

# perspectives of Teachers on Autism Spectrum Disorders in Nepal

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## **Introduction**

Individuals with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) have a profile of needs, including core difficulties in social communication and social interaction and restricted repetitive patterns of behavior including possible sensory sensitivities (APA, 2013). Since awareness and knowledge about ASD increased throughout the world, education of children with ASD and more comprehensive education for teachers of ASD children becomes more important (Yasar & Cronin, 2014; Demirok & Baglama, 2014). Therefore, early diagnosis and early educational interventions for ASD should be more applicable. According to Harris and Handleman (2000), when children with ASD enter educational programs at earlier ages, they would have more gains compared to children entered educational programs at older ages (Demirok & Baglama, 2014). Teachers' beliefs, understandings and attitudes about their students affects educational outcomes of the students. Gargiulo (2003) defined attitude as a tendency to treat in a favorable or unfavorable way towards a given attitude object. Positive teacher attitudes are considered as an important predictor of successful education of children with disabilities including those with autism spectrum disorders (Rodriguez, Saldana & Moreno, 2011; Robertson, Chamberlain & Kasari, 2003).

In Nepal, government do not offer special teacher training programs about ASD. In respect to the increase in the prevalence of autism, all teachers should be aware about autism, have sufficient knowledge about education of individuals with ASD and have positive attitudes towards autism since teacher attitudes is an important indicator of effective education. Park and colleagues (2010) stated that when people know somebody with ASD, they are more likely to have positive attitudes towards individuals with ASD. Nevertheless, when teachers have positive attitudes towards autism, their expectations from the students with autism become more positive as well. It should also be noted that knowledge and awareness about autism is important for family guidance. If teachers have sufficient knowledge about ASD, they are more likely to notice when there are irregular developmental patterns. If teachers notice such patterns, they could inform and guide the family about getting help from professionals, give information about teaching and learning process of individuals with autism. Therefore, it was targeted to increase awareness and knowledge of teachers' about autism in this study.

## Objectives

- To evaluate knowledge, awareness and attitude of teachers about ASD and teaching students with ASD.

## Research Questions

- What do teachers know about ASD?
- Are teachers aware of ASD and educational need of children of ASD?
- Do the teachers identify the placement of child with ASD in educational environment?
- Do the teachers feel prepared to teach children with ASD in their classroom?

## Method

This study was guided by quantitative research method which was followed by survey research design. Seventy Six teachers were purposefully selected who were involved in the training entitled Best Practices in Special Needs Education was conducted from January 7 to January 12, 2018 under the sponsorship of Leading University Project for International Cooperation (LUPIC), at Institute of Engineering Campus, Pulchowk, Kathmandu. They were came form Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur districts. The survey was administered to the teachers during the training time.

## *Participants*

The details information of participants were following:

Gender		Age		District Wise Participant			Schools		Teachers	
Male	Female	Below 25	Above 26	Kathmandu	Lalitpur	Bhaktapur	Special	Integrated	Disabel ed	Non disable
27	49	11	65	30	26	20	6	9	8	68

## *Data collection Tools*

The 5-point Likert Scale survey instrument (questionnaire) was developed and conducted. When conducting the study, both English and Nepali version of the questionnaire was used because the native language of the participants were Nepalese. The questionnaire includes 20 statements which ask about opinions, knowledge and awareness about ASD and related issues. It took participants approximately 30 minutes to complete the questionnaires. Descriptive statistics (Mean and S.D.) were used to analyze the data by using IBM SPSS version 24 Program and Microsoft Office Excel 2007.

# Results

## Descriptive Statistics for Each Statements

S.N.	Statement	Mean	<i>SD</i>
1	Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is considering as a neuro developmental disorder that can be improved through education.	3.36	0.94
2	Children with ASD have not feeling and emotions.	2.05	0.56
3	Students with ASD should be placed in special education classroom.	4.50	0.88
4	Students with ASD do not need communication support.	2.01	1.05
5	I am able to provide information about ASD when the people ask.	2.86	1.34
6	Visual supports do not help students who have ASD.	2.11	1.33
7	I know somebody (relatives, students, friends, and others) who has ASD.	3.77	1.27
8	I have not experience teaching a child with ASD during my teaching period.	1.75	1.22
9	There is no cure for ASD but ways to treat it.	4.01	1.19
10	Students with ASD do not need support to improve their social skills.	2.77	1.43
11	Students with ASD need behavioral support.	3.10	1.41
12	All children with ASD do not show same behaviors.	3.30	1.34
13	Students with ASD should be placed in inclusive classroom.	2.78	1.25
14	I don't know how to deal with classroom management issues in a class with student with ASD	3.09	1.49
15	Students with ASD should be placed in general education classroom.	2.39	1.42
16	I am able to plan a lesson which involves appropriate learning activities for children with ASD.	2.73	1.22
17	I am unable to integrate new teaching strategies in classroom which contains a child with ASD.	3.21	1.26
18	I am able to identify and understand the characteristics of ASD.	3.14	1.17
19	I have received enough knowledge, skills, and education about ASD. So, I am ready to take a class children with ASD.	2.43	1.39
20	Nepalese teachers should have more training, seminar and workshop about ASD.	4.26	0.98

