

Creating Connections of Support: Assessing the Critical Role of Family Conflict and Involvement in Special Education Programs

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Abstract: The study focused on assessing the critical role of family conflict and the involvement of families of children with special needs in Dumanjug Central School, Dumanjug City, Cebu. The study utilized the descriptive research method applying a quantitative approach in determining the critical role of family conflict and involvement between the levels of conflict in the family and the levels of parental involvement. Furthermore, the survey used were adopted from the study of Derasin and Derasin (2021) and Baker, Denessen, and Brus-Laeven (2007). The researchers distributed the questionnaires through home visitation of the parents in different barangays of Dumanjug, Cebu. Thirty-five (35) of the respondents answered the questionnaire religiously. All respondents were parents of children with special education needs. The study revealed that family conflict exceeds the average level of replies, same as the family involvement. The survey also discovered that family conflict happens occasionally and the parents' attitudes about helping their children enhance their academic skills were often low.

Keywords – Family, Conflict, Involvement, Special Education

Introduction

Family conflict and involvement play a critical role in the education and development of children, particularly those with special needs. Family conflict has been a problem for decades, and it can have a substantial impact on the educational experiences of learners with special education needs. Understanding and resolving these conflicts is essential for establishing an inclusive and supportive learning environment in which learners with special education needs can realize their full potential. In the context of special education in the Philippines, family engagement is not only valuable but also essential for ensuring the holistic growth and academic progress of learners with disabilities. The involvement of families in the education of children with special needs creates a collaborative and supportive environment that significantly enhances their learning outcomes and overall well-being. This research study intends to investigate the significance of family conflict and involvement in special education as an essential and fundamental need of the school children with special needs at Dumanjug Central School, Dumanjug Cebu Philippines with the belief that it is one of the significant ways towards quality special education program for the school children with special needs.

Borst (2015) discovered that family conflicts can increase the likelihood that learners will be negatively affected. The unique challenges encountered by families frequently result in elevated levels of stress and discord among family members, which can have a significant impact on the well-being of both the learner and the family. Psychologically and socially, learners from conflicted families are also at a high risk of suffering negative consequences. It is difficult for them to develop relationships with friends or family, and they have trouble winding down and sleeping, all of which contribute to the likelihood that they will have poor school performance, (Reynalods, et.al., 2014). On the contrary, improving family involvement in special education for learners with special education needs remains an important aspect in their academic achievement and overall development. Furthermore, family involvement can boost learners' success, lessen behavioral concerns, and improve parental satisfaction. According to Bariroh (2018) and Carredo et. al. (2022), motivation is a dynamic process that results in goal-directed behavior. As a result, family involvement should be encouraged to increase learners' motivation (Reyes et. al., 2023). Additionally, Afolabi (2014) demonstrated that when parents include their children in engaging learning programs outside of school, can improve their learning and performance. Families provide emotional and financial support, advocacy, and encouragement in addition to academic support which is critical for children to reach their full potential. In a research study in Cagayan de Oro, families were given opportunities for involvement



in school programs and activities; diverse families were welcomed; there were few opportunities for family education; only a few school policies were created and explained to the families; no written policies related to the SPED program were given and thoroughly explained to teachers and parents; and not all families' needs were met, stated by Presente (2021). The lack of understanding about the impact of both family conflict and involvement on academic and social-emotional outcomes for learners with disabilities in special education programs, can greatly affect both families and children. These barriers can have negative consequences for learners with special education needs, leading to a lack of communication between families and teachers and limited support for the learners' learning needs.

The importance of the study is to know and assess how the family conflict and involvement can affect in the special education programs. Families are the main factor of the said study since the support coming from them is also a factor of how the special education children learn and grow independently. This study aims to assess the critical role of the family in the special education program. The researchers are research oriented. They can write and convey to the reader the role of the families in the education of the special education children. The researchers aim to perform the study in Dumanjug Central School in accordance with their thoughts and opinions. Furthermore, the utility of providing concrete and precise results from the data that will be gathered from the respondents. The researchers believe that in assessing the critical role of family conflict and involvement in special education will create connections of support.

Methods and Materials

This chapter presents the research methodology and procedures that are used in gathering, presenting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. It also describes the research environment, research instrument, respondents, sampling design, and ethical considerations.

