



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Inclusive education for children with learning difficulties in Mauritius: An analytical study among select stakeholders

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Abstract

The present research explores the intricate terrain of inclusive education in Mauritius, providing insightful viewpoints on the implemented practices, policies, and support networks. Through the integration of quantitative and qualitative research approaches, this study offers a thorough examination of the situation of inclusive education, allowing for the identification of learning-disabled children in Mauritius. The results offer useful information that helps improve policies and regulations to improve these kids' educational outcomes and experiences. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, this study examines inclusive education for kids with learning disabilities in Mauritius in great detail. Parents, educators, and representatives from pertinent organizations participate in the research. The research delves deeply into their viewpoints, issues, and experiences. About 25 parents of children with learning disabilities participated in a survey that was part of the study's quantitative component. The purpose of the study was to collect quantitative information about parents' experiences and viewpoints on inclusive education in Mauritius. The qualitative phase involved conducting in-depth interviews with a wide range of individuals. ECCEA, SENA, speech and language pathologists, one integrated school, five parents, ten non-profit special education teachers, and a representative from academics were among them. These interviews were carried out in order to acquire more data on the various facets of inclusive education, including the difficulties encountered, workable solutions, and the duties of various stakeholders.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Learning difficulties, Stakeholders.

Introduction

Any form of mental or physical impairment is considered a disability. People with disabilities undoubtedly face prejudice, marginalization, and discrimination on a regular basis (Peterson, 2018). This negatively impacts the lives of parents of children with disabilities (CWDs). When asked about integrating their children into mainstream education, parents of students with disabilities often pointed to the lack of advancements in assistive technology, accessible infrastructure, and the fact that their only option for teaching their children was SEN schools (Ministry of Education, 2021). It is emphasized that parents are still a child's first teachers.

The decision-making process pertaining to their children's tutoring must involve the parents. There is no denying that parental participation promotes kids' academic success. Students with impairments should have reasonable accommodations in the classroom. Schools should provide for the academic, social, and life skills requirements of every student. When needed, alternative teaching techniques like braille instruction or the use of other communication tools should be used.

Despite the growing attention that enrollment of CWDs in integrated and inclusive public schools has received worldwide, some CWDs are unable to attend these public institutions due to a lack of support and accessibility. Because of this, the governments of a number of countries, including Mauritius, have put in place unique measures, like as legislation and regulations, to support CWDs in receiving a sufficient education and to solve the difficulties involved in attending ordinary schools. The establishment of special education needs schools (SENs) is one of the projects being carried out by several governments, including those in the Netherlands, UK, Denmark, Canada, and some other nations (Ministry of National Education and Youth, 2023).

Every child in Mauritius has the constitutional right to an education, and all major accords pertaining to education

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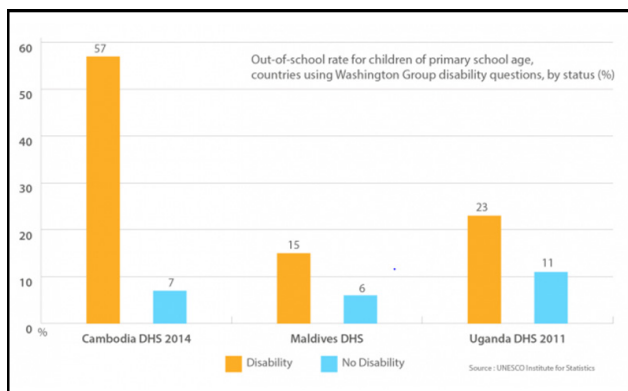
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and children with disabilities have been approved by the government (International Journal of Law, Humanities & Social Science, 2020). According to data from the most recent census, which was conducted in 2022, 2.3% of Mauritius's under-15-year-old population is impaired (Statistics Mauritius, 2022). The percentage increased from 1.5% in the 2011 census. As of October 2021, there were 2,754 students enrolled in Mauritius' 72 special education institutions, with males making up the majority of the student population (67.4%) (Charles Telfair Centre, 2021).

