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## **Parents and Teacher's Attitude towards Parental Involvement of Mentally Challenged Children**

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**Abstract:** Parents are the prime educators until the child attends an early year setting of the school and they remain a major influence on their children's learning throughout school and beyond. The school teachers and parents both have crucial roles to play in case of Mentally Challenged children. Nevid, Rathus and Greene (2000) agree that people who have mental retardation are often demeaned and ridiculed. However, it can be assessed that because most people find it stressful to care for a relative with mental retardation that all parents would experience stress. The Survey method was adopted for the study and the sample taken was 50 Parents of Mentally Challenged Children and 50 Teachers to assess the Teachers Attitude towards the Involvement of Parents. The Result and findings of the study observed that a high number of Parents found to have positive attitude towards their children in some way due to Teacher's Attitude in Special Schools than in Inclusive Schools and shows that Parental Involvement of Mentally Retarded children taken from a small group of sample have positive attitude towards their life.

**Keywords:** *Attitude, Parental Involvement, Parents and Mentally Challenged Children*

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### **Introduction:**

Most children have two main educators in their lives – their parents and their teachers. Parents are the prime educators until the child attends an early years setting of the school and they remain a major influence on their children's learning throughout the school and beyond. The school teachers and parents both have crucial roles to play.

There is no universal agreement on what parental involvement is, it can take many forms, from involvement at the school (as a governor, helping in the classroom or during lunch breaks) providing activities the reading to the child at home, teaching songs or nursery

rhymes and assisting with homework. All education professionals today, are more specifically special educators, are guided by the federal mandates of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. These two acts stress the importance of family/school partnership as a more meaningful method of educational intervention rather than a child-focused strategy alone (Knight & Wadsworth, 1999).

The implications for family/school involvement are specifically tied to the IDEA principles of zero reject, free and appropriate education, education within the least restrictive environment, the availability of procedural due process and the requirement of parental participation.

NCLB's basic principles of accountability for academic achievement and school safety, which includes parental choice for student movement to a safe school, requires communication with families and it shows the input of families and community members (Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin & Soodak, 2006). NCLB necessitates parent involvement at the state, district and local levels, including parental participation in the development of Title I policies (District Administration. 2003).

Recognizing the importance of family/school partnerships, schools of higher education must address those skills needed by pre-service teachers or their effectively collaboration with families. M. Elana Lopez, Associate Director of the Harvard Family Research Project, stated that family involvement should be integrated throughout all coursework and fieldwork in teacher education programs (Bradley, 1997). In a survey conducted by Knight and Wadsworth (1999), 83% of the respondents were in the opinion that they have addressed family issues within coursework. However, the average time focused on family issues was only one to two hours a semester. In another study conducted by Mandell and Murray (2005), 23% of the respondents indicate the family involvement experiences in their undergraduate programs, but 70% of the respondents felt that they relied more on their own family experiences to guide them in working with their students' parents. Mandell and Murray (2005) noted in their study that teacher education programs rely mainly on field experiences, not coursework, to understand and develop family relationships. Opportunities should be provided for developing the needed attitudes and skills for family-centered practice and are limited to rely on fieldwork alone. Mandell and Murray (2005) support the need for additional workshops and class time to practice the strategies required to work with parents. Several themes were identified regarding school/family partnerships by California

### **Department of Education in the 1990s.**

These include:

- **Integration of Family Involvement with The Curriculum:** Connection of family involvement and the diverse student population, Teacher awareness of attitudes and values related to family involvement (Ammon, 1999, p. 6)

Within the population of parents having children with special needs, additional issues were isolation of the child. Hence there is a need for teachers to recognize parental angst and support family members to build student self-esteem, to discuss fears and concerns for their child's future (Evans-Schilling, 1999).

### **Need and significance of the study:**

A child with a disability may have anxiety, fear, shame or other negative feelings. These reactions usually reflect how the child has been treated by others in a family (Thompson & Rudolph, 1996). Literature has shown that parents' attitudes are critical to the successful caring of children with illness. For instance, Atkinson and Coia (1995) point out the way that parents' react to an ill child partly depends on how they perceive the illness and thus the practical impact shows the illness has on them. Similarly, parents' reaction to a child with mental retardation will depend on the parents' attitude towards mental retardation. McConachie (1986) agrees that parents' attitude is an important source of information about their behaviour towards their children.

