

Original Research Article

Parents' Attitude Toward Their Children With Special Needs in Public School

ABSTRACT

Aims: The birth of a child is a sign of faith and hope, prompting expectations of continuity and perpetuation. The mere existence of the newborn, the baby's traits and appearance, are usually a source of pride. But what if the child requires special needs and attention from the members of the family. This study was conducted to determine the attitudes of parents with children with special needs.

Study design: Using a descriptive-correlational method of research, the parents were being surveyed using the Attitude Scale of Parents of Children with Special Needs, an adapted instrument.

Place and Duration of Study: This study was conducted in the Divisions of Digos City and in Davao del Sur, Philippines in 2021-2022.

Methodology: A test was done using the Pearson-r correlations to determine the relationship between the demographic's variables and the attitudes of the parents.

Results: The demographic profile of the respondents revealed that majority of the parents belonged to the middle-aged adults, low-income groups, high school graduates and from big family size or households. The result revealed age and family size showed no relationship or influence to the attitudes of parents toward their child with special needs. However, educational background and family income showed significant relationship. The results of the survey revealed that the respondent has very good attitudes and manifested positive coping attributes in spite of their situation.

Output: A parenting enhancement plan was offered as an output of this study to improve the delivery of services and the entire special education program of the Department of Education

Keywords: correlation, special needs, attitude of parents, Philippines

1. INTRODUCTION

The birth of a child is a sign of faith and hope, prompting expectations of continuity and perpetuation, the mere existence of the newborn, the baby's traits and appearance, are usually a source of pride. When a child with special needs is born, all expectations and hopes are dashed. It is difficult to perceive this child as continuing the parents. The child is no source of pride — rather a source of great disappointment. Parents of these children undergo a difficult and painful process involving a revision of their views and expectations. They are obliged to adapt to the knowledge that all their hopes and plans for the future must change.

The birth of a child with a disability or later discovered that a child has a disability has a profound effect on the family. These children may require a large portion of family time, attention, money and psychological support.

For the last 10 years, the Department of Education has been deeply serious define the education program for the children disabilities. With all the possible centers and programs set up by both public and private institutions, it is still a fact that parents offer a big contribution to the education of their children and are potential sources of information about the academic ability of students with special needs. Parents know their children better; they know what their interests are and what things are good for them. They will also provide necessary information about social, physical and emotional development. Having this information, a teacher will strive to structure and modify his or her leaching to help student with special needs the class with the strong partnership of the parents.

But what about if the level of acceptance of the problem has been an issue and hindrance to these realizations. This scenario has been observed by the researcher in several occasions in her daily undertaking of the families with children with disabilities.

The researcher is a Special Education Teacher I in a public school In Digos City Division and it is her intention to determine the level of acceptance of parents of children sent in a public special education classes so that she can find ways and means and probably render recommendations to the authorities on how to address this concern This research will take a more strengths-based focus on their acceptance.

The major thrust of this study is to achieve a more thorough understanding of the level of acceptance of the people who are the people who can continuously nurture their children to live a productive and achieve quality life despite of the disabilities.

The study presents synthesis of various readings, literature and studies related to the attitude of parents of children with special needs which are from different intellectual sources believed to be useful in the deeper appreciation of the variables.

The strength of this article is the fine attempt the authors make in beginning to classify family characteristics. The authors argue that by understanding types of families, interventions can be tailored to family and need. The weakness is that the authors never address any philosophical concern that comes with typing. The authors appear to categorize families into one type, not even addressing the possibility that a family may share significant characteristics of two or more types in their taxonomy.

Children with multiple needs (medical mental health, and development) may require some residential care that frees the parents of these children to be able to work outside of the home, to care for other children, and to pursue other leisure activities. On the other hand, parents who are providing appropriate home-based services to their children with mental retardation may be limiting their ability to engage in other activities. This article appears to support cynical adage, "no good deed goes unpunished." The authors based their discussion on their extensive field experience. Hodap and Zigler (2003) did not interview any new families for this article. The authors discuss further practical details about these families providing care at home for their children. Experiences that many families take for granted can become sources if significant stress for these families, such as planning a vacation, scheduling a myriad of psychiatric or medical appointments, having a social life, or even having some financial flexibility.

Friedrich and Friedrich (2009) explored the psychosocial assets associated with parents of children with and without disabilities. The researchers interviewed 68 families, comparing them on measures of marital satisfaction, social support, religiosity, psychological well-being, and measures of resources and stress. Authors found that families of disabled children

reported more stress and less social support and less religiosity than did families of non-handicapped children. Social support appears to offer hope to these families, and they suggest exploring ways to increase this support.

