
Practitioners Perception of causes and consequences Challenging behaviour presented by Learners with Autistic spectrum Disorders (ASDs) in primary schools

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to identify the practitioner's perception of the causes of challenging behaviour presented by learners with ASDs in primary schools in western Kenya. 146 practitioners comprising of 106 teachers and 40 teacher aides participated in the study. Data was collected using challenging behaviour questionnaire that had two parts. Part one was used to determine practitioners' cognitive perception of the causes of challenging behaviour while part two determined their perception of the consequences of challenging behaviour. A one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate job title, professional qualification, and experience of working with learners with ASDs in relation to perception of the causes of challenging behaviour. Seven dependent variables were used to elicit the practitioners' perception of the causes of challenging behaviour presented by learners with ASDs. These were Biological, psychodynamic, ecological, behavioral, humanistic, sociological and psychological challenging behavior perception. The independent variables were job title, length of service and professional qualification. The finding of this study indicates that there was no statistically significant difference among the three independent variables on the combined dependent variables. There were no significant differences in perception of the causes of challenging behaviour based on age, experience and professional qualifications. Teachers perceived challenging behaviour by learners with ASDs as time line episodic while teacher aides perceived it as a more permanent feature for learners with ASDs. Teachers also perceived their ability to control challenging behaviour higher than the teacher aides. It emerged that practitioners' perceived challenging behaviour as having consequences to learners, their peers, parents and practitioners. These factors need to be considered in designing programmes for management of challenging behaviour presented by learners with ASDs.

Keywords: Autistic spectrum Disorders, Challenging behaviour, Perception Consequences

Introduction

Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) is a developmental disorder with unknown etiology and with heterogeneous symptom. ASD is defined at the behavioural level on the basis of impairment in socialization, communication and imagination with Stereo typed repetitive interests taking the place of creative play. Although the symptoms are often heterogeneous across individuals, the disorders are all characterized by onset in early childhood. ASD is considered to be the most prevalence forms of the PDD (Wilkins, 2008). They were the first of these disorders to be recognized as a distinct disorder (Wings, 1997). Learners with ASDs share a cluster of impairment in reciprocal social interaction, communication and have stereotype behaviour interests and activities (Wilkins, 2008). These complex behaviours are of lifelong duration and affect multiple aspects of development, learning and adaptation in the community. The etiologies of these disorders are poorly understood but are thought to include genetic, (Edward,

Owen and Jamie, 2007) metabolic, immunological (Tsakanikos, Costello, Holt, Sturmey and Bauras, 2007) and other environmental influences (Bailey, 2006). They are highly variable in their clinical presentation. Only recently have efforts been directed towards a meaningful subtype of this disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2012). Despite the current state of ASDs, little has been done to establish the practitioners' perception of challenging behaviour presented by this group of learners.

In an attempt to explain what causes challenging behaviour in learners with ASDs, most practitioners turn to biological, psychological and socio-cultural perspectives (Milne, 1993; Melaned and Alizur 2001). For example, proponents of biological concept often focus on the brain and genetic factors as the source of challenging behaviour (Edward et. al., 2007). This concept assume that behaviour disorders may result from physiological disease or dysfunction and assumes that physiological problems disrupts the functioning of the brain The causes of challenging behaviours are generally explained using bio-psychological model and remediation services for this group of people are usually done by psychiatrists, clinical psychologists or psychotherapists(Alonso, Angermeyer and Bernert, 2004). Treatment is provided by various health professionals, with psychotherapy and psychiatry medication being the two major options (Alonso *et al.*, 2004). Proponents of psycho-dynamic place much emphasis on challenging behaviour as arising from unconscious conflict that produce anxiety which then result into unwanted behaviour and place the origin of the challenging behaviour on ineffective early relationship with parents (Dell, 2002). Ecological model emphasizes the capacity for growth, freedom to choose one's own destiny and positive personal qualities as possible causes of psychological disorders leading to challenging behaviour (Meland and Alizur 2001). It focuses on physical spatial and social environment and their influence on behaviour.

Proponents ecological approach (Meland and Alizur 2001; Akiskal and Benazzi, 2006) advocates for structuring of physical environment as one way of managing challenging behaviour. Cognitive behavioural approach views challenging behaviour as an inability to fulfill ones' potential arising from the pressures of the society to conform to expectation and values. In this approach, a person who displays challenging behaviour is likely to have low self-concept, because he/she has experienced repeated criticism and negative circumstances. This approach mainly attributes psychological disorders to unconscious conflicts, negative cognition, and low self-concept. On the other hand, socio-cultural approach places more emphasis on a larger social context in which a person lives (Sigafoos, 2000). It takes into account the individual's marriage, family, neighborhood, socio-economic status and ethnicity (Ian, 2008).

