

Parents of Students with Learning Disabilities Attitudes towards Resource Room

Hassan Somaily, Suhail Al-Zoubi, and Majdoleen Bani Abdel Rahman
College of Education, Najran University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Abstract— This study aims at investigating parents of students with learning disabilities attitudes towards resource room in Najran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The sample of the study consisted of (111) parents of students with learning disabilities. A questionnaire was developed to evaluate the parents' attitudes which consisted of (24) items. Descriptive statistics and four-Way ANOVA were used to analyze the data. Results showed that parents of students with learning disabilities were holding positive attitudes towards resource room. No statistically significant differences were found in the parents' attitudes that could be attributed to the variables of gender, the academic level, age, or the number of family members.

Keywords— Parents' Attitudes, Learning Disabilities, Resource Room

I. INTRODUCTION

THE process of providing education to students with special needs is considered one of the most prominent challenges the human communities encounter. The international community unanimously agrees that more than 10% of school age children in every community suffer from at least one disability. Furthermore, the international agencies involved in special education estimate that disability reaches 15% in the developing countries [1].

The term of educational alternatives in special education started as a result of the negative attitudes that prevailed against the communities during the 50s and the 60s of the past century, calling for separating learners with special needs from their regular peers and assigning them to special classes. Numerous empirical studies were conducted to assess the effectiveness of separating the learners with special needs from their peers. These studies concluded that the level of learning in the special classes is generally lower than that in the regular classes, and in most cases the learners are given specialized programs delivered by teachers who are less efficient than those in the regular classes. The studies criticized the idea of assigning the learners with learning disabilities in special classes for fear of assigning the learners names and descriptions [2].

Special education included a group of educational alternatives that can be provided for learners with special needs, according to the kind of difficulty of the learner on one side, and the extent of suitability of the educational alternative on the other. These educational alternatives can be categorized on a pyramid shape; the regular class would be on

the least restrictive alternative for the learners with special needs, and the homebound would be the most restrictive alternative. The alternatives are: regular classroom, resource room, special class, special school, residential Institutions, and homebound or hospital [3]; [4]; [5].

The resource room is an educational setting where therapeutic assessment and education are provided for the learners with learning disabilities according to a regular time schedule for a part of the educational day, and then they rejoin the regular class and receive their education with regular students. The resource room is considered on form of mainstreaming. [2]; [6].

The teacher of resource room performs numerous duties; some of which are the following: (1) performs assessment for categorizing purposes; (2) designs the educational individualized programs that suit the capabilities and difficulties of each individual learner, based on the level of the current performance of the learner. Then the teacher writes the individualized educational plan; (3) teaching represents the biggest part of the teacher's time in the resource room. He provides the learners with academic skills necessary for academic learning; (4) the teacher keeps in touch with the regular teachers; and (5) communication with the parents that is considered one of the most important roles performed by the teacher of resource room. The teacher has to hold regular meetings with the parents to discuss the educational services provided for their children, and then record the parents' opinions on their children's progress. [7]

Providing special educational services in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia started with a way that depends on the circumstances of the children with special needs in the centers within or out of the educational system. One of the pioneering experiences in this field is the establishment of resource rooms in the public and the private schools all over the kingdom. The interest of the learners with learning disabilities started by providing special educational services within the regular school system; consequently, the Unit of Learning disabilities is affiliated the Department of Special Education in the Ministry of Education [8].

The families of students with learning disabilities suffer from psychological tension resulting from their feeling that their child does not possess the same potential as the regular children. This case makes the families in need of assistance; therefore, most programs that deal with learners with learning disabilities consider that families are the most important resource that helps facilitate the therapy process

[9].

Learning disabilities have disastrous effects on the children and their social and school lives; they also influence the families. Some of the effects are as follows: (1) the effect on the children themselves by posing difficulties in the academic, social and emotional sides of their lives. It has been found that self-esteem of the children with learning disabilities is low, their anxiety is high, and they are less acceptable by their peers; (2) Effects of families: The families try hard to deal with the difficulties of their children before they start seeking for psychological assistance, since the psychological stress faced the families members in high and lasting [10], [11].

Dyson [11] conducted a study aimed at investigating the attitudes of the siblings and the parents with learning disabilities. His results revealed that existence of one child with learning disabilities in a family causes enormous stress on the parts of the parents, and affects the lifestyle of the family and the interaction between siblings. Furthermore, Warner [27] investigated the attitudes of the parents' with learning disabilities towards Special Education Schools. The results showed that there are social and cultural effects on the attitudes of the parents towards the learning disabilities and their satisfaction about those schools. Weiner [12] evaluated the effectiveness of the resource rooms and reported that the resource rooms are highly effective in improving the academic level of the learners.