Figure 1 shows the proportion of elementary school-age children who do not attend primary or secondary education. Research shows that children with disabilities are disproportionately kept out of school. This fact has led to the implementation of this research for learning-disabled youngsters in Mauritius.

The review's study topic centers on the challenge of effectively implementing inclusive education practices for kids with learning disabilities in Mauritius. Determining the viewpoints of many stakeholders about inclusive education is crucial in this particular scenario. This objective is to explore the perspectives, worries, and thoughts of those involved in the field of education, such as educators, parents, legislators, speech and occupational therapists, and members of the community. The following might be used to describe the research problem: In Mauritius, inclusive education is supported by a strategy framework. However, there is a gap between the aspirations of the strategy and its actual implementation, particularly when it comes to children who struggle with learning. Things like inadequate resources might cause this gap, inadequately prepared teachers, a lack of resource people, and inflexible curricula. It is essential to comprehend the many perspectives of stakeholders in order to identify barriers to successful integration and develop strategies for inclusive education. The research topic thus tackles the need to close the gap between the idea and reality of inclusive education by concentrating on the particular difficulties faced by the learning-disabled children of Mauritius.



(Source: Unesco, 2022)

Figure 1: Out-of-school rate of children with disabilities

This study aims to provide important experiences that can shed light on strategy modifications, teacher training initiatives, and community engagement campaigns to create a more robust and inclusive learning environment for all kids.

Early detection of specific learning disabilities, such as dyscalculia or dyspraxia, is necessary for timely intervention. By using screening tools, youth educators can identify symptoms and provide tailored medication and timely assistance. Teachers and other support personnel may lessen the negative effects of these barriers to academic progress and, with considerable improvement, identify these challenges early on and provide targeted assistance, customized learning plans, and resources. In this way, impacted children can receive the resources and assistance they require to thrive academically and socially.

According to (Purmah 2021), "In 2006, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources in Mauritius adopted inclusive education in response to the increasing demand to address the special educational needs of children with disabilities."

Materials and Methods

Materials

A survey overseen by several parties involved in inclusive education in Mauritius was used to collect data. The survey approach was chosen due to its ability to collect data efficiently and at a reasonable cost.

Survey Instrument

To collect information from parents, educators, legislators, and other key stakeholders, a quantitative survey was developed. The poll included both closed-ended and genuine questions to ensure quantitative data for factual research and qualitative information for a deeper comprehension of viewpoints.

Questionnaire Organization

All members received the same set of questions in order to ensure uniformity and parity in responses. The members' availability and inclination dictated whether the survey was sent electronically or on paper. Both quantitative and qualitative components are included in the questionnaire design. A well-structured questionnaire with both closed- and open-ended questions ensures reliability and consistency for all respondents while collecting quantitative data. This contains standardized questions so that all guardians may get precise data. Open-ended questions are used in interviews and focus groups to get qualitative insights, enabling a deeper exploration of respondents' perspectives and experiences. Comprehensive interviews provide further insight and are tailored to each responder and their unique disability. Flexibility is preserved to detect subtle responses, guaranteeing meticulous data collection and analysis.

Methods

A mixed-methodologies strategy was used in the study, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. After carefully considering all of the relevant factors, this approach was settled upon as the best way to go into the specifics of inclusive education for children with learning difficulties in Mauritius.

The study adhered to a positivist philosophy, emphasizing the value of objective request and experimental verification. This philosophy was selected to support the advancement of deterministic and thoughtless research, strengthening the basis for real, evidence-based discoveries (Park *et al.*, 2020).

Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, collected data was examined (SPSS). To summarize and illustrate the properties of the data, such as the proportions of central tendency and dispersion, descriptive statistics were used (Paseka & Schwab, 2020). The degree and direction of the links between the elements were analyzed using Pearson correlation analysis, with a focus on examining correlations between the opinions of various stakeholders on inclusive education. In order to ascertain the elements influencing stakeholders' opinions of inclusive education and to forecast future results in light of grounded theories and research findings, a relapse investigation was employed.

