

Rising Above Disabilities: A Qualitative Analysis of Psychology Interns of San Pedro College on Handling Students with Intellectual Disability

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Abstract: The study aimed to understand the experiences of Psychology Interns caring for children with intellectual disability. The qualitative phenomenological research design was utilized, and narrative inquiry were the method used for data gathering. The participants were four interns and three graduates who underwent internship from different institutions in Davao City. A total of seven semi-structured interview questions were used in data gathering which were validated by three experts. The results yielded the following emergent themes: Difficult, Physical harm, Fulfilling, Varied Experiences, Requires Empathy and Requires One-On-One Interaction. It is concluded that experiences of Psychology interns as a new field in Psychology presents numerous challenges and opportunities to interns, educators, administrators, policy makers and researchers. The experiences of Psychology interns will help policymakers develop standards and guide stakeholders towards the best practices for this area of Psychology interns.

Keywords: Intellectual disability, Davao City, Psychology interns, Qualitative Analysis, San Pedro College

I. INTRODUCTION

Intellectual disability is a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem-solving) and in adaptive behaviour, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before the age of 18. The intellectual disability may vary from mild to profound. Adaptive behaviour includes skills that people learn so that they can function in their everyday lives. This delayed development is reflected through low performance across academic and other skill areas (Nygen,2017)

Intellectual disability can be mild or more severe. Children with intellectual disabilities may take longer to learn to speak, walk, and take care of their personal needs such as dressing or eating. They are likely to have trouble learning in school. They will learn, but it will take them longer. So, it's important that students with intellectual disabilities be involved in, and make progress in, the general education curriculum. That is the same curriculum that is learned by those without disabilities It's important to raise awareness that the idea does not permit a student to be removed from education in age-appropriate general education classrooms solely because he or she needs modifications to be made in the general education curriculum. It is also advisable for the

parents to be patient and hopeful for a child, like every child, to have a whole lifetime to learn and grow. It is better if they encourage independence in the child, give them frequent feedback and praise them when they do well to build the child's abilities, find out what skills the child is learning and take pleasure in the beautiful one for He—she—is a treasure. Those with intellectual disabilities have a special light within—let it shine (Hayer, 2017).

An internship is a program that allows students and recent graduates to gain practical work experience with a company or organization (Vinay, 2017). It will allow you to learn more about your possible career paths, gain valuable experience that can be added to your resume, begin to develop your professional network and, potentially earn academic credit and pay for the work you are performing. Despite the progress in knowledge about the mental health needs of people with intellectual disabilities, consultation for the new report showed that little progress has been made in training.

A course of B.S. in Psychology introduces students to the scientific study of behaviour. It familiarizes the students with the different approaches in Psychology. Emphasis is placed on human development, nervous system, sensation and perception, intelligence, learning, memory, motivation and emotion, personality and human sexuality. Depending on the field of Psychology a student is interested in pursuing, a master's, specialist or doctoral degree may be required. As with most clinical occupations, however, schooling is only part of the process. For most psychology degrees and positions, practical experience is necessary as well.

Given that intellectual disability is common to children and that it is under the study of Psychology, the experiences of interns in handling children with intellectual disability has still not yet been fully explored. Due to this, the researchers were enlightened to do this study in going deeper into the experiences of the interns. The researchers also intend to find out the specific challenges that the interns underwent in their specific field of practice.

II. METHODS

2.1 Design

The study used the qualitative phenomenological. Qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior. The researcher will also examine the phenomenology that will test the uniqueness of individual's lived situation of the Psychology interns caring children with intellectual disability.

2.2 Participants

There were seven chosen participants through purposeful sampling. The inclusion of criteria contains: a full time Psychology students of any kind of colleges or universities, undergone Internship and it's either male or female.

2.3 Measures

The study used a researcher-made semi-structured interview guide questions that was submitted to three experts for content validation. It has also gone pilot testing for construct validity.

2.4 Procedure

The research project used the qualitative evaluation that was used to assess the seven participants in the Davao City in order to collect information needed to fulfil the desired study. The survey allowed them to give their personal experiences on handling students with intellectual disability as their duty being Psych Interns.

