

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 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, and the baby's traits and appearance are usually a source of pride. All expectations and hopes are dashed when a child with special needs is born. It is not easy to perceive this child as continuing the parents. The child is no source of pride — instead, a source of great disappointment.

Further, parents of these children undergo a difficult and painful process involving revising their views and expectations. They must 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 discovery that a child has a disability profoundly affects the family. These children may require much family time, attention, money, and psychological support. In the study of Friedrich and Friedrich (2009), "families of children with disabilities have higher perceived stress compared to other families". "Professionals must acknowledge the importance of the family, the change towards

a positive attitude towards disability, and the control decisions concerning the disabled child and the family (Kandel & Merrick", 2007)

In the Philippines, the Department of Education has deeply defined the education program for children with disabilities for the last ten years. With all the possible centers and programs set up by both public and private institutions, it is still a fact that parents make a significant contribution to their children's education and are potential sources of information about the academic ability of students with special needs (DepEd, 2021). "Parents know their children better; they know their interests and what things are good for them. They will also provide necessary information about social, physical, and emotional development. With this information, a teacher will strive to structure and modify their teaching to help students with special needs in the class with the strong partnership of the parents" (Eiserman, Weber, & McCoun, 2005).

However, the level of acceptance of the problem has been an issue and hindrance to these realizations. The researcher has observed this scenario on several occasions in the daily undertaking of families with children with disabilities. One of the reasons the researcher saw to be causing this undertaking is the curriculum of the Special Education of the institution. The Digos City division of Davao del Sur has provided free education to physically or intellectually disabled pupils as well as economically disadvantaged parents, however, it is currently framed in the basic education curriculum. Some classes that were designed specifically for children with learning difficulties, follow the same grade level laddering as the usual class. This focus is relevant because education is not only for the child but also for the parents, for a better understanding of the needs and abilities of their children—good education program that includes them must be fostered.

The researcher is a Special Education Teacher I in a public school In Digos City Division. It is her intention to determine the level of acceptance of parents of children sent in a public particular education class so that they 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 their disabilities. Also, to shed light on the importance of uniquely designed classes both for the children and their parents.

Related Literature

The study presents a 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 helpful in the more profound appreciation of the variables.

The strength of this article is the fine attempt the authors make in the beginning to classify family characteristics. The authors argue that by understanding the types of families, interventions can be tailored to the family's needs. The weakness is that the authors never address any philosophical concern 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 work outside of the home, care for other children, and pursue other leisure activities. On the other hand, parents who provide appropriate home-based services to their children with mental retardation may limit their

ability to engage in other activities. This article supports the 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 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 of 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, less social support, and less religiosity than those 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 children with mild, moderate, and severe retardation families. The hypothesis is that a higher level of retardation (lower IQ) in a child will have a more significant effect on the family regarding stress levels. Each family was interviewed and surveyed over 6 hours using the Family Environment Scale (Moos, 2006) and the Home Quality Rating Scale (HQRS)".

The negative impact on daily life appeared to diminish 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 stress 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. The lack of these attributes may result in demands for more profound end services, such as out-of-home placement.

A significant amount of time is spent in behavior management, and even fundamental family problem solving is challenging. 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 a theoretical shift in treatment practice and a paradigm shift regarding 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 on the family's resources as the Interventionist's.

The authors reviewed the relative strengths and weaknesses of previous family strengths assessment scales. This last scale was developed by three 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 regarding 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 appear to be some barriers to moving toward more family-centred practice. Existing service systems are more oriented to individual children rather than families. There has been a lack of clearly identified family-centred 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 in treatment.
4. Families' concerns may change over time.
5. Families vary on multiple dimensions, and practitioners must be respectful of diversity.

Beckman and Bristol (2001) examined “the support system for families of children with a disability in the United States”. The authors examined the subsystems noted by Bronfenbrenner (2009) as Macrosystem (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 that practitioners are not listening to them, have a poor attitude, and are insensitive. Some services are available to families at specific times rather than year-round. The authors suggested exploring formal and informal support for families.

Eiserman, Weber, and McCoun (2005) reviewed “two models of parents as teachers' programs: home-based and clinic-based. Authors noted the dearth of research on parent involvement programs or alternative roles of parents. Anecdotal reports from the field note that high parent involvement in treating their disabled child yields better treatment results. The authors conducted this research over 42 months and used the Battelle Developmental Scale to obtain scores on the 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 regarding marital and family strengths. Matching on a child's sex, race, age, and several 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 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 a

home, interests, and performance. values of the child and the family, his favorites. aims and ideas about the future.