Throughout the whole data-gathering procedure, the research adhered to ethical guidelines. Every participant gave their informed consent, and their privacy and confidentiality were ensured. The applicable institutional audit board or ethics committee also endorsed the research as ethically sound. It's critical to acknowledge some of the study's limitations, such as possible biases in the self-reported data, survey research limits (such as generalizability and reaction rate), and restrictions on utilizing SPSS for analysis. In order to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, steps were made to ensure the accuracy and consistency of data collection and analysis (Singh *et al.*, 2020). This included applying proper investigative statistical approaches, comprehensive data-cleaning processes, and standardized survey tools. In order to confirm the findings and raise the research's legitimacy, data from other sources and methodologies was also triangulated.

The chosen approaches and the goal are well aligned in many respects. First of all, a mixed-methods approach

takes into account a thorough investigation of stakeholders' viewpoints, taking into account both qualitative and quantitative data. This method ensures that a variety of viewpoints and interactions may be recorded, providing a sophisticated comprehension of the subject. By using a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions in a quantitative questionnaire, it is possible to gather stakeholder perspectives in an organized and methodical manner, which enables statistical analysis to find trends, patterns, and correlations between responses (Su *et al.*, 2020). This approach allows effective management of large amounts of data while taking into account additional insights from qualitative analysis of unconditional reactions. By finding links between elements and forecasting future results given present data, statistical tools like Pearson correlation and relapse investigation further enhance the study of stakeholders' views. Overall, the approaches selected offer a comprehensive and organized approach to handling data collecting and analysis, which helps to identify stakeholders' viewpoints on inclusive education for kids with learning difficulties.

Ethical Consideration

It was essential to take this investigation's conduct into account. This was not a required survey, nor was it meant to coerce anybody. The participants were invited to engage willingly and were made aware of their ability to reject and withdraw from the activity at any time. A briefing outlining the goals of the study and the selection procedure was also given to them. The participants pledge to maintain the strictest confidentiality about any information collected. Data analysis would never be upsetting to anyone. The participants were also given the assurance that their personal opinions would be kept secret and utilized exclusively to further the goals of the study. In-person interviews were carried out with the necessary precautions to guarantee that the respondents weren't distressed emotionally by the queries. The main disadvantage of interviews, according to (Glastonbury & MacKean 2020), is the possibility of bias entering the process because it might be difficult to treat each respondent fairly. To ensure that the data was gathered impartially, great care was taken. When inputting and analyzing the data, we adhered to the information obtained from the interviews.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

<i>Descriptive statistics</i>					
	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. deviation</i>
Gender	25	1	2	1.52	.510
Age	25	1	4	2.60	1.041
Relation with children	25	1	9	3.32	2.704
Valid N (listwise)	25				

(Source: SPSS)

Results

The result was evaluated based on "Descriptive"

The descriptive questions in the survey focused on the respondents' age, gender, and relationship to the children. The replies had a standard deviation of 0.510 and an age-related mean value of 1.52. The average age of the participants was 2.60, and their standard deviation was 1.041. The mean score for the respondent's relationship with the children was 3.32 with a standard deviation of 2.704, as reported by (Mishra *et al.* 2019). Age, gender, and relationship have maximum values of 2, 4, and 9, respectively (Table 1).