Proponents of the behavioural model view challenging behaviour as an example of operant behaviour where positive and negative reinforcement principles at work in its development and maintenance (Felce and Perry, 1996). They view challenging behaviour as functional and an adaptive way of exercising control over the person's environment. These events, whether negative or positive such as personal interactions or escapes from unpleasant work would have an influence on the behaviour of an individual. In management of challenging behaviour, this model attempts to look at functional relationship, contextual control and dynamic systems of behaviour (Williamson, 2008). In functional relationship, the reinforcers are defined functionally by what their actual effect to behaviour. In contextual control attempt is made to establish the motivational base which underlies the behaviour. It may translate into personal, biological or environmental setting events (Hastings, 1996). While in dynamic system, behaviour is viewed as being under control of wide variety of reinforcers with which a person's behaviour will interact.

In terms of explanation to the causes of challenging behaviour practitioners in Porter and Lacey (2009) study ranked in order attention seeking, task avoidance, communication problems, stress, interference with routines and provocation as some of causes of challenging behaviour presented by learners with developmental disabilities. In a related study in terms of explanations given for challenging behaviour, teachers in the Kiernan and Kiernan (2004) study cited, in rank order: attention seeking, demand avoidance, communication problems, stress, interference with routines and provocation. For just over a third of the 'more difficult' group some problem behaviour was considered by teachers to be unpredictable

Relatively little is known about practitioners' perceptions of challenging behaviour. The dominant paradigm for investigating staff perception of challenging behaviour uses Wiener's attribution theory of helping behaviour (Markham and Trower, 2003; Dagnan, 2011). This theory states that the cognitive perception made about a person and his/her behaviour will affect the feelings of the care staff which in turn would eventually affect the care staff

willingness to help that person. This theory has been linked to behavioural models of challenging behaviour management which suggest that practitioners attribution to causes of challenging behaviour would directly influence the choice of behaviour management strategy.

It's important to consider various factors that may affect the perception of challenging behaviour and by implication how this perception influences the choice of challenging behaviour management strategy. Since the publication of cognitive- emotional model of behaviour by Werner(1980) there has been a variety of studies investigating practitioners perception of challenging behaviour (Markham and Trower, 2003; Rose and Rose, 2005; Williams and Rose, 2007 Whitaker2009; Crossland, 2009; Male2010). Some of these studies have considered environment and demographic factors that may affect these perception (Markham and Trower, 2003; Crossland, 2009) others have looked at staff stress (Rose and Rose, 2005; Williams and Rose, 2007), staff support gender and behaviour topography (Crossland, 2009; Markham and Trower, 2003) while others have looked at practitioners training and their demographic variables (Whitaker, 2009; Male, 2004).

Werner's (1980) theory has been used in the field of learning difficulties to try and link care staff perception of challenging behaviour to their resultant behaviour (Wanless and Jahoda, 2002; Williamson, 2008 Dagnan, 2011). There has been an increasing interest in cognitive and emotional understanding of practitioners' response to challenging behaviour (Williamson, 2008; Dagnan, 2011). For example attribution models have been suggested for helping behaviour (Werner, 1980) which suggests that interpretation of challenging behaviour and subsequent emotions exert an effect on practitioner's behaviour. Werner (1980) focuses on the attribution of controllability which is the judgment of whether the cause of behaviour is under the person's control. He suggests that the practitioner will be more sympathetic and hence more helpful if the cause of the learners behaviour is outside the learners control for example caused by autism (Dagnan, 2011).Conversely, a practitioner will be more angry and less helpful if the cause of the learners Challenging behaviour is seen as within the learners control for example the learner knows and he/she is aware of the challenging behaviour he/she is presenting.

Previous studies have found inconsistent support for the applicability of Weiner's (1980) theory (Wanless and Jahoda, 2002; Rose and Rose, 2005). These studies show causal link between the practitioners working experience and training as the major factors that determine the individual's response to challenging behaviour. It has been proposed that the use of vignettes rather than real incidents might have contributed to these inconsistencies (Markham and Trower, 2003). Campbell (2007) advances the use of self- regulation model of illness representation. This model suggests that illness representation (cognitive responses) of symptoms and illness will have a direct influence on the emotional response to illness. This model predicts that the cognitive representation of the illness is directly related to the strategies that would be put in place to cope with the challenging behaviour presented. In a related study, Williams and Rose (2007) used illness perception questionnaire which is based on self-regulation model to investigate the applicability of using it to look at the factors that influence how care staff respond to someone with schizophrenia.

Hastings (2008) found that experienced practitioners rated challenging behaviour as less disturbing than less experienced workers. Whitaker (2009) study indicated that experienced and less experienced nursing staff working with people with learning disabilities who presented challenging behaviour differed in their views on the probable causes of challenging behaviour with the experienced staff being more likely to interpret challenging behaviour as an expression of need than less experienced staff.

