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"We Lost Our Connection with the Children, the Smiles, the 'Good Mornings' ": Caring for Special Education Pupils During the COVID-19 Lockdown

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ABSTRACT

Special education teachers care for their pupils' physical, emotional, and social needs, serve as the primary communication channel between the school and the parents, and coordinate other care workers such as paraprofessionals and psychologists. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Israeli special education system moved to distance instruction, and slowly resumed operations following the first lockdown, even while the general education system remained shuttered. The life-threatening situation of the pandemic, where special education workers faced the crisis situation both personally and at the same time, professionally, in helping their students, families, and colleagues, created a situation of "shared trauma" for the teachers. Semi-structured interviews with 17 Israeli special education teachers were conducted to explore how they experienced the phenomenon of the pandemic. The teachers felt frustrated with the system, fearful for their health, lonely, and helpless in their ability to accomplish their job. Their work was negatively affected by masking and distance restrictions upon returning to the classroom. Many teachers benefitted from the support of colleagues and principals. We explore the implications for those who work with special education pupils and highlight the potential for increased cooperation and collaboration between care workers for their own benefit and the welfare of children.

Keywords: Caring; Emotions; Disabilities; Sensory experiences; Social support

1. Introduction

The special education system in Israel serves approximately 260,000 children in special education schools and special education classes housed in general education schools (Weissblay, 2019).

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Approximately half of these children suffer from more complex disabilities such as intellectual disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), cerebral palsy, or blindness/deafness (Rumrill Jr. et al., 2020; Weissblay, 2019). Beyond teaching, special education teachers support and care for their pupils' physical, emotional, and social needs (Garwood, 2018). They also interface with and coordinate others who work with these children including paraprofessionals (e.g., physical therapists), and psychologists (Weidberg & Ceobanu, 2021). This work is often considered more demanding than that encountered by general education teachers (e.g., Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Hillel Lavian, 2015; Kebbi & Al-Hroub, 2018). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Israeli special education system initially moved to distance instruction, and following the first lockdown, the system returned slowly to being operational, even while the general education system remained shuttered (Monikandam-Givon, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic created a life-threatening crisis situation, where the teachers had to continue to care for the pupils while their own health was at risk due to potential exposure to the virus, and they were also coping with the crisis that the pandemic caused in their own lives. This created a "shared trauma", where individuals face a crisis situation (e.g., war, pandemic, natural disaster) personally, and at the same time, professionally in helping their students, families and colleagues (Ali et al., 2023; Dahan et al., 2022; Tosone et al., 2015; Tosone, 2020). However, despite the essential role that special education workers play in the day-to-day lives of their pupils and families, and particularly during the pandemic, there has been little to no research on this population and how these teachers experienced the COVID-19 crisis in Israel. The current study employed a qualitative methodology to focus on the experiences of Israeli special education teachers and their caring responsibilities during the crisis situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, which created a shared trauma experience. Exploring the teachers' experiences during the pandemic through the lens of a shared trauma experience, like the crises of September 11th (McTighe et al., 2015) and Hurricane Katrina (Tosone et al., 2015), has implications for those who care for special education pupils, and for the potential for interagency collaboration (e.g., between the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Welfare or Ministry of Health) to benefit these pupils' welfare (Chudzik et al., 2024; Tosone, 2020).

Israeli Special Education & COVID-19

At the initial outbreak of COVID-19 in Israel (March, 2020), the educational system, including the special education system, shut down and most schools moved to distance learning with the aim of maintaining the learning routine and providing an emotional response to the pupils (Weissblay, 2021). This included both special education schools, as well as special education classes housed in general education schools (where the general education classes remained locked down). Following the initial lockdown, the special education system gradually returned to operation, and continued during subsequent lockdowns (e.g., September, 2020, January, 2021), even while the general education system remained locked down (Monikandam-Givon, 2021). However, the special education system was still limited by the COVID-related restrictions that sought to minimize the possibility of contagion and there were ongoing periods of isolation of teachers, pupils, and entire classes. This situation complicated teachers' ability to care for these pupils. Special education teachers needed to find innovative approaches to continue their work addressing children's academic, social-emotional, physical, cognitive and even basic needs working with children while still being the main point of contact for families and the community (e.g., Garwood et al., 2018; Hurwitz et al., 2022; Stenhoff et al., 2020).

