

Understanding the Attitudes and Concerns of Parents of Children with Special Needs

Dr .RituTripathi Chakravarty

Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Education, Amity University, Lucknow (India)

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Corresponding Author

Email:rituchakravarty[at]gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Parenting is a super art where each child is a canvass and parents have divine powers to paint the most beautiful masterpiece of their life – Their Children

Parents of children with special needs have greater responsibilities because they have to create their own world where things go just right as per the needs and abilities of their children.

The aim of this paper is to make an attempt to understand the attitudes and concerns of parents who have children with special needs. Researcher developed questionnaire on various aspects to know what is the attitude and concerns of parents who have special needs children. Purposive sampling method was adopted to select the sample in which 30 parents of 15 identified special needs children were taken including both mother and father. Percentage analysis was done on the responses and codes were formulated for the analysis. Findings reveals that many a times parents are under stress and guilt for their children and therefore they themselves put pressures in their lives but some of them are the encouraging and inspirational as they are trying hard for being positive in between the pressures .Though the life is difficult but with awareness and collaborations of each and every members of the society parents of special needs children may be supported for creating their masterpiece live happily in best possible ways.

1. Introduction

Family is the strongest pillar in the life of a child and biggest supporter of child's achievements measured in terms educational outcomes and personality development. Researchers have proved that role of family has helped individuals to write their success story because this dimension is associated significantly with children's motivation to learn. When family is concern, parents are expected to play a crucial role in the life of their children. Parents have unconditional love and support for their children no matter how are their children.

The life is unpredictable and so are its ways .The jerk is felt when reality is different from what was planned and hoped. Being blessed with a healthy and accomplished child is a dream of every parent but when a child is who has a special need is born in a family it is difficult to accept the child .It is hard core reality which may have been expressed or may not be but parent do ask the question why this to me?

The life of parents with special needs is not easy but a pool of challenges .This is because that they have no idea how to deal. Parents of children with special needs tend to be faced with a continuous mental trauma which often leads to societal isolation and difficulty finding resources deal with their feelings of confusion and stress.

Parents are key source of vital information about their children because they have first-hand knowledge of their children's physical, social emotional and cognitive traits (Hedrick, 1997). Children are the perfect extension and expression of a couple's love and caring (Gibran, 1986). Loss of hope for the 'perfect child' causes grief, and over time the feeling is heightened by loneliness, isolation, and exhaustion. Parents frequently over-protect their child and feel guilty that they are responsible for the child's disability. With the denial in

the acceptance of the child's disability the social well-being also gets effected.

With this attitudes of parents the child does not remains unaffected. The child gathers that he is in-efficient and incompetent in some or the other way from his fellow ones. And slowly it starts creeping into the behaviours of the children by damaging his emotional and social well-being. The child is unable express but somehow his behaviours reveal the real self of the child. Parents also do not understand why this difficult situation has delved into their lives.

Parental involvement is therefore indispensable to early intervention. Kachingwe (1983) argued that it is fruitless effort to rehabilitate people and plunge them in an attitudinally disabled environment where they are pitied. This is a kind of attitude that keeps children with learning disabilities feeling a sense of guilt and deprived of self-esteem. The parents' attitude towards their learning disable children can bring significant change in the confidence levels of the Learning disable children.

2. Review of Literature

In a study Chandramukiet.all aimed to study parental attitudes towards children with specific learning disabilities. The results clearly showed differences in parental perceptions related to the gender of these children. The reason could be that parents expect more, academically, from male children than female children. Boys are expected to achieve higher levels in education, hold better positions and be financially secure in the cultural context in the country. This indicates more academic pressure on boys as compared to girls.

GunjanBhatia found in her research healthy family relationship greatly influences emotional intelligence of the adolescents. Family is the environment where the children

learned to use their faculties and understand and cope with the physical world. It is a time when they don't bother with trivial things, such as the family relationship, because they know they are the kingpin of their family. It is the place, where they learn how family relationships work, by observing their parents, grandparents, siblings and rest of the family members deal with each other.

In another study, ValeriaCavion et.allfound that the students with learning disability may encounter difficulties in their education, such as issues related to peer group acceptance, friendship and social isolation, low self-efficacy and self-esteem, and externalized and internalized behaviour problems. The relationship between family members, social and emotional learning programmes and learning disability may help to develop positive changes in the development of the personality of children with special needs.

R.T.Chakravarty has concluded that education is a powerful tool for increasing sustainability and foster happiness and if this tool is used for educating each and every members of the society no one will be left behind. It implies that Parents of Children with special needs will never feel isolated in society if each members of society make combined efforts to bring happiness in the lives of children with special needs.

