA) for students with intellectual disabilities among paraprofessionals working in an inclusive setting in the Idukki district of Kerala?
2. What is the Samagra Shisha Abhiyan scheme (SMSA) available for students with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive setting in the Idukki district of Kerala?

### **Research Design of the Study**

This research employs a descriptive approach to exploring the awareness and availability of the SMSA Scheme for SwIDs among paraprofessionals working in an inclusive classroom setting. The purpose of the study is to provide information for educational exports regarding the perceptions on inclusive education for paraprofessionals, which has typically gone uninvestigated.

**Table 1.1:** Distribution of Paraprofessionals based on age, qualification, experience, salary, locality, gender and types of schools

Variables	Groups	Category	N	%
Age	1	Below 30 years	6	12.0
	2	31- 40years	22	44.0
	3	Above 40 years	22	44.0
		Total	50	100.0
Qualification	1	Post Graduate	20	40.0
	2	Graduate	21	42.0
	3	Diploma	9	18.0
		Total	50	100.0
Experience	1	Below five years	10	20.0
	2	5-10 years	16	32.0
	3	Above 10 years	24	48.0
		Total	50	100.0
Salary	1	Below 10,000	25	50.0
	2	11,000 to 20,000	14	28.0
	3	21,000 to 30,000	11	22.0
		Total	50	100.0
Locality of School	1	Urban	14	28.0
	2	Semi Urban	16	32.0
	3	Rural	20	40.0
		Total	50	100.0
Types of School	1	Govt. Aided	8	16.0
	2	Private	42	84.0
		Total	50	100.0
Gender	1	Male	10	20.0
	2	Female	40	80.0
		Total	50	100.0

**Sample selection**

The study used convenience sampling as survey participants were drawn from a population of paraprofessionals employed at the school district where the study takes place. The investigator uses purposeful sampling to classify the samples. This study's sample size is decreased by up to 50 respondents. The study was conducted among special educators in the Idukki district of Kerala. This research included a total of twenty schools.

**Development of tools**

The investigator developed a tool in the form of a Linkert Scale for paraprofessionals employed in Inclusive Settings in the following domains to provide access to enhancing the significant role of paraprofessionals in enabling SMSA scheme among SwIDs in an Inclusive classroom setting in the Idukki district of Kerala.

- Awareness level

- Availability level

**Data collecting procedure**

- Paraprofessionals engaged in the inclusion of SwIDs in special schools have been identified in the Idukki district of Kerala.
- The school authorities were given the questionnaire to distribute to Paraprofessionals.

**Variables of study**

The investigator used age, gender, educational qualification, experience, types of service, residence, and salary as independent variables.

**Data Analysis**

The suitable statistical analysis was promoted by the practice of the SPSS 20.0.

**The major findings of the study**

**1. What is the awareness of the Samagra Shisha Abhiyan scheme (SMSA) for students with intellectual disabilities among paraprofessionals working in an inclusive setting in the Idukki district of Kerala?**

To find the level of awareness on Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme (SMS) for students with intellectual disability among Paraprofessionals working in an inclusive classroom setting in the Idukki district of Kerala, the respondents are asked 10 questions on a five-point Likert scale. Each comment is given a score from 1 for “Strongly disagree” to 5 for “Strongly agree”. We first determine the overall score of the 10 questions that were given to all 50 respondents. With that information, we next calculate the mean percentage score of the Samagra Shisha Abhiyan (SMSA) Scheme level of awareness were calculated.

**This score is classified into one of the four groups**

- 1) Poor or low if the mean % score is less than 35%,
- 2) Average if the mean % score is between 35 to 50 percent,
- 3) Good or medium if the mean % score lies in the interval 50 to 75% and
- 4) Excellent or high if the mean % score is above 75%.

A one-sample Z test is carried out to test the significance. The following table gives the Mean, SD, Mean % Score and Z value of the variable considered. (Loyd, B. H., & R. R. Abidin. R. R. (1985). Revision of the Parent Stress Index. Journal of Pediatric Psychiatry, 10(2), 169).

