

## **Role of social workers in identifying challenges and developing skills in children with learning disabilities**

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### **Abstract**

Social work values, ethics, and abilities are crucial for ensuring tailored care and support practice and advocacy based on human rights. For Children with learning disabilities, it is beneficial. The paper focuses on social work skills useful in helping kids with learning disabilities. It describes the main disagreements in the area, such as those over policy and practice. Additionally, it is asserted that social workers are well equipped to do research and engage in clinical treatment that advances social justice and full and meaningful involvement in society. The study's objective is to identify social workers varied supporting and rehabilitative roles in easing the difficulties faced by children with disabilities. The review-based study draws its support from secondary sources such journals, books, articles, and other publications. The report emphasizes how social work techniques and practices might help to lessen the difficulties faced by young people with learning problems. A framework is also provided for research, practice, educational concerns, and advocacy strategies to support families of children with learning difficulties. Since social work practice is centred on families, some of the most important competencies for social work with families of children are also included in this article. In order to serve children with learning disabilities, the research found that social workers' most prominent tasks were those of need analyst, mediator, facilitator, motivator, rehabilitator, advocate, and care planner.

Key words: advocacy strategies, educational concerns, and learning disabilities

## **Introduction**

The article focuses on various supportive roles of social work helpful in mitigating the challenges of children with learning disabilities. The emphasis on social transformation is a distinctive quality of social work as one of the helping professions. According to the global definition of social work, social work interventions address the needs of the person, the group, or the community. Social work practice spans a range of activities including various forms of therapy, policy formulation, advocacy and political interventions. IFSW promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society, including education, paid employment, community living, political participation, and cultural activities. They ensure proper health and mental health care, including medications, sexual health care, rehabilitative services, assistive technology, psychotherapy, substance abuse treatment, and palliative and hospice care. IFSW supports the introduction and preservation of income security schemes to meet the needs of people with disabilities, especially women. The organization recognizes the need for disability education and training for social workers and other health, mental health, and service providers. It also supports the full participation of persons with disabilities in the profession, social policy, and social agencies. Social workers should have the skills to work alongside people with disabilities, families, and the environment, recognizing their individuality and freedom to make their own choices. (IFSW,2014, para 15).

The article concludes with a discussion of evidence based collaborative practices that enables social workers to work in multidisciplinary team for the diagnosis of disability in early stage and to prepare care plans and intervention programs for the children with learning disabilities to promote their social inclusion .A theoretical and practical-based curriculum of social work education offers students a variety of individualized, interactive ,experiential, and critically reflective possibilities. which enables social work students to acquire the knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and character traits necessary to effectively communicate with children with exceptional needs. (Lefevre,2012).

Aim of the study is to identify the various roles of social workers in minimizing the challenges of the children with learning disabilities and to provide a framework to support families of children with learning disabilities.

The phrase "learning disability" refers to a broad category of problems, including dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and other abnormalities of speech and writing. This particular disease can make it difficult for a child to acquire and develop certain skills including reading, writing, math, coordination, focus, self-control, and appropriate communication. It is a neurological condition that impairs the brain's capacity to receive, collect, recall, process, and respond appropriately to messages. Average to above average intelligence and some artistic talents are common among people with learning disability. Several prevalence studies have estimated that between 5 and 9 percent of the general population has learning disability (Boat,2015; Rao et.al., 2017; Arora et.al.,2018; Mogasaleet.al.,2012; Altarac&Sarooha,2007)

The incidence of specific learning disabilities worldwide has been found to be 1.8 percent in school-age children (6 to 11 years) and 2.6 percent in adolescents (12 to 17 years). Adults

between the ages of 18 and 24 have a prevalence of 2.7 percent, while those between the ages of 18 and 65 have a male prevalence of 2% and a female prevalence of 1.4 percent. While there is a 0.8 percent male over 65 learning disability prevalence, and 0.7 percent female prevalence (USA Centre for Learning Disability, 2014). Statistics from Canada show that more than half of all children with disabilities—59.8%—have a learning disability (Statistics report, 2006). It is evident through the research that around 20% of pupils in African schools have learning difficulties; these kids may also experience stigmatization from their peers, which has an emotional and psychological toll on both them and their parents (Abosi 2007; Clever&Herna, 2017). According to results of a significant research, one out of every four students who struggle academically need support because of this (Lerner & Johns, 2015). To accommodate students with particular learning requirements, the educational system falls short. In 2012, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics reported that less than 1% of Children with learning disability attend school.