The results of the correlation analysis illuminated a few critical areas concerning inclusive education for kids with learning disabilities in Mauritius. The correlational analysis reveals important relationships between many variables. There is a strong link (1.000) between "Does the child have learning difficulties?" and "Can the child write texts," "Can the child read texts," and "Memory power of the child." In contrast, "Support from school" completely matches "Teachers' extra attention on children," "School management system for children with learning difficulties", along with "Children with learning issues need support and care." These results underscore the interdependence of factors impacting kids' learning experiences and emphasize the need for comprehensive support networks in learning environments. First off, a close relationship between the variables such as "Does the child have learning difficulties?", "Can the child read texts?", "Can the child write texts?", and "Memory power of the child" is highlighted by the significant connection between the components. "Support from school", "Teachers' extra attention on children," "School management system for children with learning difficulties", together with "Children with learning issues need support and care". This shows that a child's capacity to read, write, and retain knowledge may be greatly impacted by learning challenges (Table 2).

Furthermore, the relationships that exist between elements of school assistance, teachers' additional attention, school administration, and the need for care and support emphasize how crucial it is to provide a welcoming and inclusive learning environment. These findings imply that sufficient educational assistance, such as focused instructors and efficient procedures designed specifically for kids with learning challenges, is necessary for their academic success. Furthermore, the relationships between variables, such as "Advising" and "Training for teaching children with learning difficulties," highlight the significance of certain interventions and assist administrators in meeting the needs of students with learning difficulties. These findings imply that comprehensive support systems, such as teacher training programs and student guidance administrations, play a crucial role in advancing inclusive education and meeting the diverse needs of students. Legislators and

educators can more effectively design and carry out strategies to promote inclusive education and support intellectual and social development, everything being equal, regardless of their realizing abilities, by knowing the interrelationships between other factors (Yada *et al.*, 2022).

Regression Analysis

The model summary for the regression test is presented in Table 3 that can be seen below. According to the table that came before this one, the letter "R" has a value of 1.000. According to the model summary for the regression model that was used to evaluate the progress that has been made in inclusive education in Mauritius, there is a perfect match ($R = 1.000$, $R\text{ Square} = 1.000$). A number of predictors, such as the children's memory strength, the board structure for children with learning challenges, and the advice that they receive at school, are all incorporated into this model. The adjusted R Square remains at 1.000, which indicates that the predictors are able to account for all of the variance in the variable that is being forecasted. The major objective of the study is to assess the promotion of inclusive education and particular areas of knowledge concerning parental problems, stakeholder opinions in Mauritius, and incapacities. This robust model is in keeping with the main purpose of the study, which is to evaluate these specific areas of knowledge. This "R" value is affected by the predictors used for the regression study. The three variables that were chosen as regression predictors were, according to (Jfri, *et al.* 2021), "Counselling," "School management system for children with learning difficulties," and "Memory power of the child." The "R square" for the selected model is 1.000. For this model, the adjusted R square is 1.000. This regression model's estimate has no standard error. By examining the factors influencing the overall model, the study goal which focuses on comprehending stakeholders' viewpoints about inclusive education for kids with learning disabilities is linked to the relapse analysis. With predictors like "Directing," "School management system for children with learning difficulties," and "Memory force of youngster," the regression model produced a R square of 1.000, meaning that these factors together account for 100% of the change in the outcome variable. This alignment highlights the significance of elements such as memory power, effective school administration systems, and mentoring in shaping attitudes and behaviors around inclusive education for kids with learning disabilities.

For this experiment, the ANOVA test was conducted once the model was selected. The results of the ANOVA test are shown in the Table 4. The table below shows that the degree of freedom (df) for the regression is 3, and the sum of squares is 3.360. The mean square value of the regression was found to be 1.120. According to (Flatt and Jacobs 2019), the regression's "F value" or significance value is not produced by the ANOVA test. The sum of squares