In addition, Bulgren [13] investigated the level of the parents' satisfaction about their children joining high school. He demonstrated that the parents expressed medium level of satisfaction. The parents also expressed some reservation towards some schools that lack the needs of the learners with learning disabilities. The results also showed that the parents of children with learning disabilities in the rural areas expressed a high level of satisfaction compared with the parents from the urban areas. Elkins, Kraayenoord, and Jobling [14] conducted a study aimed at investigating parents' attitudes towards inclusion of their children with special needs. Their results revealed that many of the parents favored inclusion, and a small group of parents favored special placement. There were a limited number of negative attitudes to inclusion. Khrais [15] investigated the effect of a training program in modifying parental attitudes towards their learning disabled children. The results revealed that the programs are effective in modifying the attitudes. Moreover, B'airat [16] conducted a study aimed at investigating the parents' level of satisfaction about the mainstreaming of their disabled children. His results revealed that the parents were satisfied about the mainstreaming of their children with learning disabilities in the regular schools in Jordan. Fraihat [17] explored the services introduced in the resource rooms from the perspective of the regular teachers and the parents of

children with learning disabilities. He reported that the regular teachers and the parents are highly satisfied with the services provided to the learners with learning disabilities in the resource rooms. Technically, this study was guided by two research questions; first, "What are parents of students with learning disabilities attitudes towards resource rooms?" And second, "Are there any significant differences in the parents of students with learning disabilities attitudes towards the resource room attributed to gender, academic level, age, and the number of family members?"

II. METHODS

A. Subjects

The population of the study consisted of all the parents of students with learning disabilities joining the resource rooms in Najran, Saudi Arabia. However, the sample of the study consisted of (111) parents, fathers (n= 68), and mothers (n= 43) were randomly selected.

B. Measurement

A questionnaire was developed to assess parents of students with learning disabilities attitudes toward resource room after review of the theoretical literature. The questionnaire consisted of (24) items. It was sent to a specialist in special education to review the items and to establish face validity for the questionnaire. Furthermore, it was piloted to examine the reliability coefficient using Cronbach's Alpha which was found to be 0.75.

C. Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed by using SPSS V.16. Descriptive analysis and four-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used. The analyses were carried out at a significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

III. RESULTS

A. The results related to the first question

The first question of this study was as follows: "What are parents of students with learning disabilities attitudes towards resource rooms?" For this question means and standard deviations were calculated as shown in Table I.

TABLE I
MEANS AND THE STANDARD DEVIATIONS

Item No.	Item's Statement	M	SD	Level of attitude
22	I consider the community accepting my son's/daughters joining the resource room civilized.	2.89	0.311	High
19	My contact with families with children with learning disabilities will help me accept the idea of my son's/daughter's joining the resource room	2.79	0.428	High
20	I consider the school view of my son's/daughter's in the resource room a part of his/her therapy and improvement	2.76	0.503	High
24	I believe the regular curriculum should be adapted for my son/daughter to stay in the class	2.73	0.480	High
18	I believe the rights of the learners with learning disabilities in the resource rooms will be better when the awareness of the community is improved	2.73	0.499	High
11	My son's/daughter's joining the resource room could induce a feeling of low self-esteem, vulnerability, and inferiority	2.72	0.503	High
21	As a father/mother, I believe my attitude is negatively affected by my son's/daughter's joining the resource room.	2.65	0.495	High
13	I believe the teacher in the resource room should have special methodologies	2.64	0.516	High
12	The program of the resource room needs adjustment to suit my son's/daughter's needs	2.63	0.552	High
16	I closely follow my son's/daughter's learning in the resource room	2.61	0.590	High
15	The teacher in the resource room uses proper communication methodologies to encourage me to participate in the educational process	2.59	0.578	High
17	The social status for my son/daughter in the resource room is lower than that of the regular children	2.58	0.579	High
5	It is better for my son/daughter to join the regular class	2.52	0.615	High
10	My son's/daughter's joining the resource room will increase his/her sensitivity towards other student's criticism	2.51	0.569	High
14	The teacher in the resource room provides me with regular reports about the progress of my child	2.40	0.824	High
4	I have the necessary knowledge about the programs prepared for my son/daughter in the resource room	2.06	0.754	Medium
3	My son's/daughter's joining the resource room will increase the opportunity of social interaction	2.00	0.694	Medium
23	I believe the regular teachers treat the students in the resource room differently	1.93	0.741	Medium
1	My son's/daughter's joining the resource room will help develop the academic skills	1.91	0.648	Medium
2	My son's/daughter's joining the resource room is the best solution for his/her educational problems	1.90	0.587	Medium
8	I have all the necessary knowledge of the programs in the resource rooms	1.86	0.547	Medium
9	My son's/daughter's joining the resource room will increase his desires	1.85	0.553	Medium
6	My son's/daughter's joining the resource room will lead to giving him/her the educational opportunities available for the regular students	1.79	0.557	Medium
7	I fully understand the concept of learning disabilities	1.73	0.499	Medium