**Table 1.2:** Mean, Standard deviation and z value for awareness on Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme (SMS)

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean % score	CV	z	p value
Awareness	50	23.20	5.30	46.40	22.84	-2.402	0.020

**Interpretations**

The mean percentage score level of awareness on Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme (SMS) for students with intellectual disability among Paraprofessionals working in an inclusive classroom setting in Idukki district of Kerala is 46.40% which indicate that level of awareness on Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme is average. This score is not consistent, as the value is greater than 20%. To check the level of awareness of the Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme, we must examine a representative sample of the populace.

We perform a single sample Z test to test the hypothesis, and the outcome is seen in Table 1.1. The p-value of 0.05 is obtained from the results of the test, which confirms the results. Therefore, we may conclude that the degree of awareness among Paraprofessionals working in inclusive classroom settings in the Idukki district of Kerala on the Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme (SMS) for students with intellectual disabilities (SwIDs) is less than 50 percent i.e. on average.

## 2. What is the Samagra Shisha Abhiyan scheme (SMSA) available for students with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive setting in the Idukki district of Kerala?

To find the level of availability of the Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme implemented for students with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive classroom setting in the Idukki district of Kerala, the respondents are asked 10 questions on

five points Likert scale. The responses are scored as 1 for 'Inadequate', 2 for 'Adequate to Some Extent', 3 for 'Uncertain', 4 for 'Adequate', and 5 for 'Highly adequate'. The total score of the 10 questions for all 50 respondents is found out, based on which we calculate the mean % score of level of availability of Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme.

**Table 1.3:** Mean, Standard deviation and z value for availability on Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme (SMS)

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean % score	CV	z	p value
Availability	50	37.54	5.97	75.08	15.90	14.853	<0.001

### Interpretations

The mean percentage score level of availability on the Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme (SMS) for students with intellectual disability among Paraprofessionals working in an inclusive classroom setting in the Idukki district of Kerala is 75.08% which indicate that level of availability on Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme is excellent or high. This score has remained consistent at a lower-than-20% percentile. In the case of the Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme, we must first determine if the level of availability of samples in the community. We conduct a test to examine the hypothesis using a one-sample Z test, as shown in Table 1.3. The p-value of the test at the table is greater than 0.05, hence, the result is statistically significant. So, the Samagra Shisha Abhiyan Scheme (SMS) level of availability for students with intellectual disabilities in the Idukki district of Kerala is higher than 50%. i.e. good.

### Recommendations

- 1) The study advises increasing awareness of the SMSA system in inclusive classrooms among the Paraprofessionals.
- 2) The study proposes that educational programs, together with other elements influencing learner results, should be explored and undertaken.
- 3) To increase the paraprofessional partnerships, the study advises that paraprofessional training in some basic and presumably new abilities to coordinate and engage with educators.
- 4) The study indicates that paraprofessional understanding of the facilitative function of SMSA in schools should be promoted.
- 5) This study suggests the knowledge, understanding, and collaboration of paraprofessionals and special educators enable SMSA in inclusive settings.

### Suggestions for further Research

- 1) The study was only targeted at the district of Idukki in Kerala. In other areas of the state, the proposal could be adopted.
- 2) In other disability areas, parallel research may be replaced.
- 3) More samples \ bigger areas can be performed in similar investigations.
- 4) The study was undertaken between paraprofessionals; additional groups of special educators, general educators, and parents can be taken up with the idea.
- 5) Only 50 samples have been determined. In big samples, more effort can be made.

### Delimitation of the study

- 1) The study will be limited only to the Idukki district of Kerala.

- 2) The present study covers the role of paraprofessionals in enabling the SMSA scheme among SwIDs in the Idukki district of Kerala.
- 3) The study was carried out only on 50 paraprofessionals

### Conclusion

Findings from the current study show that paraprofessionals frequently adopt various roles in enabling SMSA Scheme among of SwIDs with regards to academics and learning, and related behavioral needs in inclusive environments. The main finding of the study indicated an average level of awareness among Paraprofessionals concerning the SMSA Scheme and the present school scenario agrees to the average level of provision of facilities and other machinery among the SwIDs and their associated paraprofessionals. While this teaching personnel recognized that the paraprofessionals supplied a lot of assistance during difficult situations, they suggested that paraprofessionals were the factors for such troublesome occasions. It can be suggested from the findings of this study that paraprofessionals need extra training in the supervision of behaviors and disorders, as well as in working with special needs and clarifying their duties and employment descriptions. Additionally, paraprofessionals stressed the need for cooperation, particularly when working with groups of students.

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