The challenging nature of special education work has been associated with teacher stress, burnout, and compassion fatigue (Brunsting et al., 2014; De Stasio et al., 2017; Sharp Donahoo et al., 2018). For example, Conley and You (2017) reported that special education teachers experience greater work-related stress levels than general education teachers. The COVID-19 pandemic heightened the uniqueness of, and challenges involved in special

education work. Experiencing the crisis of the pandemic themselves, while also having to care for their special education pupils, their families, and others in the system, created an experience of "shared trauma" for these special education teachers.

The Current Study

Despite their role as critical carers for special education children, and the unique hardships they experienced, there has been little to no research on how special education teachers experienced the trauma of the COVID-19 crisis. We aimed to fill this gap in knowledge and contribute to a greater understanding of these caregivers' experiences, particularly in light of the shared trauma created by the situation. This understanding can lead to improvement in the special education system as a whole. In this light, we conducted a phenomenological study, aiming to explore how special education teachers experienced the phenomenon of the COVID-19 pandemic in Israel. A phenomenological study focuses on "what" individuals experienced and "how" they experienced it (Cresswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam-Grenier, 2019). To achieve this, we relied on semi-structured in-depth interviews to focus on the teachers' experiences during this challenging time.

2 Method

2.1 Sampling and Participants

The participants were recruited using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling (Shkedi, 2011). The first author asked special education teachers within her professional network to share the invitation to participate with other teachers in their networks, and to share the invitation via WhatsApp groups of special education teachers. As all special education teachers in the Israeli system are Ministry of Education approved, they all met the criteria of having experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and the various closures of the system. Consequently, this sampling approach was conducive to the phenomenological aims of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The study included 17 Israeli special education teachers who work with various populations within the system. The teachers' ages ranged from 24-42 and most were married with children. The teachers' years of experience ranged from 1 to 18 years, with an average of 13.4 years. Most of the teachers worked in preschools that served children with ASD and children with intellectual disabilities. Some of the teachers worked in special education classes in general education schools, while others worked in special education schools. Details of the participants can be found in Table 1.

Table 1 Participating Teachers' Demographic Details

Name	Age	Family status	Experience (in years)	Work placement/type
Efrat	35	Single	12	Children with ASD, elementary school
Yael	40	Married +5	16	Children with ASD, elementary school
Sarah	39	Married +5	9	Children with ASD, elementary school
Lucy	26	Married +3	5	Children with borderline intellectual disabilities, elementary school
Esther	40	Married +7	15	Children with ASD, elementary school
Becky	39	Married +5	9	Children with ASD, elementary school
Bella	28	Single	4	Children with ASD, elementary school
Rachel	42	Married +6	18	Children with ASD, high school
Lihi	35	Married +3	13	Children with ASD, elementary school
Yaffa	33	Married +5	10	Children with ASD, elementary school
Ayala	42	Married +7	18	Children with developmental intellectual disability, middle school
Ahuva	24	Married +1	1	Children with developmental intellectual disability, elementary school
Lilac	28	Married +4	7	Children with developmental intellectual disability, elementary school
Yehudit	27	Married	5	Children with developmental intellectual disability, high school
Miri	30	Married +1	8	Children with developmental intellectual disability, middle school
Nava	30	Married +3	6	Children with developmental intellectual disability, elementary school
Tali	33	Married +4	8	Children with ASD, elementary school

2.2 Data Collection

The study relied on semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately one hour. To comply with the COVID-19-related restrictions at the time of the study, the interviews were conducted over Zoom. The interviews began with a more general question that facilitated participants' sharing their attitudes and perspectives in an open way – "Tell me about yourself and your work". This was followed by additional questions relating to the teachers' work (e.g., "Can you tell me about any feelings that accompanied your work during COVID-19"). All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Saturation was reached after 17 semi-structured interviews generated redundancy in the content of the participants' responses (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saunders et al., 2018).