Blacher, Nihira, and Meyers (2007) studied the differences in families of children with mild, moderate, and severe retardation. The hypothesis is that a higher level of retardation (lower IQ) in a child will have a more significant effect on the family in terms of stress levels. Each family was interviewed and surveyed over a 6-hour period using the Family Environment Scale (Moos, 2006) and the Home Quality Rating Scale (HQRS).

Negative impact on daily life appeared to diminish over time as children grew older. No significant differences across family groups regarding marital adjustment. The ambiguity of having a child with mild retardation may lead to other types of stresses due to unclear expectations. A child with severe medical involvement has far more home and case management consequences for the family.

In trying to describe families of children with mental retardation, researchers have proposed a variety of methods. In general, the literature appears consistent in stating that families who have more needy children experience more stress. Hardiness and social support appear to have a mediating effect on this stress. Lack of these attributes may result in demands for deeper end services, such as out of home placement.

A great amount of time is spent in behavior management, and even basic family problem solving is a challenge. In general, these families report less available social support and more family stress. Practitioner-researcher teams have developed family-centered best practice guidelines, but they have not been adopted widely in the field. These types of family-driven guidelines suggest not only a theory shift in treatment practice but also a paradigm shift in regards to policy.

Family strengths are relationship patterns, interpersonal skills, and social and psychological characteristics that create a sense of positive family identity. Trivette, Dunst, Deal and Propst (2010) described the qualities of strong families and demonstrated the reliability and validity of the Family Functioning Style Scale. The authors made several specific suggestions for community-based family practitioners regarding strengths-based assessment and treatment.

Clinicians need to be able to build on positive aspects of a family, not just fix what is broken. The authors take a strong stand for strength-based work. They note that successful intervention rests as much with the resources of the family as the of the Interventionist.

The authors reviewed the relative strengths and weaknesses of previous family strengths assessment scales. This last scale was developed by three of the authors and includes a comprehensive assessment of family qualities. The authors used this instrument to survey 105 parents, half of whom had a child with a disability. The instrument appeared to be internally consistent and predictive in terms of family functioning.

Beckman, Newcomb, Frank, Brown, and Filer (2003) explored family support and described a systemic approach to families of infants and toddlers with disabilities. There appears to be some barriers to moving toward more family centered practice. Existing service systems are more oriented to individual children rather than families. There has been a lack of clearly identified family-centered protocols for treatment. In describing this model program for families, the authors first noted five guiding principles:

1. The family is viewed as a system in which members exert mutual influence.
2. Families are the primary decision makers for their children and themselves.
3. Families are self-defining regarding who participates treatment.
4. Families concerns may change over time.
5. Families vary on multiple dimensions and practitioners need to be respectful of diversity.

Beckman and Bristol (2001) examined the system of support for families of children with a disability in the United States. The authors examined the subsystems noted by Bronfenbrenner (2009) as Macro system (social, political, and cultural factors), exosystem (agencies involved with a family), and mesosystem. In regards to macrosystem issues, the author noted the impact of poverty, access to services, and the cultural values that define available services. The authors noted the mesosystem issues that affect the relationship between parents and practitioners. Parents often feel as if practitioners are not listening to them, have a poor attitude, and are insensitive. Some services are available to families at certain times of the year, rather than year-round. The authors suggested exploring formal and informal supports for families.

Eiserman, Weber, and McCoun (2005) reviewed two models of parents as teachers' programs, one home based, the other clinic based. Authors noted the dearth of research in parent involvement programs or alternative roles of parents. Anecdotal reports from the field note that high parent involvement in the treatment of their disabled child yields better treatment results. Authors conducted this research over a period of 42 months and used the Battelle Developmental Scale to obtain scores on speech and language functioning of the child. Abbott and Meredith (2006) reported that limited studies have been conducted on coping strategies within families of children with disabilities. Sixty parents (30 married couples) were compared in terms of marital and family strengths. Matching on child's sex, race, age, and number of siblings was completed.

Theoretical Framework

This study will be mainly anchored on the Rohner's Theory of Parental Acceptance and Rejection (2005). This theory contended that the physical and verbal behaviors which are used by the parents in expressing the love towards their children represent parental acceptance. On the other hand, disinterest and neglect of the parents and their behaviors that cause physical or psychological pain represent parental rejection. It is commonly accepted that parental acceptance or rejection is a strong predictor of psychological or behavioral harmony in different cultures (Batum and Öktem, 2011). Parents know the child best and they spend most of the time with him. They provide information about his development, interaction at home, interests and performance, values of the child and the family, his favorites, aims and ideas about the future.