Statement of the problem

Learners with Autistic spectrum Disorders are at risk of developing challenging behaviours including physical and verbal aggression, self-injury, property destruction, pica, stereotypy, tantrums, anxiety, withdrawal and self-stimulation. Learners with ASDs who present challenging behaviours are at greater risk of abuse, are likely to live in a deprived environment and are more likely to be medicated to control their challenging behaviour. These challenging behaviours in most cases are reinforced by the disruption they create and without effective intervention; they are more likely to increase than improve. The way the practitioners perceive these behaviours directly influence s the choice of challenging behaviour management strategies.

Beliefs of practitioners about the causes of challenging behaviour and their emotional responses to it have been found to influence the way they deal with challenging behaviour presented by learners with developmental disabilities. However, there is relatively dearth of research into practitioners perception of the causes of challenging behaviour and little is known about how their perception influence the choice of challenging behaviour management strategies. This study thus sought to find out practitioners perception of challenging behaviour and how this influences their choice of challenging behaviour management strategies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out Practitioners Perception of causes and consequences Challenging behaviour presented by Learners with Autistic spectrum Disorders (ASDs) in primary schools western Kenya.

Research questions

1. How do the practitioners perceive challenging behaviours presented by learners with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in primary schools in western Kenya
2. What are the practitioners perception of the causes of challenging behaviours presented by Learners with ASDs in primary schools in western Kenya?
3. What are the factors that influence the perception of the causes of challenging behaviour by practitioners in primary schools in western Kenya?

Methodology

Challenging behaviour questionnaire was used to collect data, it had two parts. Part one determined practitioner's cognitive perception of causes of challenging behaviour while part two elicited perception of consequences of challenging behaviour presented. Part one was designed to specifically address challenging behaviour in learners with ASDs with possible reasons as to why learners with ASDs engage in challenging behaviour. Possible perceptions to causes of challenging behaviour included Biological/medical; Sociological; Behavioural; Ecological; Psychological and psychodynamic. Respondents were asked to rate their responses on a five point rating scale. Part two was to elicit their perception of consequences that challenging behaviour could have on the learners who present the challenging behaviour and also the practitioners who work with the learners. Five categories of consequences were to be elicited as consequence to the learner either positive or negative; consequence to the practitioner either positive or negative; control for the practitioner for example whether the practitioner perceives that he/she can manage the challenging behaviour; time line chronic whether the practitioner perceives the challenging behaviour to be permanent rather than temporary and time line episodic whether the practitioner perceives challenging behaviour to come and go. Respondents were also asked to rate their responses on a five point rating scale.

Participants

There were 146 respondents comprising of 106 teachers and 40 teacher aides drawn from special schools, inclusive programmes and special units for learners with special educational needs in western Kenya. To determine the practitioner's perception of challenging behaviour presented by learners with ASDs in schools in western Kenya, frequency tables were run as descriptive analysis as shown in the tables to establish quantitative information about the behaviour presented by learners with ASDs.

Results

Table 1.1: Challenging behaviour perception by teachers.

perception by teachers	VU	UN	ELU	L	VL	MEAN	STD
Are given tasks that are too difficult for them	18(17)	33(31.1)	23(21.7)	23(21.7)	9(8.5)	2.74	1.22
Are physically ill	8(7.5)	25(23.6)	30(28.3)	32(30.2)	11(10.4)	3.12	1.12
Are tired	10(9.4)	18(17.0)	22(20.8)	36(34)	20(18.9)	3.36	1.24

Cannot cope with high level of stress	9(8.5)	24(22.6)	18(36)	36(34)	19(17.9)	3.30	1.24
Environment is too crowded with people	11(10.4)	14(13.2)	23(21.7)	41(38.7)	17(16.0)	3.37	1.21
Are given medication	8(7.5)	20(18.9)	14(13.2)	42(39.6)	22(20.8)	3.47	1.20
Are unhappy	12(11.3)	20(18.9)	18(17.0)	40(37.7)	16(15.1)	3.26	1.25
They don't get what they want	18(17.0)	11(10.4)	11(10.4)	43(40.6)	23(21.7)	3.40	1.39
Live in unpleasant environment	4(3.8)	6(5.7)	15(14.2)	57(53.8)	24(22.6)	3.36	.96
Enjoy the effect of behavior on others	12(11.3)	6(5.7)	12(11.3)	52(49.1)	24(22.6)	3.66	1.22
They are in bad mood	11(10.4)	11(10.4)	11(10.4)	48(45.3)	25(23.6)	3.16	1.25
They are worried about something	8(7.5)	7(6.6)	17(16.0)	52(49.1)	22(20.8)	3.69	1.11
Their surrounding too warm	4(3.8)	12(11.3)	21(19.8)	49(46.2)	20(18.9)	3.65	1.03
Some biological process in their body	5(4.7)	8(7.5)	17(16.0)	52(49.1)	24(22.6)	3.77	1.04
They want something	7(6.6)	13(12.3)	19(17.9)	46(43.4)	21(19.8)	3.58	1.14
Are angry	10(9.4)	8(7.5)	17(16.0)	50(47.2)	21(19.8)	3.60	1.17
There is nothing else for them to do	10(9.4)	12(11.3)	18(17.0)	46(43.4)	20(18.9)	3.51	1.20
Live in a noisy place	11(10.4)	14(13.2)	16(15.1)	48(45.3)	17(16.0)	3.43	1.21
Feel let down by somebody	9(8.5)	7(6.6)	18(17.0)	48(4.3)	24(22.6)	3.67	1.15
Are physically disabled	5(4.7)	13(12.3)	17(16.0)	47(44.3)	24(22.6)	3.68	1.10
Not much space in their environment to move around	7(6.6)	5(4.7)	12(11.3)	51(48.1)	31(29.2)	3.89	1.09
Are often left on their own	10(9.4)	11(10.4)	13(12.3)	51(48.1)	21(19.8)	3.58	1.19
Are hungry or thirsty	3(2.8)	13(12.3)	18(17.0)	54(50.9)	18(17.0)	3.67	.993
Are frightened	7(6.6)	9(8.5)	13(12.3)	51(48.1)	26(24.5)	3.75	1.12
People do not talk to them much	8(7.5)	4(3.8)	14(13.2)	54(50.9)	26(24.5)	3.81	1.09
They want to avoid interesting tasks	6(5.7)	9(8.5)	14(13.2)	50(47.2)	27(25.5)	3.78	1.10
Don't go outdoors very much	9(8.5)	10(9.4)	18(17.0)	45(42.5)	24(22.6)	3.61	1.18
Are rarely given activities to do	7(6.6)	6(5.7)	14(13.2)	52(49.1)	27(25.5)	3.81	1.09
They want attention from other people	4(3.8)	8(7.5)	19(17.9)	57(53.8)	18(17.0)	3.73	1.15

