

## Encountered problems by parents having children needing special education

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### Abstract

This study aims to obtain problems encountered in special education in the direction of the opinions of parents attending to Special Training and Rehabilitation Institution and develops solution suggestions compensating these problems. In the scope of the study, parents of 20 students were interviewed. The data that were obtained as a result of qualitative semi-structured interview form were analysed by descriptive analysis method. The participant parents were asked seven questions about education period, physical conditions, difficulties they encountered regarding their children in the scope of relations of teachers with parents and managers and point of view of society. Most of the participants expressed problems such as most of the problems should be solved by top levels, training hours are insufficient and rejection of society.

**Keywords:** Special education, problems in special education, difficulties of parents.

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## 1. Introduction

Special Training and Rehabilitation Institutions take support from professionals who are specialised in their fields and continue their training periods with them. Although evaluations within the institution are done by the institution, the opinions and suggestions that are taken from parents of students taking service, as well as sharing the problems they encountered will be effective in the development of this institution and the child servicing in that institution. Parents are the ones who witness positive or negative developments in their children closely and development periods are the most important for them.

The mothers who undertake most of the responsibility regarding disabled child are affected by this situation more. The studies show that mothers give up other roles they have, there is a decrease in their social lives, as well as in their contribution to social activities as they take over most of the responsibility regarding the care of a child in families having disabled children (Duygun, 2001; Tekinalp, 2001). The education given to the disabled child and the reactions received are experienced in different levels in each family and each parent (Yildirim Sari, 2007). In some families or parents, this period can be overcome easily and they start to do necessary arrangements and plan some constructive approaches, in some families, long-term of sorrow and mourning can be experienced. During this period, the effort of education institution in listening to the problems of them, asking for their opinions and showing special approaches will both relieve them and increase their belief and trust towards education institution. When it is considered that each family has different lifestyle and culture, it is hard to talk about monotype education for each child. Bailey and Simeonsson (1998) in their study expressed that the requirements of mothers and fathers in each family are different and grouped these requirements as a requirement of knowledge, requirement of support, requirement of explaining the situation of the child to others, financial requirements and social requirements regarding the functioning of the family. When different expectations are taken into consideration, the most important factor that relieves family is the cooperation and conducting of training period together with families by handling encountered problems in daily life.

It was tried to obtain different studies in the literature regarding encountered problems of families. Among these studies is the study of Neely-Barnes and Dia (2008) who observed that the budget was found to be the main problem that families encounter in special education. It is the main problem, especially in families having low income and medical requirement. Russell (2004) tried to draw attention to another direction by saying that all families hope to provide development of their children by using their own experiences. On the other hand, Goodnow and Collins (1990) expressed that the ideas of families regarding special education taking for their children do not change automatically. They obtained that if families did not agree with the ideas of professionals, their expectations would change and this would cause to ignore professional knowledge. Lake and Billingsley (2000) defined other problem that families encounter in special education as a conflict between family and school. They expressed that the expectation of families from school for their children is always higher than the facilities that the school provide. Pivik, McComas and LaFlamme (2002) expressed that the problem encountered by families in special education arises from difficulties in environmental factors and self-confidence isolation in their children.

Although there are different studies done for obtaining problem in the literature, there are not enough studies regarding encountered problems of families in Turkey where special education becomes popular over the past decade. Present studies are the one that usually handle the problems in terms of institution owners, headmasters, teachers and families. That is why, in this study, it was aimed to obtain problems encountered in special education in the direction of opinions of parents attending to Special Training and Rehabilitation Institution, develop solution suggestions compensating these problems and offer an insight into future studies.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Research model**

With a study that will be done in chosen pilot regions, this research aims to obtain problems encountered in special education and develop solutions in resolving these problems in the direction of opinions of parents coming to Special Training and Rehabilitation Institution in Izmir province. Intended for the aim of the study, it was done by semi-structured interview technique from qualitative research methods.

### **2.2. Study group**

Twenty mothers and fathers having service in Special Training and Rehabilitation Institution in Izmir province formed the participant group of study. The participants were chosen randomly without considering parameters such as their economical, education levels, etc.

### **2.3. Data collection**

Before the interview with parents, the data were collected by informing parents about the importance and aim of research. The questions in the interview form consisted of six questions. These questions were intended to summarise the problems encountered by parents.

### **2.4. Analysis of data**

The analysis of questions was organised by organising codes, defining and interpretation of findings. The findings were obtained by transferring data to computer and answers were entered for each question one by one. At this stage, coding was done and for the first family V1, for the second, the third and the rest, the codes were given as V2, V3 and V4.