Influence of the parents should be taken into consideration and the contribution of the family should be provided with a two-way communication. Parents are accepted as the most influential factor in inclusion (Sönmez, 2010). The aim of this study is to examine the development of a child with special needs in inclusion and determine the effect of parental acceptance in the success of inclusion.

Statement of the Problem

The study was to determine the attitudes of parents of children with special needs in a Special Education classes In the Divisions Digos City and in Davao del Sur. The findings served as basis for a proposed parenting skills enhancement

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of?
 - 1.1. age
 - 1.2. educational background;
 - 1.3. income level; and
 - 1.4. family size,
2. What is the attitude of parents towards their child with special needs?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the respondent's profile and their attitudes towards their child with special needs?
4. Based on the findings of the study, what Parental Skills Enhancement Plan can be proposed?

Statement of Null Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the respondent's profile and their attitudes towards their child with special needs.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Design

The study utilized the descriptive-correlational method of research design to test the stated hypothesis. It focused on the description that will determine the level of acceptance of the parents as well as their demographic status. Descriptive research is an attempt to describe and examine a phenomenon that is occurring at a specific time and place(s) It concerned with the on-going trend that are evident such as the differences or relationships that exist, opinions held, conditions, structures, practices and processes. This type of study comprised of collecting data to determine whether, and to what extent, a relationship exists between two or more variables that were quantifiable. The degrees of relationship was expressed in coefficient of correlation. The exploration of these relationships provided insights into the nature of the variables themselves as well as trying to understand their relationships.

Environment

The study conducted in the special education classes of elementary schools in Digos City and Davao del Sur found that they performed better than those catering for normal children. Special needs classes were introduced for children who had physical or intellectual impairments or both which were still framed in the basic education curriculum. There were classes that catered children with learning disabilities and the grade level were ladder the same as the regular class.

Respondents

The study utilized 50 parents whose children with special needs were sent a special education class in the schools of Digos City and Davao del Sur. These parents were directly involved in the care and custody of their children.

Sampling Design

The researcher used a purposive sampling method in the selection and identification of the respondents. This type of sampling method is also called by other researchers as judgmental sample since it was based on the knowledge of a population and the purpose of this study.

Instrument

The researcher used the Attitude Scale of Parents of Children with Special Needs. This instrument is a 50-question tool measure the level of acceptance parents by stating focal concerns. The variables and indicators of the original tool will be used except the manner of scoring the responses of the respondents.

And corresponding to each item is a four numeric scale that the respondents will check which best represents their attitudes towards their children. The qualitative or descriptive equivalents of the numeric scales are as follows:

- 4 - Strongly Agree
- 3 - Agree
- 2 - Disagree
- 1 - Strongly Disagree

The demographic data determined the age of the respondents which were grouped and categorized. Other demographic information asked were the educational background, income level of the family and family size.

Data Gathering Procedures

As soon as the consent and approval of the request will be given, courtesy meeting with the immediate, School Principal and the teachers assigned in the SPED class in the schools to communicate the terms and objectives of the study.

Preparatory work was carried out before the instruments were distributed to the pre-identified respondents. A trial run of the instrument was done in order to ascertain concerns and polish the instrument prior to the actual distribution of the instruments.

Statistical Treatment of Data

In analyzing and interpreting gathered data, the following statistical tools were employed to determine the demographic profile and the level of acceptance of the parents.

Simple Percentage was utilized to treat the gathered data.

Weighted Mean was also used to determine the scores on the ratings given by the health care providers.

Pearson R is the product-moment correlation coefficient is a measure of the strength of a linear association between two variables. It attempts to draw a line of best fit through the data of two variables, and the Pearson correlation coefficient, r , indicates how far away all these data points are from this line.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Parents can never be fully prepared of the idea that their child is different. Children with disabilities need the same kind of love support, discipline, and direction as other children. Caring for a disabled child may require additional equipment, home modifications, time, and patience. The need to assess the profile of the parents was essential in this study, Parents of children with disabilities cope with the same responsibilities and pressures that other parents face. These factors may even be more complicated with the presence of other demographic factors that may affect the dynamics of dealing with children with disabilities.