## Frequency and Percentage for Each Statement

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	n	%	N	%	n	%	N	%	n	%
S1	5	6.6	34	25.8	25	19.0	8	6.1	4	3.0
S2	8	10.5	32	24.3	14	10.6	20	15.2	2	1.5
S3	50	65.8	20	15.2	2	1.5	2	1.5	2	1.5
S4	32	42.1	18	13.7	21	16.0	3	2.3	2	1.5
S5	8	10.5	23	17.5	13	9.9	15	11.4	17	12.9
S6	38	50.0	12	9.1	9	6.8	13	9.9	4	3.0
S7	31	40.8	17	12.9	11	8.4	14	10.6	3	2.3
S8	49	64.5	11	8.4	7	5.3	4	3.0	5	3.8
S9	38	50.0	14	10.6	14	10.6	7	5.3	3	2.3
S10	17	22.4	21	16.0	11	8.4	14	10.6	13	9.9
S11	14	18.4	24	18.2	7	5.3	18	13.7	13	9.9
S12	18	23.7	15	11.4	19	14.4	11	8.4	23	17.5
S13	7	9.2	16	12.2	23	17.5	14	10.6	16	12.2
S14	13	17.1	21	16.0	9	6.8	12	9.1	21	16.0
S15	8	10.5	11	8.4	16	12.2	9	6.8	33	25.1
S16	7	9.2	13	9.9	24	18.2	17	12.9	15	11.4
S17	8	10.5	11	8.4	27	20.5	13	9.9	17	12.9
S18	5	6.6	31	23.6	22	16.7	6	4.6	12	9.1
S19	4	5.3	21	16.0	8	6.1	14	10.6	29	22.0

## Discussion

According to the results of the study, the teachers are aware about ASD in general and most of the teachers know that ASD is a developmental disability which can be improved through education. However, they were not sure about that they are able to identify and understand the characteristics of autism and they were not sure that they are able to give information to people about autism when they were asked. This result could be related with the students' insufficient knowledge about ASD. This is in line with the result which showed that the teachers were not sure if they took classes about autism and educational needs of a child with autism. Knowledge and awareness about autism is a crucial factor for teachers which make them an important resource of social support for children with autism. Through increased awareness among teachers, they would be more likely to contribute to the independence of children with autism and to be perceived as an important resource of social support (Campbell & Gillmore, 2014).

In Nepal, there is not specific teacher training programs on autism till now. The amazing matter and reality of educating children with ASD are - some (not more than four) private schools run by NGOs and also situated in only capital city Kathmandu. Before launching the Inclusive Education Policy, 2017, ASD was also merged with Intellectual disability. Therefore, it can be inferred that more schools related to ASD should be established from the side of government as well as private sectors in order to increase the knowledge and awareness of about ASD

The participants reported that children with ASD need communication, behavioral, social skills and visual support. However, they are not able to identify the characteristics of ASD and give information when they asked. Based on these results, it can be said that the teachers have basic knowledge, general understanding and awareness of ASD. However, they do not feel they are competent enough to provide effective appropriate education to children with ASD. In this regards, most of the teachers reported that they could not find an opportunity of teaching children with ASD during their teaching period because there is no opportunity for ASD children to get entry into school in Nepal. This might also affects the teachers' sense of efficacy in providing education to children with ASD because they could not find any opportunity to apply their knowledge.

Providing an opportunity for education for ASD practices has become more widespread in Nepal because Inclusive Education Policy has been introducing the ASD as a separate disability category. At this point, the importance of having knowledge and being aware about autism becomes more critical. The results of the present study also showed that the teachers were not sure if they are able to plan a lesson which involves appropriate learning activities for children with autism and they don't know how to deal with classroom management issues students with ASD.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study results provided sufficient information about the teachers' knowledge and awareness of ASD. According to the survey results, there should be more training courses for teachers related with ASD and educational needs of children with ASD offered by the government of Nepal as well as NGOs. This study provide educational implications about the situation in Nepal. Educational policies and programs should be improved in Nepal in order to increase and improve teachers' knowledge, understanding and awareness of ASD. In this way, teachers would be more beneficial for children with ASD by providing apposite and effectual educational programs which meet the educational needs of children with ASD.

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