2.5 Conducting the study

The researchers prepared an Informed Assent Form that was given to the participants before they were interviewed. After disseminating the forms, the researchers then prepared the certificate of assent filled in by the participants whether they are going to partake or involve in the study. The researchers made also other applications like making letters to the School Head and Dean of the Arts and Sciences to enable us to conduct and proceed to our research study.

The researchers selected seven participants of Psychology students who underwent internship. The researchers informed the Psychology students and graduates about the research study. Next, the researchers gave an orientation about what to do while conducting the study. Lastly, each participant was interviewed by the researchers and answered the prepared question based on their experiences.

The gathering of data was done accordingly. The researchers compared the result from the different participants being interviewed. Furthermore, the information being collected was validated through the data analysis particularly the thematic analysis.

III. RESULTS

The narratives gathered from the participants were encoded carefully and scrutinized well to classify the significant statements. After the relevant statements were tabulated, meanings were developed and later grouped into clustered themes.

The one-on-one interview with the respondents affirmed the experiences of interns caring for children with intellectual disability. Significant experiences mostly centered around the daily life of the Psychology students during their internship.

It includes their relationship towards the child they are caring, the change of their perspective and the challenges they encountered. The feedbacks of the respondents for the one-on-one interview were classified which resulted to the formation to the clustered themes.

3.1 Main Themes

The researchers accumulated seven main clustered themes that developed from the significant statements on the experiences of Psychology interns caring for children with intellectual disability. These are the following: 1) Difficult; 2) Physical harm; 3) Fulfilling; 4) Varied Experiences; 5) Requires Empathy; 6) Requires one-on-one interaction.

3.1.1 Clustered Theme 1) Difficult.

Mostly, the participants experienced difficulty in handling children with intellectual disability during their internship. This may let them strive hard to get the attention of the children. Generally, the participants stated that during the first encounter of the children with intellectual disability was not easy. This is in line with the statements of various participants: Conan: *"Hard to please. They don't really trust you, it's really hard for them to open up themselves."* (The children were hard to please. They don't really trust you, it's really hard for them to open up their selves). Conan: *"Dako siya na responsibility."* It's a big responsibility.; Sabrina: *"Hindi sila sociable so kailangan mag-double effort."* They are not sociable, so you need to double your effort.; Shea: *"Di magsunod sa sasabihin ko."* They don't obey to what I say.

3.1.2 Clustered theme 2.) Physical Harm.

Physical pain, injury, or bodily harm, these were some of the incidents that the Psychology interns were dealing while handling children with intellectual disability. Physical harm imposed by the children with intellectual disability is related to one sub theme: It connotes understanding. In the words of Psychology Interns: Sabrina: *"Ang iba doon kay manakit, so kailangan mo talaga na i-immune ang self mo 735aming735n na environment para lang maka survive for like 1 month"* Other children may impose physically harm to you, so you have to immune yourself to the environment for you to survive for a month. Krispy Kreme: *"Matest jud imung patience. Kay nay times na ano sila.. kanang mambira, magscratch, muluwa sila."* Your patience will be tested because there were times when they will grab, scratch and spit

on you. Karla: *“Di ka pwede mu ingon na ‘You’re wrong.’ Kay basig ma sumbagan ka.”* You can’t tell them they are wrong because maybe they will punch you.

3.1.3 Clustered Theme 3) Fulfilling.

Fulfillment is one of the factor the participants encountered in handling children with intellectual disability. The participants feel fulfilled on how they helped the children with disability such as memory recall, develop motor skills and reading. This where the participants gained strength and feel motivated in dealing with children with intellectual disability. This is in line with the statements of various participants: Participant 1: *“Fulfilling siya because it opens up a whole new kind of perspective.”* It is fulfilling because it opens up a whole new kind of perspective.; Conan: *“Fulfilling gihapon because we are able to share and give support.”* It is also fulfilling because we are able to share and give support to them.; Krispy Kreme: *“Fulfilling kay finally nahuman na jud ang pinaghirapan.”* It is fulfilling because finally the internship that they sought for is over.