Children with learning disability often face rejection by peer and family and having difficulty mixing with others and making friends because of the misinterpretations of feelings. The focus of the article is to recognize, clarify and establish the treatment and management options for learning disable children. The author draws on previous research on the emotional and behavioural challenges faced by kids with learning disability and the different communication issues that contribute to the illness. While drawing from the body of prior research, this paper's contribution is in establishing a framework for social workers to address the behavioural and emotional issues that learning disable children face in order to improve parents' comprehension as well as children's communication skills.

To establish the role of social work with children who have learning difficulties was the main focus of this study. New developmental changes in the field of learning disorders call for community care to support kids and their families. Social workers offer support to people who have lived experiences with learning disabilities in hospitals, family settings, and the community in addition to specialized care settings. In order to provide individualized treatment and support human rights-based practice, social workers must uphold certain principles, ethics, and competencies. To address the discriminatory and subpar services that kids with learning disabilities frequently encountered, more in-depth understanding and specific techniques are also required. Children in institutions are also subjected to subpar and occasionally abusive care services. Social workers must be able to conduct themselves professionally while also being warm, empathetic, kind, and sincere in their interactions with others. Humanism's philosophical milieu has had a significant impact on the growth of social work theory. Problem solving and change management are the foundations of professional social work. The medical paradigm, which sees disability as a functional restriction, pathology, and personal issue (Brzuzny, 1997; Finkelstein, 1991), has been the prevailing perspective on disability in social work and social services. Recent years have seen a shift in social work toward ideas on empowerment, strength, and resilience (Burack-weiss, 1991). Collaborations between social workers and oppressed communities have recently been promoted by the empowerment viewpoint.

The focus of social work theories and practice models is on human experience. The humanistic perspective acknowledges the legitimacy and worth of individuals' own interpretations. Social workers should assist clients in developing the abilities to critically evaluate their own actions and investigate the unique meanings they attribute to their perceptions of the outside world and how those meanings affect them (Paynee, 2011:208). Client-centred therapy denotes a manner of interacting with patients that fosters healing change and growth (Rogers 1991, 187). Empathetic listening is the central idea of the Rogers approach. A social worker is a professional who is capable of taking responsibility, respecting and taking into account diversity, thinking critically, using verbal and nonverbal communication skills, and developing creativity. According to Rogers (1975), a social worker taught him the best practices for an empathic approach. He continued by saying that since the year when empathy started to gain prominence, the idea of empathy has been present in the applicant-social work interaction. Empathy is a crucial component for a successful therapeutic interaction, according to numerous studies. Empathetic communication can help medical professionals effectively diagnose the issue, respond to nonverbal cues, and control the applicant's negative emotions and behaviours, such as fury and regression (Tauren, 2009). Social workers must use their critical reflection and analytical skills to expand their empathy and better comprehend the ramifications, significance, and emotional experiences of change and transition from the perspective of the individual. In situations where change is difficult, social workers must actively listen to children, give them the opportunity to express themselves and provide suggestions for support changes in a way that ensures they are not overlooked or disregarded.

**Methodology-**Author conducted a search for published studies using a comprehensive search strategy that including multiple electronic databases and reference list of prior relevant studies. For the purpose of the study and to get relevant support, various databases searched included Medline; Google Scholar; Social Services Abstract; Web of science/knowledge data base social science citation index

The challenging issues were identified in various spheres of life like educational, communicational, rehabilitation, independence and social inclusion. The role of social worker in minimizing the challenges were sought out through the relevant research evidences. To foster the skills in children with learning disabilities relevant studies were identified and various strategies were studied and discussed like -parental training, skill training, parental support, creating awareness etc.