KEY: VU-very unlikely; UN- unlikely; ELU-equally likely and unlikely; L-likely; VL-very likely

Minimum-1 point, maximum- 5 points, std- standard deviation

Generally, the teacher's response to variables in this section indicated that there was considerable divergence in their perception of causes of challenging behaviour. Other variables that had high number of respondents included 'are hungry or thirsty' 54(50.9) 'people don't talk much to them' indicating that they attributed the causes of challenging behaviour to psychological and sociological perspectives. Other variables that received significant responses from teachers included 'enjoy the effect of behaviour on others' 52(49.1); 'they don't get what they want' 43 (40.6) and 'are unhappy' 40(37.7) accounting for behavioural perspective. Teachers also ranked the medical perspective highly, 'some biological processes in their body' 52 (49.1) and 'are given medication 42(39.6)

1.2: Challenging behaviour perception by teacher's aide.

perception by teachers aide	VU	UN	ELU	L	VL	MEAN	STD
are given tasks that are too	15(37.5)	9(22.5)	8(20.0)	8(20.0)		2.74	1.22

difficult for them							
Are physically ill	2(5.0)	7(17.5)	13(32.5)	12(30.0)	6(15.0)	3.12	1.12
Are tired	2(5.0)	4(10.0)	10(25.0)	17(42.5)	7(17.5)	3.36	1.24
Cannot cope with high level of stress	1(2.5)	5(12.5)	11(27.5)	19(47.5)	4(10.0)	3.30	1.24
Environment is too crowded with people	1(2.5)	5(12.5)	10(25.0)	17(42.5)	7(17.5)	3.37	1.21
Are given medication	3(7.5)	5(12.5)	6(15.0)	18(45.0)	8(20.0)	3.47	1.23
Are unhappy	2(5.0)	3(7.5)	9(22.5)	20(50.0)	6(15.0)	3.26	1.25
They don't get what they want	1(2.5)	4(10.0)	6(15.0)	19(47.5)	10(25.0)	3.40	1.39
Live in unpleasant environment		5(12.5)	7(17.5)	18(45.0)	10(25.0)	3.86	.961
Enjoy the effect of behavior on others	2(5.0)	6(15.0)	9(22.5)	15(37.5)	8(20.0)	3.66	1.22
They are in bad mood	2(5.0)	3(7.5)	10(25.0)	19(47.5)	6(15.0)	3.61	1.25
They are worried about something	1(2.5)	5(12.5)	8(20.0)	18(45.0)	8(20.0)	3.69	1.11
Their surrounding too warm	3(7.5)	2(5.0)	8(20.0)	21(52.5)	6(15.0)	3.65	1.03
Some biological process in their body	3(7.5)	1(2.5)	8(20.0)	21(52.5)	7(17.5)	3.77	1.04
They want something	1(2.5)	3(7.5)	11(27.5)	22(55.0)	3(7.5)	3.58	1.14
Are angry	3(7.5)	6(15.0)	7(17.5)	18(45.0)	6(15.0)	3.60	1.17
There is nothing else for them to do	2(5.0)	5(12.5)	9(22.5)	20(50.0)	4(10.0)	3.51	1.20
Live in a noisy place	2(5.0)	3(7.5)	10(25.0)	18(45.0)	7(17.5)	3.43	1.21
Feel let down by somebody	1(2.5)	4(10.0)	11(27.5)	18(45.0)	6(15.0)	3.67	1.15
Are physically disabled	2(5.0)	6(15.0)	7(17.5)	21(52.5)	4(10.0)	3.68	1.10
Not much space in their environment to move around	6(15.0)	24(60.0)	10(25.0)			3.89	1.09
Are often left on their own	1(2.5)	2(5.0)	10(25.0)	21(52.5)	6(15.0)	3.58	1.19
Are hungry or thirsty	2(5.0)	4(10.0)	26(65.0)	8(20)	00	3.67	.99
Are frightened	1(2.5)	4(10.0)	7(17.5)	23(57.5)	5(12.5)	3.75	1.12
People do not talk to them much	1(2.5)	5(12.5)	25(62.5)	9(22.5)		3.81	1.09
They want to avoid interesting tasks	3(7.5)	10(25.0)	22(55.0)	5(12.5)		3.78	1.10
Don't go outdoors very much	1(2.5)	4(10.0)	7(17.5)	23(57.5)		3.61	1.18
Are rarely given activities to do	2(5.0)	6(15.0)	7(17.5)	18(45.0)	7(17.5)	3.81	1.09
They want attention from other people	3(7.5)	4(10.0)	7(17.5)	18(45.0)	8(20)	3.73	.96