3.1.4 Clustered theme 4) Varied Experiences.

There were different experiences that the participants have encountered during their internship. These experiences widen their perspective, developed relationship and help them to understand well the children with intellectual Disability. As stated by the participants, Conan: *“During my internship it’s not easy tapos ano kanang dile pa kayo in-ana ka open ang society regarding sa Autism Spectrum. Ang uban man gud kay muingon ug pareha sa ‘Hala Mongoloid mana sya’ or ana bitaw so murag na happy ko kay na Psych ko kay at least na understand nako sila.”* During my internship, it is not easy and because the society is still not open regarding to the illness Autism Spectrum. Other people would say ‘he/she is abnormal’, like that and I’m happy because I’m a Psychology student that at least I can understand those people who have Intellectual Disability. Mark: *“Parang connected gud talaga kami.”* I can feel that we have a connection with each other.

3.1.5 Clustered theme 5) Requires Empathy.

Psychology Interns needs to develop empathy skills in order for the patients to feel secured and being loved. Empathy is related into two sub themes: Patience and Coping. As by the participants stated: Conan: *“It should be your choice to be in that program because If you enroll sa psychology half hearted then it’s better na muhawa nalang ka ana nga course because psychology requires a whole hearted nga service.”* It should be your choice to be in that program because if you enroll in Psychology with half hearted then it is better that you will not pursue this course because Psychology requires a whole hearted service. Anna: *“Sa akong ano internship? Siguro emphatic kay murag makit-an man gud nako.. nagavisit man gud.. ay kanang ginahatluld man gud sila sa parents tapos murag somewhat ma ano ko sa.. kanang maluoy ko sa mga parents ba ug mahanga pud ko kay dile man gud lalim na nay anak na nay ingun ana na sakit.”* During my internship? I guess, it’s being emphatic because

every time I see their parents bringing them to school, I somehow feel pity for them. At the same time, they inspired me for I know it’s not hard to endure the hardships of having a child with Intellectual Disability.

3.1.6 Clustered theme 6.) Requires one-on-one Interaction.

The interaction between the children with intellectual Disability and the Psychology interns requires direct individual communication. One-on-one Interaction between the interns and the children with intellectual Disability was related to three sub themes: Willingness, Passion for work, and the need for full attention. In the words of Psychology interns: Mark: *“Hands on talaga kasi ang daily task 736aming is one on one talaga kami kasi ang style of teaching 736aming is one on one hindi siya as one class one teacher so one teacher one student.”* It is a hands-on experience since our daily task is to teach them one-on-one, not by class. Krispy Kreme *“Hands on jud sya na experience.”* It is indeed a hands-on experience.

IV. DISCUSSION

This study was conducted intended to gather information about the life experiences of the Psychology interns in caring children with intellectual disability. One-on-one interview among the interviewers and the participants were done in different settings. The same set of questions was asked to the participants for purposes which is beneficial in tabulating and validating each participants’ significant statements.

In addition, the results of this study were collated and tabulated by the researchers. Subsequently, the data were given formulated meanings and clustered into themes to find out if the results touched the sub themes the researchers are aiming for.

Challenging: According to the participants that the researchers interviewed, caring children with intellectual disability is very hard to handle because they do not listen or obey to what you will say in order to keep them united. These youngsters lack care skills. They communicate poorly and often have behavioral problems including repetitive or self-stimulating behavior. A disruption in the mastery of specific developmental skills also can present unique challenges for the child or adolescent’s caregivers and family, in how they engage as well as respond to the child. The challenging aspect happens to both the participant and the children because it will take time for the participant to teach them in order to develop the memory recall and motor skills, and since the children have the intellectual disability they have the difficulty to develop themselves. This implies that Psychology Interns need efficient coping skills to easily adapt themselves in an environment and maintaining the same demeanor despite facing problems. Second is the need for efficient communicating skills to enable them to interact with the children with little to no difficulty. Another one is entailment of efficient flexibility which is defined as to easily change oneself when facing children with different intellectual

disability.