The researchers utilized a descriptive research method, making use of quantitative approach since the researchers conducted a study on assessing the critical role of family conflict and involvement in special education. Furthermore, the study was conducted in Dumanjug Central School, Dumanjug Cebu Philippines. The research instrument being utilized is divided into three parts. The first part is the family's profile which includes their personal as well as the child's information. The second part is acquired from the study of Derasin and Derasin (2021) which measures the Level of Conflict in the family. Additionally, the third part is adopted from the study of Baker, Denessen, and Brus-Laeven (2007) which assesses the level of parental involvement in the education of their children. This questionnaire consists of thirty (30) statements and rated using a five-point scale. The statements deal with specific aspects of family conflict and family involvement that have found to have a significant impact on children's academic progress, such as parents engaging in school-related events, exchanging information with school faculties, and offering educational assistance at home. Moreover, this will help the researchers to evaluate essential components of both family conflict and involvement. The data subsequently was collected and interpreted by the researchers using inferential statistics. The researchers presented the weighted mean to arrive at a definitive interpretation of the scales.

Ethical Consideration

In order to maintain and guard the ethical standards that are followed when performing research, the researchers will preserve the ethical considerations as well as protect the respondents' identity. Before undertaking the questionnaire, each respondent is given a data privacy agreement and consent form, which details the objectives and methodology of the research study, as well as the precautions that will be taken to protect their anonymity and privacy. The respondents are provided with an option to decide whether or not they would like to take part in this study, and the respondents are given the assurance that their responses would be treated with the utmost respect and discretion.

Data Gathering Procedure

Upon contacting the adviser of Special Education in Dumanjug Central School, the researchers were provided with the list of parents that are fit to partake in the study. The thirty-five (35) respondents were selected by

means of judgement sampling, after which each parent was sent consent through a group chat to participate in the study. After the consent had been approved and secured, the survey was conducted through home visitation.

Results

The data are presented in four tables below. The first two (2) tables show the socio-demographic profile of the respondents and the disability of their child, the third table described the levels of conflict in the family, and lastly, the fourth table presented the level of family involvement.

	Frequency	Percent
Male	19	54.3
Female	16	45.7
Total	35	100.0

Table 1. Gender of the Respondents

Table 1 shows the gender of the respondents. It presented that majority of the respondents are male with nineteen (19) respondents and a percentage of 54.3% out of thirty-five (35) respondents. Furthermore, there are sixteen (16) female respondents with 45.7% of the overall population. This being the case that the result revealed there are more male parents with a child with special education needs that are enrolled in Dumanjug Central School.

Table 2. Disability of the Children

	Frequency	Percent
Learning Disability	1	2.9
Intellectual Disability	13	37.1
Hearing Impairment	7	20.0
Autism	3	8.6
Down Syndrome	4	11.4
Cerebral Palsy	4	11.4
Speech and Language Disorder	1	2.9
Visually Impaired	1	2.9
Multiple Disability	1	2.9
Total	35	100.0

Table 2 outlines the respondents' children with disabilities who are enrolled. It states that intellectual disability has the highest frequency with thirteen (13), which accounts for 37.1% of the total population. Moreover, the lowest frequency is 1 which represents 2.9% of the overall population. In summation, the majority of the students enrolled in Special Education are children with intellectual disability.

Table 3. Levels of Conflict in the Family

	Mean	SD	Interpretation
In the family we fight a lot (not physically).	4.2286	1.51630	Very High
In the family we often criticize each other.	1.8000	.40584	Very Low
When conflict arise in the family, we most like loss our temper.	1.4286	.50210	Ver Low
Most of the time we raise our voice, when there is conflict in the family.	3.5429	1.09391	High
When there is conflict, we get so angry that we throw things.	1.6000	.49705	Very Low
We often try to out-do each other in the family.	3.6857	1.23125	High
Sometimes we hit each other in the family.	1.5714	.50210	Very Low
If we disagree in the family, we do not try to smooth things over	1.5143	.50709	Very Low
Family related strains interfere with our daily activities.	1.4286	.50210	Very Low
The demands of my family or spouse/partner interference with my daily activities.	1.6000	.49705	Very Low
Grand Mean	2.2400	.7255	Average

Legend:

Rating Scale	Adjectival Rating	Parameter Limits	Interpretation
5	Strongly Agree	4.21 – 5.00	Very High
4	Agree	3.41 – 4.20	High
3	Undecided	2.61 – 3.40	Average
2	Disagree	1.81 – 2.60	Low
1	Strongly Disagree	1.00 – 1.80	Very Low

Table 3 presented the levels of family conflict in the family. It shows that the grand mean is 2.2400, in which the respondents have an average level of conflict in the family. Additionally, the first row resulted with the highest mean (In the family we fight a lot (not physically)) having a mean with 4.2286 which is interpreted as a very high level. Ultimately, the family usually experienced conflict inside the household premises