KEY: VU-very unlikely; UN- unlikely; ELU-equally likely and unlikely; L-likely; VL-very likely

Minimum-1 point, maximum- 5 points, std- standard deviation

The table indicates that just like teachers, teacher aides reported varied perceptions on the causes of challenging behaviours presented by learners with ASDs. They perceived 'are frightened' 23(57.5) and some 'don't go out very much' as the most likely reasons why learners with ASDs engage in challenging behaviours giving it psychological and ecological dimension respectively. The other likely causes of challenging behaviour as perceived by teacher aides were 'their surroundings too crowded' 21(52.5) and some 'biological processes in their body' thus attributing challenging behaviour to ecological and medical perspective respectively. Other significant perception of challenging behaviour by teacher aides included 'are unhappy' 20(50); 'they don't get what they want' 'they are in bad mood both at 19(47.5) indicating behavioural aspect of challenging behaviour.

A one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate job title, professional qualification, and experience differences in finding out practitioners' perception of the causes of challenging behaviour. Seven dependent variables were used to elicit the practitioners' perception of the causes of challenging behaviour presented by learners with ASDs. These were Biological, psychodynamic, ecological, behavioral, humanistic, sociological and psychological challenging behavior perception. The independent variables were job title, length of service and professional qualification. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multi-collinearity, with no serious violations noted. There was no statistically significant difference among the three independent variables on the combined dependent variables: $F(1, 146) = .92, p = .52$ Wilks' Lambda = .93; partial eta squared = .037. When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, there was no any difference to reach statistical significance, using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .004. An inspection of the mean scores indicated that teachers' aide reported slightly higher levels of perception of challenging behaviour being ecological ($M = 15.39, SD = .59$) than teachers ($M = 14.38, SD = .35$); small difference in the perception of psychodynamic behaviour, teachers ($M = 13.9, SD = 14.6$) and teacher's aide ($M = 14.62, SD = .57$) with a record of high believe in all the factors except behavioural perception which recorded low mean score, teacher ($M = 11.0, SD = .31$) and teacher's aide ($M = 11.05, SD = .47$) showing that both practitioners did not believe so much in behavioral perception. A p-p plot was also carried out for sociological perception, to investigate the linearity of the relationship between the practitioner's perception and the challenging behavior as shown in the graph below.

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

Dependent Variable: sociological challenging behaviour perception by practitioners

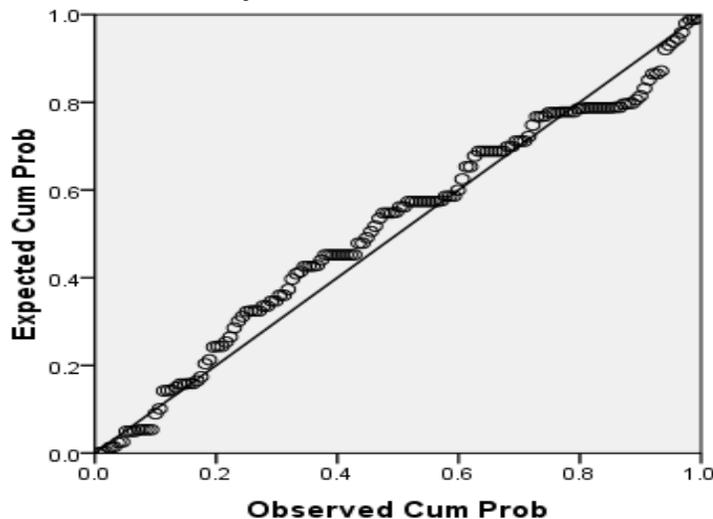


Figure 1.1: Linearity of the relationship between the practitioner's perceptions

To elicit the practitioner's perception of consequences of challenging behaviour presented by learners with ASDs, a questionnaire was constructed having five subscales as consequences of challenging behaviour to the learner presenting the behaviour; consequences to the practitioner managing the behaviour; control for the practitioner – whether the practitioner perceives the challenging behaviour as manageable; time line chronic/acute – whether the behaviour is perceived to be long or short time and time line episodic – whether the behaviour is seen as something that comes and goes.