2.3 Ethics

The study was conducted in line with ethical guidelines for qualitative research (Doshnik & Zabar Ben-Yehoshua, 2016), and received the ethical approval of the institution's ethical review board. All the teachers signed an informed consent form prior to the interviews. All names and identifying information have been changed to protect the participants' privacy.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis, we conducted a full thematic analysis using iterative readings of the interviews (Braun et al., 2018). According to this approach, themes are thought to reflect "a *pattern* of shared meaning, organized around a core concept or idea, a central organizing concept" (Braun et al., 2018). In this analysis, the first author read all the interviews and identified initial themes. The second author then went through a selection of the interviews and the themes were discussed and finalized between the authors. The central themes focused on in this article address participants' emotions during the pandemic, how sensory elements were affected, the importance of social support, and the teachers' experiences as part of the broader special education system. These main themes are presented below and illustrated with quotations from the teachers.

Both in conducting the interviews and in the data analysis, the authors needed to consider the ways in which their own professional background and experiences might impact the research (Leavy, 2022). Neither author is a special education teacher, but the first author is the head of the college's special education department. This provides her with particular insight into the special education system but may also lead to particular interpretations of the data. This was part of the rationale for the second author going through the interviews and themes and discussing them. In addition, the first author made notes of her own personal thoughts and feelings that may have arisen during the analysis process.

3 Results

3.1 Teachers' Emotions

The sudden move to distance learning at the beginning of the pandemic forced teachers to cope with new methods of teaching that would be appropriate for the pupils in their current reading. That is, a reality for which they could not always prepare ahead of time. Each teacher approached this challenge somewhat differently, in the sense that each student with intellectual disability faces unique difficulties and challenges. Numerous emotions were expressed by the teachers, but the most frequently emerging ones were frustration and fear/worry. These emotions are expressed in the various quotes below.

Ahuva related that the main challenge was a lack of appropriate learning tools:

> *Working from a distance was a nightmare, because in the end, there were no symbols at home, no communication board, and things that you needed because I have pupils with vision problems in the class. There's no black background…I didn't have any of these things…and I had to be really creative because I didn't have any of the accessories that are there in the classroom.*

Due to the reduction in the professional and paraprofessional staff during the pandemic to reduce

opportunities for contagion, the classroom teachers were teaching all day, every day, leading to strong feelings of frustration. Nava explained: "It was very frustrating. The number of lessons you had to prepare was crazy. The pupils see the same person every single day without any kind of change, and it was frustrating. "Efrat experienced this somewhat as a feeling that she wasn't sufficient: "The children needed to be worked with, by the communication clinician, and other paramedical professionals, and they just missed getting what they really needed for a very long time. It was very hard. I felt like I wasn't doing good enough work." Rachel also related to this: "They wanted us to do the impossible. They told us to celebrate birthdays for the children, but we weren't allowed to give out cake. We couldn't do cooking lessons. All kinds of rules that weren't relevant. They expected us to be super-people and it was really difficult."

The realities of the return to work for the teachers in the special education system were also associated with particular emotions. Tali very clearly explained the complicated feelings of this time:

> *My feelings were very difficult because they were always putting us at a disadvantage. They never even showed us on the television, we never got screen time. No one agreed to interview us… they didn't ask if we were managing, that we have to leave our own children at home and come to work. There was this feeling that we don't matter.*

Fear and worry frequently accompanied the special education teachers when they returned to work during the lockdowns. Esther said:

> *There was worry for us as teachers and for the pupils. We are taking a particular risk, and we can get sick, but the pupils also, so there wasn't exactly a calm learning environment. It was a stressful environment full of worry.*

Sarah also expressed this: "We were just afraid to come to work. There was so much fear associated with this whole situation."

The overwhelming negative feelings can be summed up in Lucy's statement:

> *We were just miserable, I was miserable. I just didn't want to come to school. I asked if I could not come, and they told me that I was obligated. This obligation took a very heavy toll on my family, my kids. And it's not acceptable that at the end of the day that my work should come first in my head instead of my kids.*

3.2 Sensory Experiences

Many of the teachers related to the sensory aspects of special education and how these were affected by the pandemic. According to Lilac, the main difficulty in learning manifested itself in the avoidance of physical touch and the inability to illustrate what was learned: "In our population, it's very difficult to move the learning to distance learning or Zoom because most of our work is essentially physical…everything has to really be sensory - to show them and let them feel things." Miri agreed but expressed this idea somewhat differently:

> *Children who are nonverbal can't talk on the telephone. Really, I had pupils who would call using video and wave hello and try to connect it to what is happening in reality, but in the end, they're at home and learning at home isn't learning in school, and certainly not for our pupils. It's hard to say that we were able to fulfill the child's IEP goals. Think that if in a regular school it was difficult, how much more it was in these settings.*

A number of the teachers mentioned that a central challenge related to the children's language expression and how it was limited by the mask requirements. Lilac described this:

> *There were masks, there were plastic shields over the masks, we had robes, and gloves. In the beginning it was really strange, and the children couldn't really identify us…It was difficult for the pupils, and at times I did take my mask down for a minute and just keep the shield, because sometimes they had to see my lips.*

Yaffa added to this and noted how the learning and expansion of vocabulary was impaired for the children:

> *We were in masks all day. I can count on my hands the number of times that they saw my face… it's ridiculous. Especially since these are children with special needs who really need to see the face. I had one student who only said a few words and I aimed to expand her vocabulary, but with COVID-19, it was much harder.*

Similarly, Ayala added: "We worked in robes and masks this year and it was really hard. For example, I have a student who is learning to speak but he couldn't see my mouth…it caused issues with teaching."

The importance of physical touch was mentioned by some of the other participants as well. For example, Yehudit related: "It really led to physical distance….fewer hugs and the like. Also, academically. For example, some pupils, you need to help them learn how to write their letters, so you really have to touch them [and we couldn't]." She also described the impact of the constant disinfection of the surfaces and maintaining distance: "There is really physical work with these children, they need help to learn how to eat, but when you have to maintain distance, this is really challenging. Children who need help going to the bathroom - you can't just tell them to do it themselves." Becky also mentioned the lack of physicality, "In the beginning we really came with masks and kept our distance, but all of a sudden you can't hug the little kids. All the time there's this pressure, to be distant, to disinfect, etc." These difficulties can be summarized in Efrat's words:

> *In special education, there's a lot of warmth, closeness, touch, you - your face. They have to see your smile…it's something we can see with our eyes, but this [COVID-19], this is not that.*

3.3 Social Support

Many teachers related to the lack of social support that they experienced during the pandemic. For example, Lihi explained:

> *In previous years, the staff would know each other much better and do things together. This year, there's more distance between the staff that I work with all the time…there's no opportunity to do things together.*

The teachers who work with special education pupils in general education schools returned to school alone, which was greatly felt by the special education teachers, such as Yehudit:

> *The teachers' presence is very meaningful. First, it gives the children someone else, it gives me more air. When the gym teacher comes in I can breathe for a minute, get a drink, use the bathroom, call a parent who was looking for me, sit with another teacher to update her. During COVID-19, this didn't happen.*

Efrat noted the difficulties that this time created between staff and also related to the anger she felt towards others for their lack of effort:

> *I felt that really no one cared about us, and it also created many problems amongst the staff….. The occupational therapist said she couldn't come because she had little children…. To some degree I was angry - you know, I also have little children and have to make arrangements, and I don't let myself not come…like I really did everything in my power to come, but she didn't feel the need.*

Esther described the lack of support from the principal:

> *I felt that she [the principal] was trying to appease the parents, but less listening to our needs… it made it very difficult, because she wanted things to be like regular routine for the children and for the parents to be satisfied, but at a certain point, I didn't feel like she listened to us and our needs enough, the staff. I have a staff member who's at-risk, and there was no option to not come to work, there were no options, you do what's regular, and that's it. There's not much to talk about or do about it.*

In contrast to the above, some of the teachers felt that the support they received was extremely helpful. For instance, Yael said:

> *The principal was amazing. She really understood that the teachers didn't want to come and put themselves at risk…it really strengthened the relationship with the principal because she came from a place of understanding and knew how to say that everyone should do what they can, rather than just ignoring the situation. She's a very open and understanding principal.*

Bella also mentioned the support she received: "Particularly the principal who always took an interest. When she came to school she would always come to the class, say hello." Similarly, Yaffa noted: "There is so much support, from the staff as well as from home...my husband and friends; it really strengthened me and helped during this crisis."

