

Knowledge and Perception of Speech Therapists and Parents on Telepractice for The Intervention of Paediatric Speech and Language Disorders in Sri Lanka.

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The usefulness of telepractice is highly reflected during the COVID-19 pandemic for speech therapy services in Sri Lanka due to restricted mobility. This study aimed to explore the knowledge and perception of speech therapists and parents of children with paediatric speech and language disorders who involve in telepractice in Sri Lanka.

The study participants were thirty (n= 30) speech language therapists and sixty- two (n= 62) parents who use telepractice service. Data were collected through a self – administrated online survey and telephone interviews were conducted to obtain qualitative data from both speech therapists and parents separately. Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis respectively.

Telepractice was considered as an effective procedure similar to face-to-face service by 60% and 84% of speech therapists and parents respectively. Most of the speech therapists' knowledge on telepractice was based on their experience. Both parents and speech therapists reported that they have a high level of confidence, satisfaction, and positive attitudes toward the use of telepractice. Both groups identified a range of advantages such as improvement in the child's progression, and ability to overcome logistical challenges after conducting several sessions through telepractice. In addition, parent involvement in the speech therapy sessions were found high with telepractice. Eighty-three percent and 90% of parents preferred to carryout activities at home and obtain frequent feedback from speech therapists respectively.

The study showed that the majority of participants positively identified the usefulness of telepractice to deliver speech therapy service. Providing appropriate training of delivery strategies for speech therapists and education of parents on the use of technology may further enhance the access to telepractice services for children with speech and language disorders during the COVID-19.

Keywords: Telepractice, paediatric speech and language disorders, speech and language therapists, parents