Table I shows that (15) items of the (24) items received a high agreement level by the parents towards the resource rooms, and the mean ranged between (2.40 – 2.89). However, the rest of the items receive an agreement level of medium and the means ranged from (1.73 – 2.06). The item “I consider the community accepting my son's/daughter's joining the resource room civilized” was the highest with a mean of (2.89). However, the item “I fully understand the concept of learning disabilities: was the lowest with a mean of (1.73). Whereas the questionnaire items number (22, 19, 20, 24, 18, 11, 21, 13, 12, 16, 15, 17, 5, 10, and 14) received an agreement degree of ‘high’ indicating the awareness of the parents of the role of the resource room in improving the skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic of their children, in addition to their belief in the role of the teacher in the resource room following up their children.

However, items number (4, 3, 23, 1, 2, 8, 9, 6, and 7) received an agreement degree of ‘medium’, indicating that the parents do not have any knowledge about the individualized educational programs prepared for their children in the resource room.

B. The results related to the second question

The second question of this study was as follows: “Are there any significant differences in the parents of students with learning disabilities attitudes towards the resource room attributed to gender, academic level, age, and the number of family members?”, means and standard deviations were calculated as shown in Table II

TABLE II
MEANS AND THE STANDARD DEVIATIONS

Source of variance	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Means squares	F	Sig.
Gender	2.294	1	2.294	0.230	0.632
Academic level	49.593	2	24.79	2.487	0.088
Age	44.809	2	22.40	2.247	0.111
No of family members	3.123	2	1.561	0.157	0.855

Table II shows superficial differences between the means of all the variable of the study. In order to find if there are statistically significant differences ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the means of the parents' attitudes towards the resource room that could be attributed to the variables of the study, a four – way analysis of variance was found as shown in Table III below.

TABLE III
RESULTS OF THE FOUR- WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

Source of variance	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Means squares	F	Sig.
Gender	2.294	1	2.294	0.230	0.632
Academic level	49.593	2	24.796	2.487	0.088
Age	44.809	2	22.404	2.247	0.111
Family members	3.123	2	1.561	0.157	0.855

Table III shows that there are no statistically significant differences that could be attributed to the variables of gender, the academic level, age, or the number of family members.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of Semadi [18] revealed the effectiveness of the resource room in improving the skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic of the students joining the resource rooms. In addition, some of the negative items that received an agreement degree of 'high' from the parents' perspective, and related to the inferior view of the society of their children joining the resource room, (item 11), might make the children see themselves inferior. Children might develop a feeling of low self-esteem. Khazaleh & Al Khateeb [19] indicated that learners with learning disabilities suffer from psychologically and socially difficulties, thus, developing a sense of inferiority and low self-esteem. As a result, they get socially rejected by their regular peers in the school. In addition, item (17) received an agreement degree of 'high' indicating that the parents of children with learning disabilities believe that the social status of their children joining the resource room will be lower than that of the normal children. However, some studies such as Abu Alia and Mulhem [20] proved that the resource room has a significant role in improving the

social and the behavioral sides of the learners with learning disabilities.

The parents also have simple information about the resource rooms, the concept of learning disabilities, and the role of the resource room in increasing the social interaction and the development of the academic and social sides on the learners with learning disabilities. This could be attributed to the lack of visits by the parents to their children in the resource rooms due to working hours, or to the customs and traditions in Najran area, where people still think that children joining the resource room bring shame to the family. Al-Khateeb and Hadidi [21] showed that the teachers in the resource rooms are not satisfied with the lack of parents' visits and participation in the resource rooms.

The school and the teacher of resource room have to specifically arrange a number of meetings, lectures, and seminars for the parents, the administration, and the staff of the school. Furthermore, Shechtman and Gilat [22] stressed the effectiveness of the counseling programs in alleviating the psychological stress on the part of the parents of children with learning disabilities. In addition, the normal student's attitudes towards their peers who have learning disabilities are still negative. The psychological tension, resulting from the feeling that their children do not possess the same potentials as the regular children, the families of children with learning disabilities suffer from making them feel that they need support, assistance, and the acceptance of the society to the idea of their children joining the resource room.

The results are consistent with Al-Khateeb and Hadidi [23], B'airat [16], and Elkins et al [14] showed that the handicapped leaves profound psychological effect on families. Numerous factors play an important role in affecting the parents, and these factors could influence their attitudes. Some of these factors are cultural represented in the values and the beliefs of the community towards the learners with learning disabilities. Thus, training and media programs must be provided for the parents. These programs will play a significant role in changing theses attitudes.