Table 2: Correlation

		<i>Correlations</i>									
		<i>Does Child Have Learning difficulties</i>	<i>Can The Child Read texts</i>	<i>Can The Child Write texts</i>	<i>Memory Power of child</i>	<i>Support From school</i>	<i>Teachers' Extra Attention to child</i>	<i>School Management system for children with learning difficulties</i>	<i>Training For Treating children</i>	<i>Counselling</i>	<i>Children With Learning Issue Need Support and care</i>
Does child have learning difficulties	Pearson Correlation	1	1.000**	1.000**	1.000**	.053	.053	.053	-.206	-.206	.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.802	.802	.802	.322	.322	.802
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Can the child read texts	Pearson Correlation	1.000**	1	1.000**	1.000**	.053	.053	.053	-.206	-.206	.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.802	.802	.802	.322	.322	.802
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Can the child write a text	Pearson Correlation	1.000**	1.000**	1	1.000**	.053	.053	.053	-.206	-.206	.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.802	.802	.802	.322	.322	.802
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Memory power of child	Pearson Correlation	1.000**	1.000**	1.000**	1	.053	.053	.053	-.206	-.206	.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.802	.802	.802	.322	.322	.802
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Support from school	Pearson Correlation	.053	.053	.053	.053	1	1.000**	1.000**	.017	.017	1.000**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.802	.802	.802	.802		.000	.000	.934	.934	.000
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Teachers extra attention to child	Pearson Correlation	.053	.053	.053	.053	1.000**	1	1.000**	.017	.017	1.000**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.802	.802	.802	.802	.000		.000	.934	.934	.000
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
School management system for children with learning difficulties	Pearson Correlation	.053	.053	.053	.053	1.000**	1.000**	1	.017	.017	1.000**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.802	.802	.802	.802	.000	.000		.934	.934	.000
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Training for teaching children with learning difficulties	Pearson Correlation	-.206	-.206	-.206	-.206	.017	.017	.017	1	1.000**	.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.322	.322	.322	.322	.934	.934	.934		.000	.934
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Counselling	Pearson Correlation	-.206	-.206	-.206	-.206	.017	.017	.017	1.000**	1	.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.322	.322	.322	.322	.934	.934	.934	.000		.934
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Children with learning issue need support and care	Pearson Correlation	.053	.053	.053	.053	1.000**	1.000**	1.000**	.017	.017	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.802	.802	.802	.802	.000	.000	.000	.934	.934	
	N	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3: Model summary

<i>Model summary</i>				
<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	<i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i>
1	1.000 ^a	1.000	1.000	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Counselling, School_management_system_for_children_with_learning_difficulties, Memory_power_of_child^a

Table 4: ANOVA test

<i>ANOVA^a</i>						
<i>Model</i>		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1	Regression	3.360	3	1.120	.	. ^b
	Residual	.000	21	.000		
	Total	3.360	24			

a. Dependent Variable: Children_with_learning_issue_need_support_and_care

b. Predictors: (Constant), Counselling, School_management_system_for_children_with_learning_difficulties, Memory_power_of_child^a

Table 5: Coefficient test

<i>Coefficients^a</i>						
<i>Model</i>		<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>		
1	(Constant)	.000	.000		.	.
	Memory_power_of_child	.000	.000	.000	.	.
	School_management_system_for_children_with_learning_difficulties	1.000	.000	1.000	.	.
	Counselling	.000	.000	.000	.	.

a. Dependent Variable: Children_with_learning_issue_need_support_and_care

for the residual is 0.000, and its "degree of freedom (df)" is equal to 21. The mean square value of the residual is 0.000. In this ANOVA test, the total "degree of freedom (df)" found is 24, and the overall sum of squares is 3.360 (Chicco., *et al.*, 2021). The ANOVA test's dependent variable is "Children with learning issues need support and care." The variables that forecast include "Counselling," "School management system for children with learning difficulties," along with "Child's memory power."

The ANOVA test is related to the study goal of comprehending stakeholders' viewpoints on inclusive education for kids with learning disabilities since it examines the effects of particular variables on the dependent variable, "Children with learning issues need support and care." By analyzing the change explained by the relapse model, the ANOVA test determines if the selected predictors together substantially contribute to explaining the variation in the dependent variable. Regardless, no significance value or F esteem was discovered in this instance, indicating that more

research may be necessary to ascertain the significance of the predictors in explaining the variation in the dependent variable.