### **Educational Needs and the role of social worker**

According to the UN convention on the rights of people with disabilities (2008), article no.24, no one will be excluded based solely on a disability, despite the fact that reports from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005) revealed that the majority of students were excluded and marginalized from quality education. The necessity of governments and school communities upholding a core set of values that foster an inclusive environment for all children is required. The preparation of a child's social and developmental history, group and individual counselling for the child and family, work with issues in the child's home, school, and community that affect the child's adjustment in school, and mobilize

school and community resources are all part of social work's role in this area (NASW, 2018). This enables the child to benefit the most from his or her educational programs.

According to the School Social Work Association of America, school social work is a specific area of practice in which social workers with professional training help students with a variety of needs and concerns, including mental health issues, support for positive behaviour, academic and classroom support, and counselling, among others. According to Openshaw (2008), the primary goal of a social worker is to support students and give them a setting that will foster effective learning. According to the various studies (Webber ,2018; Damyanov ,2010; & Bali 2016, social workers' roles are primarily focused on addressing the mental health needs of students, assessing those needs, and creating intervention plans for them to ensure that they receive special education services in an inclusive setting. A social worker's assessment serves as a foundation for other professionals, such as teachers, counsellors, principals, and management, to contribute to the creation of programs that are welcoming to children (AASW, 2015). Home visits are thought to be very helpful when working with children who have special needs in order to promote inclusive education, encourage parental involvement, respond to family variety, and establish practical strategies that could be useful at home and in the classroom (Winter & Cree, 2017& Bali, 2016). In order to address children's demands for advocacy for their rights, a reduction in stigma, and the promotion of equality in order to meet their socioeconomic requirements in inclusive settings, social workers' roles in educational assistance go beyond just connecting various systems (NASW, 2012). In the multidisciplinary team's efforts to identify at-risk pupils with impairments and to intervene with them early (NASW, 2012; Openshaw, 2008& Bali, 2016), social workers have a significant role to play. In order to address issues in a child's living situation (home/school/community) that affect the child's adjustment in school and to mobilize school and community resources to enable the child to benefit fully from his or her educational programs, a social worker working in this area of inclusive education must have the skills to work with individuals, groups, families and communities (Asamoah et. al.,2021).

### **Communicational requirements and the role of social worker**

Reading and writing are two linguistic skills that are typically linked to learning problems (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Hammill, 1990). Therefore, it is important to teach children the right techniques for using nonverbal communication, and to look for strategies to encourage the efficacy of communication between and among those people (Mirenda & Williams, 1990). Additionally, they are typically less curious, more reserved, less active, and less enjoyable than a youngster without a disability (Petrica, 2018). However, difficulties can occasionally be linked to a non-verbal learning disability (Snowling, 2012; Ellins et al. 2012: Regnard et al. 2007) found more than twenty changes in behavior in children with learning disabilities when they encountered distress, and it is probably true that those who do not speak verbally are more likely to respond to non-verbal communication. Therefore, it is crucial for professionals who work closely with children to interact with them as much as they can (Cowder, 2010).

Learning difficulties are more likely to require assistance in adjusting to daily life in the home and at school. According to estimates by Eric et al. (2012), there are 1.5 million learning