3. Significance of the Study

A thorough literature survey revealed that there are hardly any studies available on understanding the feelings and concerned of the parents of children having special needs. Therefore this study was planned which intended to explore out and bring the feelings, stress and attitudes of parents for special child in raising them and issues they face for understanding and growing up their children so that they have better skill to deal and understand the special needs of their dear children.

4. Statement of the Problem:-

Understanding the Attitude and Concerned of Parents with children having Special Needs

5. Objectives of the Study:-

1. To study the attitude of Parents of children with special needs
2. To understand the concerns of Parents of Children with special needs

6. Operational Definitions of the Terms

The statement of the problem is worded as; "Understanding the Attitude and Concerns of Parents with children having Special Needs"

- Parents' Attitude:- Refers to positive or negative predispositions to think, feel, perceive and behave in a certain way towards a given situation by parents.
- Parents' Concern: Refers to the worry of parents for the children with special needs.

7. Design of the Study

- **Research Methodology:** -The investigator will use survey method for the collection of the data.

- **Approach of Research:** - It is a Quantitative research with qualitative input
- **Sources of the Data:** - The data will be collected by both primary as well as secondary means.
- **Population of The Study:-**Parents of children with special needs in urban locality of Lucknow city.
- **Sample:** - 30 Parents of 15 children with special needs from three schools situated in nearby urban locality of Lucknow city formed the sample
- **Sampling Techniques:-** In the present study Purposive Sampling Technique was used for selecting the sample.
- **Tools Used:-** The data will be collected through self-developed questionnaire.
- **Data Analysis Techniques Used:-** In the present study the investigator used the percentage analysis of the data.

8. Findings

1. The concern of parents for the future life of their children was immense which was greatly disturbing them. Almost 100 % of the parents were troubled to see and think about the future well-being of their children as they felt that it is only parents who can take care of their children with full devotion. They felt that what will happen to them when they will not be there to take care .However 47% mothers were positive that their children will be happy and will have support and concern of their siblings and friends along with the community .Only 10 % of the fathers felt so .It shows mothers were more optimistic than the fathers of the children with special needs.
2. On feeling of Overburden 90 .5% of the parents felt that with the varied needs they feel overburden many times. They felt that they have to curb many daily routines and requirements and have to bring changes as per the needs of the special child at home and therefore effects the overall functioning of their system.
3. It was difficult to understand when parents were asked did they have a feeling of guilt when they see their special needs children .Both mothers 92.5 % and fathers 89.6 % had a feeling of guilt . Some of them felt that if they knew why this has happened to their children (Austism ,Celebral Palsy) they would have done something or taken some precautions to prevent it.It means that awareness on the issue is the major challenge in the society and acceptance even more as somewhere deep down the feeling of guilt is disturbing most of the parents.
4. Most of the parents attitude towards the social acceptance of children with special needs was however heartening. 78% of parents said that due to the increase efforts in schools on inclusiveness and continuous efforts of the government policies combined with the efforts of the NGOs, the peers of these children have developed some positive behaviour. They play, talk and help them without any feeling of dejection. This is a good indication of mainstreaming. However 22% parents did not felt so. They believed that there is lot of discrimination for

their children in their peer group. And because of it they feel socially isolated.

5. The parents were asked how they encourage their children to perform their daily activities it was good to get 86% of parents saying that they try to remain with their children in most of the situations to encourage and direct. Few of them go daily to school with their children as they feel comfortable in school with them. This effort of the parents is indeed commendable as parents while doing so have to make lots of changes in their daily routine. There were 5% of mothers who left their jobs in order to make efforts for their children to learn and grow happily.

9. Conclusion

Life is hard, full of difficulties and these difficulties lead to stress, guilt and disappointments. Parents of children with special needs face challenges in their daily life. These challenges when met with positive attitude bring positive outcomes but when failed, they bring the feeling of remorse, despair and negativity. This created imbalance and with the imbalance there is no growth. Ultimately happiness suffers. Empathy is the most perfect word which can create wonders. Parents of children with special needs require a lot of epithetical

support from the community. And these collaborative efforts will definitely help to create a better world where everyone has a sense of belongingness and happiness.

10. Recommendations

The parents of the children with special needs are under pressure and continuous stress. Efforts should be made to reduce the stress of these parents as it is related that parents have a vital role in the life of their children. They directly and indirectly shape and develop the personality of their children. The social and emotional skills are sharpened in the positive outlook parents bear for their children. Various Programs on Parenting of Special needs Children may be of great help and programs on maintaining positive mental health of parents will bring desired changes in the life of these children. Schools and teachers have a greater role. They should organize guidance and counselling services for the students and for their parents. Rehabilitation services including therapeutic services should be designed and made easily assessable in the community and for the parents. Collaborative efforts in the community will help to minimize the feeling of despair and removal of negative attitudes of parents and help to increase the positivity in parents of children with learning disability.

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