A Kruskal Wallis test was carried out to explore the impact of job title on total consequence of challenging behaviour (Consequences of challenging behaviour to the learner; consequences to the practitioner; control for the practitioner; time line chronic/acute and time line episodic) as perceived by practitioners. An inspection of the mean rank was done to find out the highest overall ranking corresponding to the highest score on the total consequence of practitioner's perception on the challenging behavior presented by learners with ASDS.

Table 1.3: consequence of behaviour to the learner

Ranks			
	job title	N	Mean Rank
Total consequence for the practitioners perception of challenging behaviour	teacher	106	76.73
	teacher aide	40	
Total		146	

The teachers displayed a high mean rank of 76.73 while the teacher's aide displayed a mean rank of 64.95. Both showed that there was consequence of challenging behavior on learners with ASDS. The results were further tested to find out whether there was a statistically significant difference in the challenging behavior consequence perception by practitioners. The chi-square significant value was found to be greater than .05, [Asymp.sig=.131] meaning that there was no statistically significant difference in the perceptions by practitioners.

Table 1.4: Total consequence of behaviour to the learner

Test Statistics	
total consequence for the learner's perception of challenging behaviour	
Chi-Square	2.276
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.131
a. Kruskal Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: job title	

The study also investigated practitioners perception based on experience of working with learners with ASDs, professional qualification and serving period, a two way between group analysis of variance was carried out. Preliminary analysis was carried out and there was no violation of the assumption of the normality of variance across the groups. This was assessed by Leven's test of homogeneity of variance which had a sig. value great than .05 [asymp.sig=.496] hence the variance of the scores was the same across the groups.

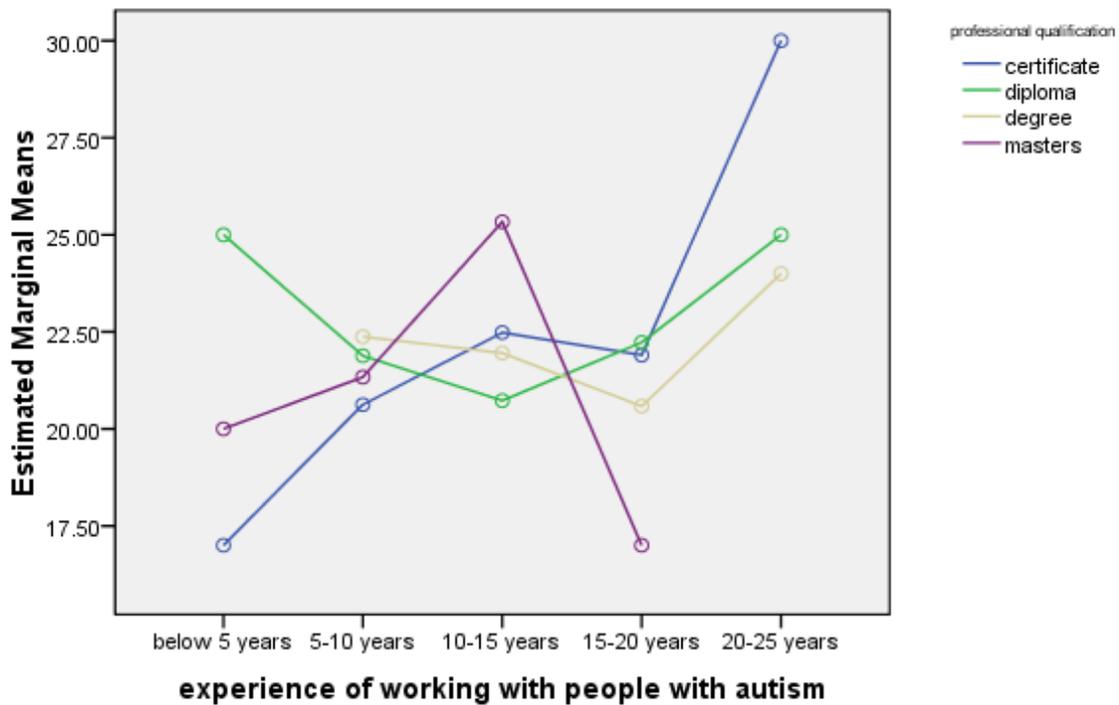
Table 1.5: Levenes test of equality of error variance

Leven's test of equality of error variance			
F	df1	df2	Sig.