Phillips [24] showed that the parents are satisfied with one educational program used in teaching learners with learning disabilities in the resource room. Moreover, the results of this study are contradicted to Stephenson [25] and Bulgren [13] as parents of children with learning disabilities are frustration and dissatisfaction about their children joining the resource room and the services provided for them. The participation of the parents in the resource room activities helps the education of their children. Soud [26] and Khrais [15] indicated the effectiveness of the group training programs in modifying the attitudes of the parents towards their children and the training programs provided for them. Furthermore, studies are more recommended to investigate the siblings of children with learning disabilities attitudes toward resource room.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researchers are indebted to the Deanship of the Scientific Research in Najran University, KSA, for funding this research project.

REFERENCES

- [1] Al- Khateeb, J & Hadidi, M. (2010). *Introduction to special education*. Amman: Dar AlFiker.
- [2] Smith, D. (2004). *Introduction to special education: Teaching in an age of opportunity*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- [3] Heward, W. (2009). *Exceptional children: An introduction to special education*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- [4] Gargiulo, R. (2002). *Special education in contemporary society: An introduction to exceptionality*. Wadsworth Publishing.
- [5] Bender, W. (2008). *Learning Disabilities: Characteristics, Identification, and Teaching Strategies*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- [6] Lerner, J. (2003). *Learning disabilities: Diagnosis and teaching strategies*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- [7] Al-Zoubi, S. (2007). The effect of a training program in improving instructional competencies for resource room teachers in Jordan. *Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation*, University of Science Malaysia, Malaysia
- [8] Ministry of Education. (2011). *Resource room program. Department of Special Education*, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- [9] Seligman, M. & Darling, R. (2007). *Ordinary families' special education: Systems approach to childhood disability*. New York: Guilford Press.
- [10] Erk, R. (1997). Multidimensional treatment of attention deficit disorders: A family oriented approach. *Journal of Mental Counseling*, 19, 3-23.
- [11] Dyson, L. (1996). The experiences of families of children with learning disabilities: Parental stress, family function, and sibling self-concept. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 29, 281-288.
- [12] Weiner, H. (1999). An investigation of the effectiveness of resource rooms of children of students with disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 2, 223-229.
- [13] Bulgren, A. (2002). The educational context and outcomes for high school students with disabilities: The perception of parents of students with disabilities. *Research Report. ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED469288*.
- [14] Elkins, J., Kraayenoord, C., & Jobling A. (2003). Parents' attitudes to inclusion of their children with special needs. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 3, 122-129.
- [15] Khrais, M. (2004). The effect of a training program in modifying parental attitude toward their learning disabled children. *Unpublished Master's thesis*. Yarmouk University.
- [16] B'airat, M. (2005). Satisfaction of parents towards mainstreaming of their children with learning disabilities in regular schools in Jordan. *Unpublished Master's thesis*. University of Jordan.
- [17] Fraihat, S. (2007). The services of resource rooms from regular classrooms teachers and parents of children with special needs perspectives. *Unpublished Master's thesis*. University of Jordan.
- [18] Semadi, J. (1996). The effectiveness of a resource room in improving reading and arithmetic for slow learners' students. *Journal of Abhath Al-Yarmouk*, 12, 121-146.
- [19] Khazaleh, A., & Al-Khateeb, J. (2011). Social and emotional skills for children with learning disabilities. *Dirasat*, 38, 372-389.
- [20] Abu Alia, M., & Mulhem, A. (1998). The effectiveness of a resource room program in reducing the behavioral problems of academically disabled third and fourth females' graders at public school in Amman. *Journal of Mu'ta*, 13, 11-39.
- [21] Al- Khateeb, J & Hadidi, M. (2009). Teachers' and mothers' satisfaction with resource room programs in Jordan. *International Association of Special Education*, 10, 56-59.
- [22] Shechtman, Z., & Gilat, I. (2005). The effectiveness of counseling groups in reducing stress of parents of children with learning disabilities. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 9, 275-286.
- [23] Al-Khateeb and Hadidi (1996). The effect of the child's disability on the family. *Journal of Faculty of Education*, Mansoura University, 13, 1-28
- [24] Phillips, P. (1990). A self advocacy plan for high school students with learning disabilities. *Handicapped and Gifted Children*, 23, 466-471.
- [25] Stephenson, J. (1992). Perspective of mother whose children are in special day classes for learning disabilities. *Journal of learning disabilities*, 25, 539-543.
- [26] Soud, M. (2008). The effect of a training program in modifying parental attitudes toward their autistic children. *Unpublished Master's thesis*. Yarmouk University.
- [27] Warner, R. (1999). The views of Bangladeshi parents on the special education attended by their young children with severe leaning difficulties. *Handicapped & Gifted Children*, 26, 218-223.