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. Profile of Respondents for Gender

Demographic Category	Type/Group	Frequency	Percentage
Age (Years)	18 below	2	4.0
	19-30	6	12.0
	31-40	4	8.0
	41-50	9	18.0
	51 Above	29	58.0
Educational Background	Undergraduate	12	24.0
	College Graduate	4	8.0
	Highschool	29	58.0
	Elementary	5	10.0
Income Level (Annual income)	70,000 php and below	30	60.0
	80,000-130,000 php	14	28.0
	140,000 and above	6	12.0
Family Size	2-5	25	50.0
	6-9	18	36.0
	10 above	7	14.0

The table presented the results of the survey which determined the demographic profile of the respondents include the age, educational background, income level and family size. Apparently, majority of the respondents are middle and older adults, the former covering 19% of the total number of respondents, the latter covering 58%. The least number were parents who were 18 below with 4%. The findings suggest that middle-aged parents were convince to send their children with disabilities to public school that focused and improved their expertise in the education and growth of children with disabilities. The data that reflects the education background showed that majority of the respondents were high school graduates. This is a good indication that in spite of the limited educational attainment of the

respondents, they still value basic education which as parents can be translated as driving values that will motivate them to send their children to school.

In the aspect of the income level, the data revealed that majority of the respondent belonged to the low-income group. The data also reflected that there were also families of middle-income groups. This is also a good indication that the parents even if they can afford to send their children to private institutions, still trust our public-school system of education.

Attitudes of parents of children with special needs

The role of children with disabilities in the education system has evolved over the years. One of the most important factors that contributed to its success was the attitudes of the parents toward their children. The focus of government thru the Department of Education has resulted in a program that placed children with special needs in the basic education system.

Results of the survey that assessed the attitudes of parents of children with disabilities towards their children are presented in the second part of this two-part series. The results of the responses to the queries enumerated in the instrument used in the survey. Item number 40 garnered the least weighted mean of 2.74.

The item asked about the development potential of children with special as time goes by. Children with special needs when given the right education and nurturing environment will eventually be productive, self-reliant, and learned individuals. This is one objective of the special education program of the Department of Education. The heavier challenge of the program other than developing the children is to mold and transform the mindset of the parent. Children with special needs deserve the care and the opportunity given to normal children since their development potentials are as promising as with the others.

It shows that parents of children with special needs are able to cope well with the negative appreciation and ideas of other persons. Results also revealed that they have already surpassed the likelihood of subjecting their children to social isolation. It assessed the feeling of the parents to be accepting as a normal person rather than being mindful of the opinions and acceptance of another person.

Overall, the parents of a child with a disability were asked to describe their child at an average rate of 3.52 which has a descriptive equivalent of strongly agree. The finding was a good determinant that the parents have already accepted the fact that their child was different to other children, and will require special attention throughout their lives.

Relationship between the demographic profile and the attitudes of parents

The findings were an indication that the age of the parents and the family size of the family does not in any way influence or affect the attitude of parents toward their child with special needs. It is tantamount of saying that age does not indicate the level of acceptance and coping of parents towards their child with special needs nor the number of family member in a household influence the degree of acceptance and other creation of positive dynamics towards the positive acceptance of a child that needs special attention by the household members. Definitely, education transforms and influenced the attitude of any person and no wonder that it has become an important element in the implementation of the special education program of Department of Education. On the other hand, it was also found out that family income has influenced with the attitudes of parents.

The more financially abled the person is, the better he can cope with the stress of having a child with special needs. The financial resources of a family therefore predict the responses and reflect the ability to cope with a situation wherein there is a member with special needs.

4. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to determine the attitudes of parents with child that needs special attention. The respondents were in the low-income group and usually came from big household size. Most of them were high school graduates and middle-aged adults age group.

A test was done to determine the relationship between the demographics and the attitudes of parents and the result revealed that two variables namely the age and the family size do not have significant relationship and influence over the attitudes of parents.

Based on the findings of this study, parents of children with special needs showed strong indication that they have manifested very good attitudes. And that the parent's ability to adapt to the situations being studied was also influenced by the level of education and the condition of the child as well as the financial capability of the family.

The findings also support the contention and the literature espoused under the Rohner's Theory of Parental Acceptance and Rejection (2005) which contends that the physical and verbal behaviors which were assessed using the Attitude Scale of Parents of Children with Special Needs and found to be very good represent parental acceptance.

Recommendations

1. The proposed action plan must be presented, reviewed by the Department of Education and the stakeholders handling the Special Education Program;
2. The stakeholders of the SPED program must broaden the base of their implementation by encouraging the parents to participate in any undertaking that affects the welfare of their child as a way of educating them and making them strong partners of educating and developing their children;
3. The Department of Education must improve the capacity of the SpEd and build stronger relationship with their constituents to ensure achievement of the vision and mission of the vision and mission of the program.
4. Finally, the following topics are suggested for future research undertakings:
 - a. Level of satisfaction of the parents of the Special Education Program of the Department of Education;
 - b. The assessment of the learning needs of the Special Education;
 - c. Analysis on the Quality of Education of the Special Education Program of DepEd;
 - d. Qualitative study: The making of a SpEd Teacher.

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