3.4 Teachers' Experiences as Part of the Broader Special Education System

A number of the interviewees expressed senti-

ments relating to their experience with the broader special education system during the COVID-19 crisis. Many of the teachers explained how "invisible" they felt when they had to return to work during this time, often in contrast to the broad recognition that essential medical workers received. Becky noted this: "We should feel that they relate to us a little more and we're not just coming to work. I don't feel like I'm just coming to work, I go beyond that." Recognition and acknowledgement by the special education system was needed by the special education teachers. The Ministry of Education, which oversees the special education system and was involved in decisions regarding school closures/re-openings, also contributed to the teachers' confusion and difficulties during the pandemic, due to conflicting messages with the Ministry of Health. As Sarah said: "There was a disconnect between the Ministries, but you know that there are these bureaucratic issues that aren't dependent on a single factor. I have no way to control the educational system." Lihi also related to the bureaucracy: "The guidelines that were received from the Ministry of Education were confusing, not clear, and disconnected so most people couldn't follow them. Teachers couldn't follow them themselves and had a hard time instructing the pupils to follow them."

The teachers alluded to a disconnect between the Ministry of Education and the realities on the ground that they were experiencing. According to Yael, there wasn't enough distinction between the different levels of special education: "The announcement about the return to school related just to official special education institutions, and ignored the many children who are in small classes within general education schools, who are special education pupils. These pupils didn't receive appropriate care." The differences in the types of special education pupils and classrooms did not seem to be taken into sufficient consideration by the broader system.

Lastly, some of the teachers related to participation in special education overall, and how teacher attrition was an issue that was compounded by the pandemic. As Esther explained:

> *I look at our staff this year, and it's full of teachers who left – teachers who took a sabbatical, some who decided it's just not for them, many who switched professions. This year was very difficult, and many teachers just reached their threshold and felt it was too much. I don't know how it's possible to do things differently, but this year definitely made a difference…I came with less energy, I really want to come but the work this year was really, really difficult.*

Many of the teachers thus contended with their own personal situation, but also saw issues with the way the broader special education system was handling the pandemic, with mixed message and a lack of caring leading to complex emotions, teacher confusion and stress, and at times, leaving the profession.

4 Discussion

During COVID-19, special education teachers felt invisible, that the system as a whole was minimized, and their care was not taken sufficiently into consideration by policymakers (e.g., Katz & Cohen, 2021). In turn, this impacted their ability to effectively care for their special education pupils. The shared trauma that the teachers experienced during the crisis of the pandemic thus was not sufficiently understood or appreciated by those within and outside the system. The experiences and responses of the special education teachers in this study can lend themselves to addressing issues within and beyond the underlying system, both in its day-to-day functioning as well as in future crisis situations.

Practically all of the participating special education teachers in our study expressed frustration and fear/worry as a result of the move to distance learning, the return to work while the general education system remained closed, and the COVID-19 virus itself. This is in line with studies from around the world (e.g., Glessner & Johnson, 2020). For example, Sayman and Cornell (2021) examined the journals of 12 special education teachers and reported similar emotions of confusion, frustration, fear, and anxiety, which translated into feelings of loss and grief. Further, special education teachers in the Phil-

ippines reported tremendous fear, a lack of preparedness to deal with the transition to online learning, and loneliness due to the social isolation resulting from the pandemic (Toquero, 2021).

Similarly, experiencing the pandemic themselves, and in those with whom they work, fosters the shared trauma in care workers (Tosone, 2020). Thus, the pandemic seems to have impacted special education teachers, taking an emotional toll at multiple levels relating to the nature of the work itself as well as fears and concerns for themselves, their families, and their children. Indeed, the teachers often noted how alone they felt and that they took on the roles of other special education caregivers. This highlights the need for improved communication and collaboration between caregivers of special education pupils to promote not only the pupils' welfare, but also their own.

One feature that emerged in many of the interviews related to the physical and sensory elements, which are particularly prominent in special education. A study of early childhood special education teachers in the U.S. also revealed that the teachers described the absence of physical contact as particularly challenging, especially for children with disabilities (Steed & Leech, 2021). Children with ASD and other developmental disabilities often demonstrate atypical responses to sensory input, such as hyperresponsiveness or hyporesponsiveness (Butera et al., 2020; Little et al., 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic, with the focus on social distancing, masking, sanitizing, made it all the more complicated for the special education teachers to address the sensory aspects of the pupils' learning, and many felt that their hands were tied in adapting their teaching approaches (e.g., Yakut, 2021). Green and Moran (2021) noted the negative implications of sensory and touch deprivation that resulted from social distancing policies. This element of special education work was significantly hampered by the governmental decisions made during the pandemic, and the special education professionals felt that this complicated their already-difficult situation (Glessner & Johnson, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic can thus be instructive in how important it is, even in unexpected crisis situations, to be focused on a specific and unique response to each segment of the population, and especially thinking about children's welfare in crisis situations. In the future, policymakers should be more aware of, and sensitive to, the unique nature of special education work, such as the importance of touch and sensory experiences.