disabled people in the UK, and between 50% and 90% of them experience sensory loss and it urges the need of assistance. It is also evident through researches that active listening coupled with correct or fluent word recognition is another crucial skill that is lacking or shown to be insufficient in learning disabled children (Wagner & Torgesen, 1987; Fletcher et. al., 2019; Dickman, 2017). The complicated skill of listening calls for the use of working memory, vocabulary, attention, and brain processing. The brain uses active listening techniques to organize and decode information (Beck, 2015). The achievement gap in reading for these pupils might be closed with the aid of learning techniques that incorporate audiobooks. According to research, children normally need to hear 46 million words in order to be prepared for school, and they also need to spend 20,000 hours listening before they can begin to read (Hart & Risely, 2007; Dehaene, 2010). Children with auditory-specific perceptual abnormalities, which underlie many learning difficulties including specific reading and language disabilities as well as some sensory and motor issues, need receive listening instruction in particular. Children who have dyslexia may occasionally struggle to fine-tune their auditory systems to the sounds of language (Akpan, 2013). As a result, meaning is lost when reading since the letters that the eyes see do not match the sounds that the letters represent. Reading comprehension is greatly influenced by listening, which is the cornerstone of decoding. The vestibular system of the inner ear is connected to the ear, which suggests that the ear may possibly contribute to eye tracking. This may explain why some dyslexic kids also have trouble listening. They frequently report that the letters seem to "jump" across the page or be inverted. Fortunately, symptoms can be reduced with the aid of technology like reading applications, audiobook platforms, decodable books, and listening practice programs.

Researches demonstrated the need to incorporate communication with people with learning disabilities and non-verbal communication as specific areas of learning for all social work students (Mitchell, W., et al, 2009). An understanding of the larger contextual issues in which social work contacts occur is also included in the intervention in social work education. According to this, social work communication is both an art and a science (Healy, 2018). They work with various variety of settings like victims, children, vulnerable and disabled to understand the underlying emotions and feelings, to build rapport and strong relations. Effective communication is essential in ensuring high quality health care (Balandin & Hemsley, 2008) and is an essential skill for social workers. The role of social workers in institutional practicing with the children of learning disability is two folded; direct practicing and indirect. In direct practice they try to establish directly the communication skills through talking, listening carefully, playing listening games, modelling, negotiating etc. While in the role of indirect practicing try to give the tips of parenting and dealing with the child of learning disability to the parents or care givers. The parents have a crucial role in developing the skills in children but in many cases, parents need the specific tips to develop the skills in child. Social workers can assist them to understand fully about the disability of child and also the supportive ways of handling them. Social workers communication skills should reflect the professional values and ethics, they need to develop these skills themselves like importance of autonomy in appropriate circumstances and to conduct capacity assessments, observational skills to interpret body language and advocacy skills to promote social justice.

## **Rehabilitation Requirements and the role of social worker**

Children with learning disabilities have to face various emotional, behavioural and adjustment challenges. Learning disability is an information processing problem which prevent the person from learning a skill and using it effectively. They may feel frustrated that they cannot master a subject despite trying too hard. It can also present emotional, behavioural disorders like ADHD, with estimate ranging from about 25 to 40 percent of children with learning disability displaying characteristics of ADHD (Corteilla,2011& Lerner&Johns,2015). Combination of problem can make hard for children to succeed in school. Researchers note that children with learning disabilities sometimes experience communication problems in social settings (wiener &Timmermanis,2012), children have found lower self-esteem and poor self-concept than their peers due to the frustration with learning difficulties (Cavioni et.al.,2017& Kulkarni et.al.,2001). It is also revealed that deficit in social skills is a common characteristic among many (Mash&Wolfe,2015; Wiener&Timmermanis,2012).

Due to misunderstandings of others' sentiments and emotions, students with learning disability frequently experience rejection from their usual peers and have trouble developing friends (Lerner & Johns, 2015; Wiener & Timmer, 2012). Such kids and their peers will be greatly impacted by activities that demonstrate or model empathy. They will gain a better understanding of the fact that each person has unique abilities. A learning-disabled youngster may experience communication difficulties with parents and teachers as a result of poor listening skills and incorrect eye contact. As part of their training, social workers in this profession can help kids develop good eye contact, which will help them focus more. It is possible to boost their level of confidence and keep up their self-esteem by providing supportive feedback and encouraging them to ask questions.

Social workers play a key role in helping vulnerable persons of all ages. They can assist in a variety of ways, including gathering background information, inspiring loved ones and teachers, referring patients for medical assessments, and providing skill development through various therapeutic sessions. They can also give parents access to good parenting practices that can benefit kids with learning disabilities. They can help kids with behavioural health issues by identifying and decoding the specific behaviour, connecting them with services, and encouraging emotional support within the family.