1.003	74	70	.496
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Tests of within group ANOVAs indicated that there were no significant differences in the means of total scores across the experience and professional qualification of respondents [Sig. =.635]. A plot was drawn to show the marginal mean difference between level of education and working experience on the practitioner's perception on the total consequence of the challenging behavior on learner's with ASDs.

Estimated Marginal Means of total consequence for the learner's perception of challenging behaviour



Non-estimable means are not plotted

Figure 1.2: Marginal means of total consequence

One of the interesting finding was that teachers who had masters degree and a teaching experience of 15 to 20 years perceived challenging behaviour as having no consequence to the learners.

Consequence to the practitioner

A one way between group analyses was also carried to find out whether there was a consequence of the challenging behavior as presented by learners with ASDs on the practitioner. To determine this, practitioners were asked whether learners with ASDs had affected the way they behaved.

Table 1.5 Levenes test of error variance

Leven’s test of equality of error variance showed a significant value less than .05 hence there was variance of

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances^a

F	df1	df2	Sig.
2.499	85	59	.000

There was a small a significant interaction effect between professional qualification and experience of working with people with ASDs. [Sig=.04] The significant main effect of the two independent variables on practitioner’s perception had partial eta squared[eta²=.18]. The general perception as displayed by the mean differences ranging between 3 and 3.5 showed that the learner’s challenging behavior had changed the way the practitioner’s behaved across all the variables tested.

dependent variable across groups.

Table 1.6: Experience of working with people with Autism

2. experience of working with people with autism

Dependent Variable: learners with ASDs challenging behaviour has affected the way i see myself as a person

experience of working with people with autism	95% Confidence Interval			
	Mean	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
below 5 years	3.000 ^a	.497	2.005	3.995
5-10 years	3.536 ^a	.232	3.071	4.001
10-15 years	3.791 ^a	.167	3.457	4.125
15-20 years	3.692 ^a	.205	3.282	4.103
20-25 years	4.375 ^a	.381	3.613	5.137

a. Based on modified population marginal mean.

Control for the practitioners

To find out the practitioners perception on their ability to control the challenging behaviour exhibited by learners with ASDs, Kruskal Wallis test was carried out and ranked mean tests were inspected. Teachers had the highest mean of 76.14 hence showing high control over the learner’s challenging behavior. Teacher’s aide had a mean of 66.50 as shown in the table below, hence showing little control over the challenging behaviours.

Table 1.7: Table on Ranks

Ranks			
	job title	N	Mean Rank
Total control; for practitioners	teacher	106	76.14
	teacher aide	40	66.50
	Total	146	

Significance difference on the control variable across the variables was also inspected and the results found not to have a statistically significant difference [Asymp. Sig.=.208] As the sig value was greater than .05.

Table 1.8: Equality of Error variance

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances				
	F	df1	df2	Sig.
learners with ASDs find challenging behaviour easier to live with	1.684	8	137	.108
challenging behaviour has serious financial consequences to families of learners with ASDs	1.360	8	137	.220

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups. From table, 1.8 Leven's test of the equality of error variance shows that there was no violation of the homogeneity of variance across any of the variables [the two sig values were greater than .05]. From the multivariate tests, a Wilks Lambda of .601 on the experience showed that there were no differences among the groups while that of job title was below sig value of .05 hence displaying differences among the groups [sig.=.033] There was a statistically significant main effect for job title [$F(1, 146)=6.096$, $p=.15$]; however, the effect size was small (partial eta squared=.043)

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that there were significant difference in the means scores [$M=3.846, SD=.163$, for teachers] while [$M=2.76, SD=.331$, for teacher's aide] on the question of challenging behavior on financial consequences. Teachers recoded a belief of financial consequence on the challenging behavior while teacher aides perceived challenging behaviour as not having financial consequences to the family of learners with ASDs.

Time line episodic

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the time line episodic scores for teachers and teacher's aide. This was to determine their perception on their view of challenging behaviour whether it was permanent or temporary. There was no significant difference in scores for teachers ($M=3.75$, $SD=1.13$) and teacher's aide [$M=3.92$, $SD=.892$; $t(146)=-.916$, $p=.361$]. The magnitude of the differences in the means was very small (eta squared=.008). Thus teachers viewed it as more of timeline episodic that challenging behaviour was coming and going as compared to teacher aides.

Discussion

The results of the present study indicates that both teachers and teacher aides highly ranked the presentation of challenging behaviour by learners with ASDs when they seek attention from other people 57(53.8) and their stay in unpleasant environment. This indicated that they attributed challenging behaviour to sociological and ecological perspectives respectively. This supports Lacey (2009) study that ranked in order attention seeking, task avoidance, communication problems, stress, interference with routines and provocation as some of causes of challenging behaviour presented by learners with developmental disabilities.