The influence of the parents should be taken into consideration and the contribution of the family should be provided with 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 on 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 thew 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 research design method to test the stated hypothesis. It focused on the description that will determine the level of acceptance of the parents and their demographic status. Descriptive research attempts to describe and examine a phenomenon occurring at a specific time and place(s). It is concerned with the ongoing trends, such as the differences or relationships that exist, opinions held, conditions, structures, practices, and processes. This study consisted 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 were expressed in the coefficient of correlation. The exploration of these relationships provided insights into the nature of the variables and trying to understand their relationships.

National Context

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 to normal children. Special needs classes were introduced for children with physical or intellectual impairments, which were still framed in the primary education curriculum. Some classes catered for children with learning disabilities and the grade level were laddered the same as the regular class.

Respondents

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

Sampling Design

The researcher used a purposive sampling method to select and identify the respondents. This sampling method is called by other researchers a 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 that measures the level of acceptance of parents by stating focal concerns. The variables and indicators of the original tool will be used except for the manner of scoring the respondents' responses.

Moreover, 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 family's educational background, income level, and family size.

Data Gathering Procedures

After the consent and approval were made, a courtesy meeting took place with, School Principal and the teachers assigned to the SPED class in the schools to communicate the terms and objectives of the study.

Preparatory work was completed before the instruments were distributed to the pre-identified respondents. A trial run was done to ascertain concerns and polish the instrument.

Statistical Treatment of Data

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

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 measured 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 for the idea that their child is different. Children with disabilities need the same 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 than 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 survey results, which determined the demographic profile of the respondents, including their age, educational background, income level and family size. The 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 and below with 4%. The findings suggest that middle-aged parents were convinced to send their children with disabilities to a 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 most of the respondents were high school graduates. This is a good indication that despite the limited educational attainment of the respondents, they still value primary education, which as parents, can be translated as driving values that will motivate them to send their children to school.

In the aspect of income level, data revealed that the 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 education system.

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 critical factors that contributed to its success was the parents' attitudes 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 primary education system.

The second part of this two-part series presents the survey results that assessed the attitudes of parents of children with disabilities towards their children. The results of the responses to the queries are 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 will eventually be productive, self-reliant, and learned individuals when given the proper education and nurturing environment. 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 parent's mindset. Children with special needs deserve the care and the opportunity given to normal children since their development potentials are as promising as the others.

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

The parents of a child with a disability described their attitude towards their children, and the results garnered an average rate of 3.52, which has a descriptive equivalent of strongly agree. The finding was a good determinant that the parents had already accepted that their child was different from other children and will require special attention throughout their lives.

Relationship between the demographic profile and the attitudes of parents

The findings indicated that the parents' age and family size do not in any way influence or affect the attitude of parents toward their child with special needs. It is tantamount to saying that age does not indicate the level of acceptance and coping of parents towards their child with special needs. The number of family members in a household influences the degree of acceptance and other positive dynamics towards the positive acceptance of a child that needs special attention by the household members.

Education transformed and influenced the attitude of any person, and no wonder it has become an essential element in the implementation of the special education program of the Department of Education. On the other hand, it was also found that family income has influenced parents' attitudes.

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

4. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to determine the attitudes of parents with a child that needs special attention. The respondents were in the low-income group and usually came from big households. 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 parents' attitudes. The result revealed that two variables, namely the age and the family size, do not have a significant relationship and influence the attitudes of parents.

Based on the findings of this study, parents of children with special needs showed strong indications that they have manifested excellent attitudes. Furthermore, parents' ability to adapt to situations studied was influenced by the level of education, condition of the child as well as the financial capability of the family.

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

Recommendations

This paper was conducted to initially assess the attitude of parents with a child with a disability, the results were able to highlight relevant information reflected in the conclusion of this study. Moreover, the findings of this study have implications for the current DepEd program for the Special Education, hence the following recommendations are presented:

1. The proposed action plan must be presented and 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 vital partners in educating and developing their children;

3. The Different of Education must improve the capacity of the SpEd and build a stronger relationship and their constituents to ensure the achievement 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 of the Quality of Education of the Special Education Program of DepEd;
 - d. Qualitative study: The making of a SpEd Teacher.

ETHICAL APPROVAL:

As per international standard or university standard written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

Consent

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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