PARENTAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE INCLUSION EDUCATION FOR THEIR DISABLED CHILDREN

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine parents' attitudes toward inclusion for their children with disabilities in general education and to associate their perspectives with parent variables e.g. Sex, education and child variables e.g. age, gender and types of disability. The sample consisted of parents (51 mothers, 68 fathers) of children with disabilities, residing in Hyderabad region. Each parent completed the Attitude Toward Inclusion/ Mainstreaming" scale (Leyser and Kirk, 2004), composed of 18 items selected and adapted for parent respondents that assess scores for the factors of benefits, satisfaction, teacher ability and inclusion support, and child rights. The results of the study revealed children's age and gender as the factors that mainly influence parents' views regarding inclusion. No differences were noted on the subscales of the questionnaire related to parents' sex, educational level and children's type of disability.

Keywords: Parents, Attitudes, Inclusion, Children with Disabilities.

The birth of a baby is usually anticipated with great excitement and expectation of a future filled with happiness and success. This exuberance may become muted with the birth of a child with disability. It does not matter if the disability is blindness, retardation or a physical abnormality. The family into which this child is born will change some ways. Having handicapped child born into a family and grow into adulthood is one of the most stressful experience a family can endure. The last decades the idea of inclusion, that is, educating students with disabilities in programs and activities for typically developing children in a variety of situations (Odom and Diamond, 1998; Rizzo, Davis and Toussaint, 1994), has become the most important topic in the field of special education. The inclusion movement has been reinforced by many who believe that separate education is not an equal education, leading to the development of inclusive practices as a guiding educational policy in many countries.

However, barriers to inclusion of students with disabilities in typical education are often mentioned. Some of these are the inadequate training and attitudes of general education teachers, the huge class size and the lack of equipment and support personnel (Auxter et al., 2001), the lack of specialised training and support for child care providers to provide inclusive child care (Grove and Fisher, 1999) Fewell, 1993) as well as concerns about the attitudes of care providers and general education teachers regarding serving children with special needs in their programs (Rafferty and Griffin, 2005). Opinion of secondary school teacher also played an important role in parental attitude towards the inclusion education for their disabled children on problem based learning (Trivedi, 2013). Research indicates that inclusion does not promote positive attitudes, unless specific interaction experiences are planned and the environment is carefully structured (Jones, 1984). Many

teachers have negative attitudes toward students with disabilities because they do not know how to teach them (Clark, French and Henderson, 1986).

Parents have a major role in the challenging and dynamic inclusion process that starts with the parents' decision to place their child in a mainstream setting. Consequently, over the last two decades a number of studies examined parent views and concerns about inclusion, leading to contradictory results. Several of these studies concerning parents of children with mild or moderate disabilities (Leyser and Kirk, 2004; Seery, Davis, and Johnson, 2000; were supportive of inclusion practices and satisfied with the benefits provided for their child. However, results from other studies (Palmer, Fuller, Arora, and Nelson, 2001; Fox and Ysseldyke, 1997; Green and Shinn, 1994) report less support. Kasari, Freeman, Bauminger, and Alkin (1999) identified diagnosis, age, and current placement as factors that have an impact on parent perceptions toward inclusion, whether Stoiber, Gettinger, and Goetz (1998) recognised that parents' education level, marital status, and number of children were associated with their inclusion beliefs. Parents' views are an important aspect of the evaluation of the inclusion movement. Useful conclusions could also be drawn with the comparison of parents' attitudes toward inclusion from different studies.

The purpose of this study was to examine parental attitude towards the inclusion education for their disabled children in general education settings and to associate their perspectives with parent variables (e.g. sex, education) and child variables (e.g. age, gender and severity of disability).

Methodology : Descriptive research design is used in the study. Research Method used for the study was Survey method. In this study the investigator selected purposive sampling. The sample consisted of 119 parents (68

mothers, 51 fathers) of children with disabilities (63 with mental retardation without Down Syndrome (DS), 21 with mental retardation and DS, 8 with autism and 27 with cerebral palsy) residing in Hyderabad region. Attitude Toward Inclusion/ Mainstreaming'' scale (Leyser and Kirk, 2004). composed of 18 items selected and adapted for parent respondents that assess scores for the following factors: a) benefits of inclusion for students with and without disabilities as perceived by parents, b) parent satisfaction with their child's progress and special education services compared to inclusion, c) parent perceptions of teacher ability and inclusion support by parents of students without disabilities and d) the child rights factor related to the philosophical and legal justification of inclusion .It is a 5-point Likert-type scale, anchored by strongly agree (1 point) and strongly disagree (5 points) for each item. Eight items were statements in favour of inclusion and 10 items that express negative attitudes were reverse-coded during the analyses so that low ratings can be interpreted as favourable to inclusion.