Since parent involvement relates positively to student achievement. Parents are encouraged to participate in their children's education in a variety of ways both at home and in school. At home they are asked to read with their child, provide a quiet place for homework, supervise assignments, monitor television and internet use, and promote school attendance.

Parent Involvement is vital in the success of mentally challenged children. In India not much research has been done in this area even today. Hence an attempt has been made by the investigator to examine how parents' of Mentally Retarded Children view and cope with the situation.

### **Objectives:**

- To find out the level of Parental Involvement of Mentally Challenged Children
- To assess the Teacher's Attitude towards Parents Involvement of Mentally Challenged Children

- To study the Parents and Teacher's Attitude towards Parental Involvement of Mentally Challenged Children

### **Materials and Methods:**

The Methodology of the study adopted for the Present study is survey method. This helps the investigator to know the present conditions. It is used as a common approach in the research field.

Checklist was adopted to study the Parental Involvement, consist of 26 questions and most of the questions deal with the parental involvement acquired by the student for their better living. And also Questionnaire for the Teacher's Attitude towards Parental Involvement of Mentally Challenged Children, consist of 24 questions.

Pilot study was conducted by the investigator for the small group of Parents and Teachers of Children with Mental Retardation at schools. Thus the Reliability was established and it was found to be reliable at **0.0961**. The study was delimited to the sample of 50 parents of Mentally Challenged Children and 50 teachers in Special and Inclusive schools at Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu.

### **Results and Findings:**

The Inferential Analysis interpretation is given for the selected hypothesis of the present study as follows:

- It was found that Male and Female did not differ significantly on over all parental Involvement and Teacher's Attitude towards the Involvement of Parents.
- It was inferred that there is significant difference between Age group of Mentally Challenged Children towards their parental involvement since the p value 0.22 and it is significant at 5% level of significance using t-test. This shows that the parental involvement differs accordingly, the Age group of Mentally Challenged Children. By comparing the mean scores, the parental involvement among the age group of 5-10 years was much better than the age group of 11- 15 years of children with Mental Retardation.
- It was found that there is significant difference between Type of Schools with respect to Parents on parental involvement and Teachers Attitude towards parental involvement and its p value was .000 and found to be significant at 1% level of significance using ANOVA statistical analysis. It is concluded that the parental involvement vary when it is compared with the Type of Schools of Mentally Challenged Children.

- It was concluded that there is significant difference between Level of Retardation with respect to their parental involvement Teachers Attitude towards parental involvement and its p value were .48 and .29 and found to be significant at 5% level of significance using t-test. May be due to the reason that the Involvement of Parents and Teacher's Attitude were much greater in mild, moderate, severe and profound level of Mentally Retarded Children.
- It was interpreted that there was no significant difference between Parent's Occupation and Parent's Income in relation to Parent's Involvement. This shows that the parents seems to have both feelings of positive and negative perceptions towards their children but it was found that Educational Qualification of parents were optimist and significantly related to Parental Involvement.
- The Pearson-product moment Correlation determined that the Correlation coefficient between Parental Involvement and Teacher's Attitude with regard to Mentally Challenged Children is found to be .758 which indicates 70 percent positive relationship. Hence it shows that there is inter correlation coefficient between Parental Involvement and Teacher's Attitude found to have highly significant at 0.01%.

### **Discussions and Conclusion:**

When a child has a disability, family problems (which the child can sense) increase demands for time and financial resources add a heavy burden of stress. Emotionally, the greatest risk to which most mentally retarded children are exposed is the loss or lack of adequate relationship with an adult caregiver. This loss has profound implications (Bowlby, 1988).

Mentally Challenged Children are particularly vulnerable to a range of negative attributions. The most powerful of these is likely to be the position of "Social Reject" to which, inevitably, they are subjected. Nevid, Rathus and Greene (2000) agree that people who have mental retardation are often demeaned and ridiculed. However, it can be assumed that because most people find it stressful to care for a relative with mental retardation that all parents would experience stress.

The study is concluded with its objectives that the Involvement of Parents seems to have the feelings of embarrassment towards their Mentally Retarded Children. Although parents expressed the emotions of disappointment towards their children they were not over protective. However it gives hope to observe a high number of Parents positive towards their

children in some way due to Teacher's Attitude in Special Schools than in Inclusive Schools and shows that Parental Involvement of Mentally Retarded children taken from a small group of sample have positive attitude towards their life.

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