Physical Harm: Some physical problems encountered by the participants are being slapped, thrown by the chair, punched, etc. Therefore, having a child with intellectual disability requires a deeper understanding to the lifelong intervention for them since they are the one who has a disorder

Our understanding of Intellectual Disability has grown and expanded from one of ignorance and fear to one of knowledge, understanding and acceptance. With this understanding our care for people with Intellectual Disabilities has also evolved. This implies that for the institutions that carry internship to prevent injuries and other unfavorable situations, it is recommended to employ more manpower. While efficient decision making is needed for the Psychology Interns in order to make decision that will yield beneficial results to the institution and the children. Another one is the requisite presence of mind for them to think quick and know what to do when bad situations arise.

Requires Empathy: One clustered theme of the study is it requires empathy. Handling children with intellectual disability requires proper caring and understanding. Approaching these individuals with empathy can have a positive impact on the difficulties that they face on a daily basis. According to the participants, you need to understand their feelings and behaviors because what they are going through is not easy. Others view empathy as an attribute that enables healthcare providers to understand the inner experiences of children, to communicate this understanding, and to respond in a therapeutic way. Empathy facilitates the development of mutual trust, shared understanding, and optimal communication, allowing children with disability to feel understood and listened to. Most of the participants say that it is not easy to handle children with disabilities and in order to survive their 1 month internship; all they need to do is to have patience because a child with intellectual disability has difficulties with conveyed meanings through speech and nonverbal language, such as body language and facial expressions. This can make communication difficult because the child does not understand the need to reciprocate, as it is not easy to work out another person's intentions. This implies that Psychology Interns should be empathic, to create connections with the children with Intellectual Disability and bring them together and help forge good relationship. Another attribute to be considered is patience, to withstand children with intellectual disability, to tolerate and withstand shortcomings.

Requires one-on-one Interaction: According to the respondents, children with intellectual disabilities lacks focus and attention in doing their activities, thus it required them to put their full attention to the child they are handling and by providing hands on learning methods. In a one-on-one relationship, teachers can get to know their student's fully and keep track of their progress, gauging their successes and struggles. Instructors can then adjust or completely alter

lesson plans, deadlines, course projects etc., so as to fully serve the student, it also lessen the distraction and overstimulation of a room full of peers, students are able to focus all of their attention on their instructor and the material being learned. One-on-one interactions enable the student to use all of their brain power on school and not on the environment around them. Hands on learning can also be an effective way of teaching a student with intellectual disability. A hands-on approach is particularly helpful for students with ID. They learn best when information is concrete and observed. It is important to make sure that people settle for the job that they like. Being passionate has multitudes of benefits in life. Caring for children with intellectual disability requires willingness to take full responsibility for their efforts, actions and results. A willingness to take ownership of every step along the way from training, to the process, to daily actions and the results that come from them. This implies that interns should be committed in their work for them to execute the duty correctly and be passionate in order to fully commit themselves in providing care.

Fulfilling: All children need love, encouragement, and support especially for children with intellectual disability. Children with intellectual disability exhibit less community participation and fewer social relationships. According to our participant that it was fulfilling because it opens a whole new kind perspective with those kinds of cases. In the general public on average assumes that children with intellectual disability are always screaming, breaking things, freaking out over little details, or whatever, and that our lives as parents are miserable black hopes. The term implies that those who are not contented are unhappy, miserable the opposite of the term might be. Also, children with intellectual disability can leave you feeling upset, shocked and concerned. It may be helpful to remember that your child is still the same person and that nothing has changed. The better support your child receives, the more they can thrive, be happy and achieve their potential. Intellectual disability does not stop a child from having an enjoyable life and the determination to keep going even when things are tough. The Psychology interns and the children with intellectual disability develop not only a student-teacher relationship but a sense of family spirit towards each other.

Varied Experience: People with intellectual disability can experience difficulties and understanding the complicated abstract nature of intimacy, also relationships can contribute to difficulty in day-to-day life and cause vulnerability to exploitation. According to our respondents, handling children with intellectual disability experience difficulties associated with their care, challenging because of their minimum attentions span and hard to control their behavior. To clear things, human diversity does not mean we all have the same interests and have to be friends, it just means we all are in this world together to interact with each other at some point in our lives. This implies that the participants experienced different world on their first internship.

V. CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that experiences of Psychology interns as a new field in Psychology presents numerous challenges and opportunities to interns, educators, administrators, policy makers and researchers.

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