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Knowledge of teachers regarding fine motor skills of children with Down syndrome in the context of special education in Southern Province of Sri Lanka

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Fine motor skills (FMS) are essential functional performance skills for children to interact within the classroom environment successfully. Children with Down Syndrome (DS) are predisposed to specific challenges due to deficits in FMS. This study is aimed to determine the knowledge of teachers regarding FMS of children with DS in the context of special education in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. A cross-sectional study was conducted among all consenting eligible teachers (n=147) working in government schools of the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. The self-administered questionnaire was developed based on literature and expert opinion, to assess awareness, factors affecting, and interventions to improve FMS. To determine the level of knowledge, a score was assigned for correct responses resulting in total scores for each of the three domains. Good knowledge was defined as having a score equal to or above the median. The associations between teachers' characteristics and their knowledge of FMS were assessed using the Chi-square test. Approximately 93% of subjects were females with a mean age (\pm SD) of 43.1 (\pm 10.1) years. Approximately 30% of teachers have had training in special education and 83% had children with DS in their classrooms. A good knowledge on awareness of, factors affecting, and interventions to improve FMS were observed in 74.1% (n=109), 66.0% (n=97), and 68.0% (n=100) respectively. Sixty one percent (n=89) of teachers had good overall knowledge of FMS. Teachers who had a training in special education had a significantly higher knowledge of FMS (p=0.042). The teachers' knowledge of FMS was significantly associated with being aware of FMS difficulties in children with DS (p= 0.046). The results suggest that teachers were less knowledgeable in factors affecting FMS and interventions to improve FMS of children with DS. Teachers having special education training had significantly better knowledge of FMS. Further research is needed to determine whether teachers working in the context of special education in Sri Lanka having intensive training improve the FMS of children with DS.

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