Procedure of Data Collection : The researchers gave verbal instructions prior to the completion of the questionnaire and they were present during the whole process to provide any additional information required by the parents. A brief introduction indicating the purpose of the study and asking parents to provide background information (i.e., the type and severity level of the child's disability, age of child, education level of parents) was also included. The data was collected over a period of three months.

Data Analysis : Statistical analysis included the use of the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS 10.0). A t-test for independent samples was used for the analysis regarding disability, parents' gender and education level, and students' gender and age. A one-way ANOVA was used to investigate possible differences existing in terms of disability type.

Results :

Table : 1 - Factor differences between parents of boys and girls

Factors	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df
	Boys	75	4.36	.76	2.51	.013
	Girls	44 3.93	3.93	1.08	2.30	64.26

Table 1 showed statistically significant difference between parents of boys and girls on the rights factor.

Table 2 showed Students' age appeared as an important factor providing statistically significant differences regarding parents' views in all subscales of the questionnaire. And No differences were noted on the subscales of the questionnaire related to parents' sex, educational level and children's type of disability.

Table: 2 Factors result with respect to Student age

differences

Factors	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df
Benefits	Children	76	3.65	.71	2.97	117
	Adults	43	3.23	.75	2.91	81.12
Ability	Children	76	3.12.	.61	4.08	117
	Adults	43	2.62	.65	4.01	82.99
Satisfaction	Children	76	2.94	.74	4.71	117
	Adults	43	2.25.	.78	4.64	83.94
Rights	Children	76	4.46	.72	4.40	117
	Adults	43	3.74	1.04	3.98	64.81

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that most parents of children with disabilities have positive attitudes toward inclusion and support the concept of mainstreaming. An examination of the responses to the items expressing benefits showed that 65% of the parents recognise that inclusion will prepare their children's adjustment in the real world, giving them a chance to participate (63.9%) and interact with other classmates. Positive social outcomes were also recognised for children without disabilities who are likely to learn and become more sensitive to peoples' differences (82.2%). Interestingly enough, children's attitudes was not a major concern for parents. 42.4% of parents did not seem to consider that inclusion is likely to harm the sentimental development of their children, as 52.5% of them expressed the belief that inclusion is more likely to make their children feel better about themselves.

However, parents were uncertain or expressed a concern about whether inclusion would lead to their child's social isolation by other children in a typical class. Children's social acceptance along with quality of instruction and availability of support services seem to puzzle parents' views and create a feeling of uncertainty. Perceptions whether children with disabilities are more (33%) or less (40%) to receive special help and services and whether teachers in conventional classes are able (23.5%) or not able (43%) to help children with disabilities, give a first but not yet clear picture of parents' views, as approximately 30% of parents remained undecided about teacher ability and possible loss of support services in typical settings. Consequently, parents of children with disabilities are not yet certain about the positive or negative outcomes of inclusion practices, although benefits of inclusion for students according to parents' perceptions are positively related to children's rights from a philosophical and legal standpoint. Indeed, parents strongly support their children's chance to participate in conventional classes (68%) and to have the same advantages and rights (83.2%) as children without disabilities, especially parents of boys who express a greater support toward children's rights compared to parents of girls (p= .013). An important finding is that only a 27.3% of parents express their satisfaction with special classes' services, something that raises an issue about parents' approval of special education provision in settings. Parents' satisfaction with their child's progress

and special education services compared to inclusion was moderately correlated to their perceptions about teacher ability and inclusion support by parents of students without disabilities. A larger percentage of parents (47%) did not seem to support that special support can lead their children to a faster skills development compared to traditional practices, or that that special education is taught better by special professors. Moreover, parents appeared more confident (47.5%) about the equal treatment of their children provided by teachers in typical classes and more positive (56.3%) about their children's acceptance by parents of children without disabilities.

The most important factor providing statistically significant differences regarding parents' views in all subscales of the questionnaire was students' age. In particular, parents of children aged below 18 years achieved higher scores in all subscales compared to parents whose children were already adults. Accordingly, the results of this study show that the concept of inclusion appeals more to parents who are more concerned about the future of their younger children, compared to parents whose children are already adults and their possibilities for inclusion in society are already recognised to some extent.

Conclusion

The main findings of this study reveal that the parents of this study do not express a major concern about whether inclusion would hurt their child emotionally. However they are concerned whether their children would be socially accepted by other peers without disabilities. Parents strongly support their children's chance to participate in typical classes. Students' age emerged as the principal factor that influenced parents' perceptions about inclusion, with parents of students aged below 18 years appearing more emotionally involved and concerned about the future of their children through inclusion practices. Parents' sex, education level and children's type of disability did not emerge as factors that influenced parental views about inclusion.

Limitation & Future direction: The main limitation of the study is less sample size. This study is a first attempt to provide several implications for future research and practice for inclusive education settings .Future research with larger samples that will include parents of children with all kind of disabilities.

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