## **Policy development / Advocacy needs and the role of social worker**

Additionally, it's crucial to foster the autonomy and give the learning-disabled youngsters the freedom to make their own decisions. According to Macintyre (2012), social work expertise is necessary to identify stop abuse, and combat discrimination. According to qualitative research (Stefansdottir et al., 2018), advocacy is seen as the essential component to fostering personal autonomy in person with disabilities, how personal autonomy improved person with disabilities daily lives. According to studies, all people with impairments can take self-determined action

when provided the proper support (Lee 2012; Vicente et al., 2019). Advocacy emphasizes the significance of meaning interpretation and translation. It is fundamentally significant in the lives of persons who are unable to completely express themselves. When thinking about independent living and individualization methods to living, it is more important to recognize the complexity of demands and respect for choices of people with substantial intellectual and multiple disabilities. In this regard, it is crucial to emphasize that social work's primary tool, which sets it apart from other helping professions, is advocacy. This is due to the fact that social work, which is based on the NASW's 2018 code of ethics, aims to advance social justice by working with socially and economically marginalized populations and is commended for taking deliberate measures to help individuals advance their rights, opportunities, and dignity. A study (Presnell & Keesler, 2021) makes a plea for social work to get involved in strategies and fixes to get rid of significant obstacles to community involvement. Some of these categories include the use of a human rights-based strategy, coordination with person-centred planning, use of participatory action research, growth of the inclusion of disability content in social work programs, and encouragement of community action and advocacy. Social workers may be particularly beneficial for assisting students with disabilities in gaining independence and self-advocacy skills, according to Dente and Parkinson (2012).



Source-Author

### **Role of social worker in Parental/care-givers training**

Another role of indirect practicing or family counselling is very crucial. Children with learning disability or related disorders are like puzzle for the parents. It is easy for the parents to understand their feelings of inadequacy but it is not easy for them to know their feelings of adequacy because of their many abilities and disabilities. It is also challenging for the parents to understand that their behavior is how much influenced through the natural conditions or how much oppositional. Parenting approaches that include clear, brief instructions, nurturing the Childs interests, constant approval of positive behavior to encourage their choice making help the children feel secure and confident. The familial scenario of the child with learning



disabilities can be hard, one parent often mother or father or both can understand the child well while the siblings often resent the amount of attention given to the child. Grandparents in some cases tend to blame the parents to pamper the child and sometimes punish the child to be disorganized and undisciplined. As a counsellor there is a need to make them understand about the disease of the child in a proper manner.

The role of the social worker in institutional setting starts with the diagnosis of the child. Even after the diagnosis, parents may experience phases of sorrow, including anxiety, anger, and guilt over having a child, according to Ross (1980). It is common for parents to place blame and make concessions, thinking that the issues might be resolved by the instructors or the doctors. But in the end, they must accept the child's condition. The truth is shocking for the parents, but they are powerless to change it. They need to be reassured that these issues are organic and not the result of outside influences. (Smith,1991,1995). They must have to understand fully about the disability of the child and skills of parenting and various challenges they are going to face in interpreting the behavior of their child. They must also realize them that children with learning disability need a bit more parental support. With thorough assessment of the family of the child social worker starts giving the parental education to the parents or care givers. It includes enabling the parenting strategies/appropriate ways of parenting the child with learning disabilities.

Like the perplexity about what their children can and cannot do, parents find it difficult to understand their children's behavior. What children like and what they choose to do are typically used as a gauge of their strengths in order to distinguish between what they can and cannot do. Planning-related misunderstanding can arise when educators, medical specialists, and other professionals differ on a child's diagnosis as well as the recommended course of action or program. Parents must keep a close eye on their children, think back on the day's events, and identify the child's areas of strength, interest, and difficulty before developing a behavior management strategy. Many children with learning disability are severely disorganized and unable to do the most basic tasks in the allotted time due to central nervous system malfunction, neural immaturity, and abnormalities. By giving kids a defined structure, parents may assist their children. Fostering skills in parents to involve their kids in planning tasks, such as designing a little garden or creating a shopping list, to help the kids and establishing clear and enforced routines in this way is a role of social worker in this area.