For special education workers, receiving support from others is related to greater job satisfaction and commitment to the job (Bettini et al., 2020; Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). In particular, recognition and acknowledgement are important elements of emotional support (Alon & Aram, 2021; Cinamon, 2009). The feeling of abandonment was noted by various educators during the COVID-19 pandemic (Feldman et al., 2022), particularly in contrast to emergency workers such as doctors and nurses, who were publicly acknowledged and thanked. At the same time, some of the participants in this study specifically related to the benefits of receiving support from their school principals. These finding is in line with other studies around the world relating to this crisis time period, highlighting that those working in special education sought social support as a way of coping with the additional stressors of the time (Glessner & Johnson, 2020; Klapproth et al., 2020). Social support helps promote retention of critical caregivers connected to special education (e.g., Hester et al., 2020; Hughes et al., 2015; Stang-Rabrig et al., 2022; Webb & Carpenter, 2012). Further, social support can be help those in situations of shared trauma and can promote resilience (Stahnke & Firestone, 2024). Increasing recognition and acknowledgement of the critical care provided by special education teachers may make them more visible and "seen," and perhaps, more likely to remain in the special education system, which so desperately needs them.

Beyond recognition, support at all levels -- from colleagues, from principals, and from the broader system, is necessary for those working within the special education system. The current study highlights this need and provides lessons for the broader Israeli education system as to improving the sense of

social support during general functioning, and particularly during crisis situations. Moreover, experts in treating trauma should be included in the support provided in times of crisis. Thus, the need for social support extends beyond the educational system and to the broader support system of the state in general. In particular, greater coordination between governmental bodies is needed. Although a crisis situation, like a pandemic, can understandably lead to conflicting governmental edicts, there were inconsistencies in the directions that were given from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. This led to a lack of understanding and confusion amongst educators (Feldman et al., 2022) as to their responsibilities, risks, and obligations. It is important in future crises for various governmental bodies to be united prior to conveying particular directions in order to avoid confusion and lend stability during an inherently unstable time.

Limitations & Future Research

The current study's results are limited by a number of aspects. First, while the qualitative methodology used enabled a deeper exploration of the special education teachers' experiences through the use of interviews, it is more difficult to generalize these results to the broader population as might be true using a quantitative approach. Similarly, although reasonable for a qualitative study, the sample size was fairly small for generalizability. While the study provided profound insights into the experiences of special education teachers, it would also be interesting to gain the perspectives of others who work with special education teachers, including principals and parents.

5 Conclusions

Professionals involved in special education face challenges due to the nature of the population and the kind of work involved. The COVID-19 pandemic added to these difficulties, creating a situation of shared trauma where special education workers experienced the pandemic both personally and professionally. They worried about their own health and fear of contracting the virus combined with having to help pupils and their families navigate the crisis. This was associated with emotions such as frustration, worry, and loneliness, increased challenges of reduced physical and sensory interactions, and a lack of social support for many. The study has implications for Israeli policymakers in terms of the importance of children's welfare and the needs of the professionals who care for them, especially those in special education during times of crisis. Governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Welfare, and Ministry of Health must consider these needs when responding to future crises. Greater inter-agency collaboration should be promoted to facilitate cooperation between all who are involved in the special education system. It appears that this is currently not the norm in Israel, despite the potential benefits of such collaboration. Specific trauma-related treatment should be included during crisis situations and aiding in the support of special education workers. There is also an increased need for recognition of special education professionals' work, sensitivity to the unique nature of this work, and the tremendous importance of social support at all levels of the system. As Becky highlighted: "It's important that there will be more recognition. I'm not only talking about the principals and teachers, I'm talking about recognition from the country, from the education system, which there hasn't been to date."

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