## **3. Findings**

- Findings regarding question ‘What is your point of view before and after having a child needing special education’?

In the scope of the first question, it was obtained that parents do not have any idea before having a child needing special education and they even did not think of that. They realise that the child needs a parent more after having a child like that.

- Findings regarding question ‘What kind of changes did you experience after you have learned that your child needs special education? From whom did you get help?’ (Did you have any changes in your future plans?)

In the scope of research, as a second question, the participant parents were asked what kind of changes happened in your life when you had learned you would have a child needing special education. Among given answers, the most generalised one that they had a disappointment, drew back from social activities, reduction in expectation from their children, whereas in some families there was no change and they accepted their children as they were. In answers given to whom you got help from, they expressed mostly from doctors, psychologists and teachers.

- Findings regarding question 'What are you doing as a parent for the success of your child'?

For the third question, generally these answers such as sending to special education, being careful in his success by making repetitions and some of them making practices at home to compensate speaking problems were taken. Two of the participant parents expressed that they support the education of their children by providing educational materials. The most remarkable answer was given by two parents who said that they are supporting their children by just showing love since they are illiterate.

- Findings regarding question 'Do you make cooperation with special education teachers and school?'
  - a) If you do, what kind of cooperation do you make?
  - b) If you do not, why'?

In the scope of the fourth question, except four parents, rest of the parents expressed that they are in cooperation with the teachers of children. The cooperation that is made observing the lesson of a child with his teacher, exchanging information about the development of the child, repetition at home regarding what had been taught at school.

For an excuse, the parents that do not make cooperation said that their children go to school by school bus so they just give support by following the notes that the teacher has written.

- Findings regarding the question 'Can you tell the difficulties you encounter because of environmental factors'? (slope, toilet, the point of view of society, etc.)

Generally, the answers given were they cannot communicate with their peers since they fall behind them, they feel uncomfortable outside by the glances of children, some people named special education school as mental hospital and the society is unconscious about this subject and other families do not want their children to play with children needing special education. The answers that some parents have given are like this. People keep away from them and their children. They look wilfully. Normal people sit at the places for disabled people in public transport vehicles. Some people are still insensible toward disabled people.

- Findings regarding question 'You have a special child. Can you tell us what kind of changes happened in your life'?

In the scope of the sixth question, the answers show different distribution. Some families mentioned that their expectations for future lessened, whereas some families said there was no change and some of them emphasised that they learnt down syndrome and autism with their children and had some changes like showing more attention and spare more time. Some of the answers given by parents are like this. I did not experience much change except sparing more time and showing more attention than parents having a normal child. The biggest change that causes in my life was to understand that.

#### 4. Discussion and results

In this section, based on final findings of the study, general results were obtained in the direction of the target of discussion and study. As a result of research done, the most known result that is different from the studies in literature is the result of Levy and Allen (1988). Levy and Allen (1988) explained the problem that parents encounter like this: the parents having a child needing special education blame everybody for this and this approach causes an obstacle for them. Levy and Allen (1988) expressed for the expression of a mother about this subject as 'we cannot do anything for these schools and they disappoint us'. In a study the problem which Levy and Allen (1988) expressed was not obtained with developing world such that different from Levy and Allen, the families in Turkey did not blame by saying 'it is destiny, it had to be experienced or its our fault due to consanguineous marriage'.

The first reaction of families is the feeling of shock when they are going to have a child needing special education. It can take hours even a few days to overcome this. With this experienced shock, sometimes the feeling of blaming someone or rejecting comes out (Hadjiyiannakou, Ioannou & Tziogkourous, 2007). Hadjiyiannakou vd. in parallel to the study he did in 2007, the families in Turkey also experience the feeling of disappointment but he presented with findings that they do not have the feeling of blaming anyone.

Hoy and Miskel (1978) expressed that the keyword for encountered problems of families in special education is independent and various therapies that can be solved with communication between family and school and this result was also presented with this case study.

As a result of obtained findings, the difficulty that the parents encounter in Turkey is shown as government support at the first rank. One of the results that come out is the education given by the government for 2 hours is insufficient and studies have to be done to increase the hour. This difficulty, especially affects low-income families so it comes out as they cannot take special education or support from an educator named as shadow teacher.

The presence of illiterate families today confronts us as the main problem. The children that need the support of parent fall behind since their parents are illiterate and they cannot get support from family during education period. That is why it is inevitable to give educational support to those kind of families for the development of the country.

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