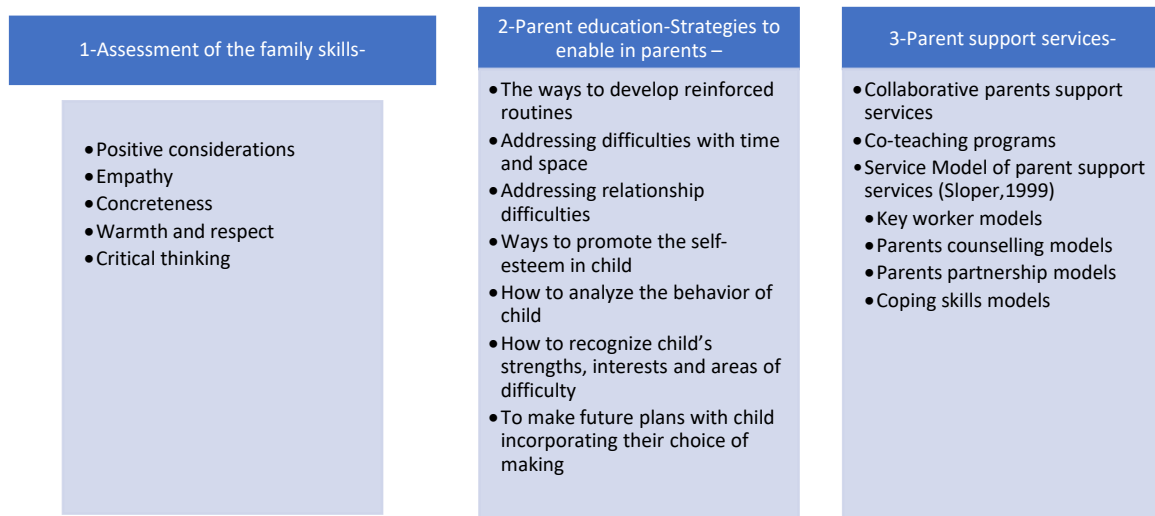
Many children with learning disability cannot play as they don't read the social signals, emotions, tones of voice, this effect family life and peer relationships, parents have to work with them on reading faces, gestures, movements etc. Child notices soon that they are not performing the tasks well as compared to their peers and due to this may receive frequent criticism by using praiseworthy and encouraging words parent can support them and increase their self-esteem.

Parent training can take different forms depending on the needs of particular families. They required to be taught how to assist their child master basic academic skills using the positive discipline methods. On the other hand, the training program also include the collaborative strategic plan, to acknowledge the parents about parental rights and advocacy, they must know about the laws protecting their child in community and institutional settings. Parents have the full right on their children. They need to be protected legally against wrong notions. To give effective services in this spectrum social worker should expand their knowledge about the existing services in the community and must be able to make the collaborative care plans and to be always prepare to become the part of the care plans and support services. Coordinate and

collaborative services are also a part of parent support services. In which teachers, parents, doctors and other professionals like social workers, occupational therapists, music therapists become the part of the care plan to identify the needs of the child 's special education services or additional support's-teaching programs are the good example of these types of services .A lot of communities based preschools also uses co-teaching because they want to do something that allows all children access to the individualized approaches of both special education and general education (Amanda Schwartz,2019).