By examining the effect of explicit predictors on the dependent variable "Children with learning issues need support and care," the coefficient test in the relapse examination is linked to the research objective, which is to comprehend stakeholders' perspectives on inclusive education for children with learning difficulties (Table 5). Either way, the results of the coefficient tests show that there are no significant unstandardized or standardized coefficients for any of the predictors. These coefficients' low t- and p-values suggest that they have little statistical significance in predicting the dependent variable. This implies that the selected predictors may not have a significant influence on the belief that children with learning disabilities require assistance and support, underscoring the need for more research or model improvement to better understand the variables influencing this belief.

Stakeholder analysis has led to the conclusion that children who struggle academically ought to be provided with empathy, encouragement, and the chance to realize their full potential. It is critical to understand that a child's learning challenges reflect their own information processing style rather than their IQ (Strauß *et al.*, 2023). The establishment of a welcoming and encouraging learning atmosphere comes first. Promoting diversity, lowering stigma, and giving kids a sense of belonging is all achieved via inclusive education. This method helps kids with learning difficulties get an excellent education while encouraging empathy and tolerance in all pupils (Veerabudren *et al.* 2021). The educational system should provide teachers with specialized training that focuses on efficient teaching techniques for students with learning disabilities (Tolbize, 2019). Children who struggle to learn can take an active role in their education by communicating their needs and preferences, asking for assistance when they need it, and participating fully in the learning process (Veerabudren *et al.* 2021). Among the most important stakeholders are parents of children who struggle in school (Veerabudren *et al.* 2021). In addition to working together with teachers and other staff members to meet their kid's requirements, they also need to help their child both academically and emotionally at home. Parents need to be aware of their children's rights and educational options.

Discussion

The goal of the study is to ascertain stakeholders' viewpoints about inclusive education for children with disabilities, which aligns with the findings from various analyses carried out during the investigation. Awareness the viewpoints of stakeholders requires an awareness of the segment characteristics of the respondents, such as age, orientation, and relationship with the children, which is provided by the descriptive statistics. Furthermore, the relationships between several elements, such as learning challenges, reading and writing proficiency, memory capacity, school assistance, and guidance, highlight the interdependence of elements influencing inclusive education.

However, the relapse analysis, ANOVA test, and coefficient test reveal that the chosen predictors advising, memory power, and school management systems might not have a substantial effect on stakeholders' perceptions of the need for care and support for kids with learning disabilities. This demonstrates how intricately several elements shape stakeholders' perceptions of inclusive education.

Conclusion

According to the findings of the study, the variables that impact the perspectives of stakeholders about inclusive education for children with learning impairments in Mauritius are interconnected and interdependent on one another. Even when specific predictors may not have a significant

impact on views, stakeholders continue to highlight the necessity of empathy, support, and an atmosphere that is favorable to learning. The support of parents, the training of teachers, and the active participation of students are all essential components in the process of promoting inclusive education. It is hoped that collaborative efforts will be able to satisfy the diverse requirements of children who have difficulty learning and will guarantee that everyone has equal access to education of a high quality. In spite of the fact that many factors do not have statistical significance, the topic of stakeholder examination highlights the value of empathy, support, and a learning environment that is good for children who have difficulties learning. In doing so, it brings to light the significance of inclusive education in terms of fostering diversity, lowering stigma, and assisting students in reaching their full potential.

In addition to this, it places emphasis on the necessity of teacher training, the active participation of children in their own education, and the collaboration between parents and teachers in order to meet the requirements of children who have difficulty learning. It is stated in the United Nations' "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)" that every individual who has a disability has the right to receive an education that is inclusive (UNICEF, 2022). Through the utilization of this concept, educators and lawmakers have the potential to successfully support inclusive education practices that cater to the varied requirements of children who have learning difficulties. Providing a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives held by stakeholders and bringing attention to the necessity of inclusive education for children who have learning difficulties are two of the reasons why the purpose of the study is warranted.

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