It also emerged out that there was difference in perception of the causes of challenging behaviour among the practitioners which could be attributed to lack of unified understanding of what constitutes challenging behaviour and viewed challenging behaviour as a socially constructed process. This social construction of challenging behaviour implies that the strategies to be used by different practitioners to manage challenging behaviour was likely to vary across settings. This social construction of challenging behaviour may therefore mean that different practitioners socially construct differently what constitutes challenging behaviour

The present study also indicates that teachers and teacher aides rated differently the consequences of challenging behaviour. The teachers displayed a high mean rank of 76.73 while the teacher's aide displayed a mean rank of 64.95. Both showed that there was consequence of challenging behavior on learners with ASDs. This supports McDonnell, Stummey, Oliver, Cunningham, Hayes, Galvin Walshe, and Cunningham, (2008) study that highlighted the negative consequences of aggression as rejection by peers, practitioners and family members, increased use of psychotropic medication, injuries to self, peers, practitioners and increased costs of living. This practitioner's perception that challenging behaviour has negative consequence to the learner also supports the findings of Crossland (2009) that challenging behaviour engaged in by learners with ASDs can result into negative consequences for these learners such as being physically and socially excluded from services or neglected by practitioners. It may hinder the learner and other learners from learning, endanger the learners life and that of other learners, cause great strain and stress to the learner others and practitioners and may put the learner on high risk category for later social problems, school failure or drop out.

Some of the perceived social and educational consequences of challenging behaviours mentioned by teachers in the Male (2003) study included: isolation from peers; reduced access to the curriculum; reduced opportunities for participation in extracurricular activities; and risk of injury to self or others. Teachers in the Porter and Lacey (2009) study mentioned pupils missing out on leisure and social activities and reduced contact with their peers and the wider community.

One of the interesting finding was the rating of consequences of challenging behaviour based on professional qualification and amount of experience of respondents. The findings indicate that teachers who had masters degree and a teaching experience of 15 to 20 years perceived challenging behaviour as having no consequence to the learners. This could be an indication that practitioners who hold high professional qualification and are well experienced, perceive challenging behaviour more positively. This finding supports Samantha and Whitaker (2012) study that examined the variance in challenging behaviour management strategies, their effectiveness and the attitudes of nurses and assistant nurses which found out that qualified staff had more significant positive attitudes than nursing assistants. Viewed in another perspective, it could be a shift by experienced practitioners from viewing challenging behaviour from having a unitary cause but instead stress on interaction between the environment and the learner presenting the challenging behaviour (Porter and Lacey, 2009). This perspective views challenging behaviour as a socially constructed process based on assumption that there is a shared belief on how to behave. This kind of perspective seem to have a practical value as it helps to negotiate and redefine what constitutes a challenging behaviour and gives room for redefining acceptable norms which can help the society to change its attitudes so that some challenging behaviours are seen as acceptable (Parsons, 2008).

The finding of the present study highlighted a difference in manner in which practitioners perceived their ability in controlling challenging behaviour presented by learners with ASDs, Teachers displayed highest mean of 76.14 while teacher aides had 66.50. Based on Werner's (1980) theory of helping behaviour, its certain teachers were likely to have better cognitive perception on challenging behaviour presented by learners with ASDs than teacher aides thus more willing to help the learners who present challenging behaviour. Teachers viewed challenging behaviour presented as time line episodic while teacher aides viewed it as more permanent feature for learners with ASDs. This perception has implication to the choice of challenging behaviour management strategy. Practitioners who perceive challenging behaviour as something that comes and goes are likely to examine the environmental consequences maintaining the behaviour and come up with better management strategies than those who perceive challenging behaviour as an inherent characteristic of learners with ASDs.

Conclusion

Results of the present study indicate that practitioner's perceived challenging behaviour presented by learners to be caused by psychodynamic, ecological, psychological, biological, and humanistic factors. They did not significantly perceive challenging behaviour presented by learners with ASDs to be caused by behavioural factors. Both teachers with mean rank of 76.73 and teacher aides mean rank of 64.95 perceived challenging behaviour to have consequences to the learners with ASDs. Teachers perceived challenging behaviour presented to be more episodic than the teacher aides who perceived it as being more permanent.

It clearly emerged from this study that challenging behaviour does not refer to a single topography of behaviour but refers to behaviours that will have a wide range of impacts upon quality of life for learners with ASDs who exhibit challenging behaviour and those who live and work with them. The consequences of challenging behaviour may also be direct via response to challenging behaviour by practitioners and may result into abuse, exclusion, deprivation, inappropriate treatment or systematic neglect.

The finding of the present study indicates that there was considerable divergence in the practitioners' perception on the causes of challenging behaviour. They attributed challenging behaviour to variables such as psychological, behavioural, humanistic, psychodynamic and ecological. Multivariate analysis revealed that there were no statistically significant differences among the three independent variables- job title, length of service and professional qualification against combined dependent variables.

Recommendations

1. Practitioners need to be given more training on learners with ASDs more so on challenging behaviour causes so as to have positive feelings towards challenging behaviour.
2. There is need for offering more support services to practitioners working with learners with ASDs such as counseling to enable them develop positive attitudes towards their management of challenging behaviour presented by learners with ASDs

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