According to research, parents of children with special needs are especially susceptible to stress. Up to 70% of mothers and 30% of fathers of severely disabled children with special education requirements have been reported to be highly distressed (Sloper & Turner, 1991). Children are impacted by the parental distress and dysfunctional family in many different ways (Cuzzocrea et al., 2013). In 1999, Sloper served as a role model for a parenting assistance program that could be useful in providing parents with a pathway for support. In this scenario, a key worker who is a professional or connected person keeps in regular contact with the family and has access to a variety of resources for information and services. He needed to be capable of critical analysis and analytical thinking. According to the second categorical model, developing relationships, communicating, and being responsive are key components of effective help-giving. The third model relies on interactions between parents and experts to identify needs and determine appropriate course of action. In the final model, the emphasis is on services that provide a comprehensive approach to parent assistance by giving parents the chance to access many different services as necessary.

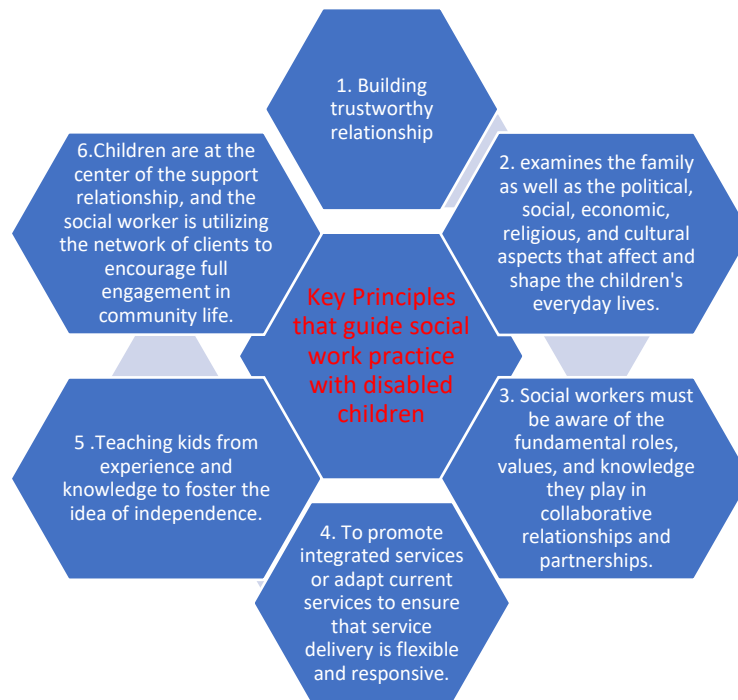
### Role of the social worker with parents/care givers



### Source-Author

Relationship between parents and professionals are base of the service effectiveness. Building relationship in therapeutic measurement is the tool of the effective social work service or in other words maintaining the good relationship is basic skill of the social worker. Working with children who have learning disabilities requires adhering to a number of fundamental concepts. This begins with recognizing the children's talents and building a reliable relationship with a strength-based approach. Social workers should encourage and assist children in pursuing their goals in life. They should assess how their environment is affecting them and work with them

to increase their level of control. They should assist the youngster in recognizing, developing, and using their unique qualities and talents.



Source-Author

## **Conclusion**

It can be concluded through the impact of the researches that various identified teaching strategies emerging with counselling therapies can improve the social and civic life of a children with learning disabilities and their families. We need more intervention options, research evidences and sufficient breadth of intervention approaches for prevention to remediation spectrum. Incorporating the interventional approaches of teaching/counselling and skill development can develop high levels of self-regulation, emotional awareness and also inclusion. Positive social work values and ethics should serve as the foundation for social workers' communication. One of the major responsibilities of the social worker's is to comprehend how various models and perspectives on learning disabilities influence and shape assessment, intervention, and care-planning. The paper can be used as a reference to emphasize the role of social workers in fostering inclusive education, developing communication skills, offering therapeutic measures to lessen the behavioural challenges of learning disabilities, promoting autonomy, and maximizing social inclusion by increasing their independence. In addition to enabling parenting strategies, interests, and areas of difficulty, working with parents, caregivers, and institutional settings also includes creating care plans with caregiver assistance to control child behaviour while giving them the best support possible. Through identifying the role of social worker in such field and the various skills required to perform the role in best way, it is needed to incorporate the purposeful training for social workers through social work education to equip them to perform their role.

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