Table 4. Level of Parental Involvement

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
If there are problems with my child, I initiate contact with the teacher.	3.4857	1.50238	High
I have contact with the teacher on a regular basis.	4.3143	.47101	Very High
I can ask the teacher any questions that I have.	4.4571	.50543	Very High
Contact with the school is pleasant.	4.4857	.50709	Very High
The school takes the opinion into account.	4.1143	.71831	High
Parents influence school policy.	4.2857	.66737	Very High
I present myself to help with different school activities.	3.3143	1.18251	Average
I help in school when this is requested.	2.2571	.98048	Low

I am active in the parent's association or another school committee.	1.8286	1.07062	Low
I have a lot of contact with other parents at my child's school.	1.5429	.95001	Very Low
I play games with my child.	2.5143	.95090	Low
My child talks at home about what she/he has learned at school on almost a daily basis.	2.2000	.93305	Low
I ask my child almost daily about how things went in school.	2.1429	1.03307	Low
I read books with my child at home or I encourage my child to read on his/her own.	1.8857	.79600	Low
I help my child with homework.	1.9143	.91944	Low
I watch informative TV programs together with my child.	1.7714	.97274	Very Low
I always read the information leaflets or newsletters from the school.	3.8286	.70651	High
If the school organizes something, I know about it.	3.8857	.90005	High
I know how my child is doing at school.	2.2857	.85994	Low
I attend the parents' meeting	1.8000	1.10613	Very Low
Grand Mean	2.9157	0.8867	Average

Legend:

Rating Scale	Adjectival Rating	Parameter Limits	Interpretation
5	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	4.21 – 5.00	<i>Very High</i>
4	<i>Agree</i>	3.41 – 4.20	<i>High</i>
3	<i>Undecided</i>	2.61 – 3.40	<i>Average</i>
2	<i>Disagree</i>	1.81 – 2.60	<i>Low</i>
1	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	1.00 – 1.80	<i>Very Low</i>

Table 4 presented the level of parental involvement. It described that with the grand mean of 2.9157, the respondents have an average level of parental involvement. Furthermore, in the fourth item, it has the highest mean with 4.4857 (Contact with the school is pleasant) which is evaluated as average. The outcome concluded that most respondents are low in participation when it comes to the school's activities and the development of their child related to academic skills.

Discussion

This study acquired the researchers on assessing the critical role of family conflict and involvement in the special education program. Children with special education needs, need much more support from their families since they are the ones who are in need of attention. If school officials can distinguish between parents' needs and their positions, they can reconcile the division between parents and the school's perspectives. The same occurs when educators take parents' long- and short-term objectives for their children seriously, (Lake, 2009). Family conflict will affect the lives of the children especially when they come to school bearing with them the conflict they have in their families. Thus, this will affect their performance in school and even in the community. Moreover, the study reveals that the levels of family conflict of the respondents were average, which shows that when it comes to conflict of the family of children with special education needs it is feasible. This is also in line with what the Family Court of Australia (2013) stated that conflict is inevitable in existence. When children observe their parents working together

to resolve a conflict, they gain valuable life skills such as negotiation and problem-solving. It can also be reassuring for the children to observe their optimism regarding the resolution of differences.

Furthermore, parents and guardians should be able to provide insight into whether current strategies and instruction are aiding the child's learning and offer suggestions for change and development, (Logsdon, 2022). Families and teachers should collaborate to provide children with special education needs with quality education. With the assistance and involvement of the parents, it will not be difficult for the teachers to teach these children. The support occurs not only in school but also at home, with parents acting as teachers to their children and implementing what they have learned at school. As their greatest accomplishment, families should not disregard their children's academic achievements. Additionally, the results of the survey indicated that the respondents' involvement with their child with special education needs is on an average level, wherein the respondents are more involved in communicating with the teachers. This is consistent with what Spann, Kohler, & Soenksen (2003) stated, which suggests that parents' ability to brainstorm and problem-solve with school personnel using shared information about students' progress is an important component of satisfactory parent involvement in decision-making.

In the long run, the learning of these children with special education needs will help not only themselves but also their families and the community. When families have less conflict in the house premises and get involved in the special education program, they will surely not regret it since they are also a beneficiary of the support they give to the school and also to their children.

Conclusion

The education of children with impairments depends a great deal on the involvement of families. This makes it abundantly evident that children will have a very difficult time in school without parental assistance. The study found that parents interact with teachers and are significantly more interested. Most parents follow up with teachers on a frequent basis and ask them about their children's education. This illustrates how parents participated in the various school programs that were available.

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