



Impact of Family Counseling on Development of Special Children

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Abstract

Children with special needs are often at a risk in society. They encounter barriers in school and social situations, such as being bullied and not being taken seriously. While the world is changing, these children are not always welcome in society. Parents and caregivers play an important role in helping children with special needs to grow and develop to their potential. Studies have found that children raised in families with high levels of cohesion, harmony and child support succeed in more adaptive ways than those raised in families with less cohesion. This suggests that parents of children with disabilities need more assistance. This study uses a constructive theoretical framework to explore the notion of disability as experienced by parents of children with disabilities. The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of a therapy intervention in a specific group of people who underwent family counselling sessions. The past researches of different authors were evaluated. Surveys were conducted using self-structured questionnaire, the results of which have been interpreted using statistical analysis. 68% respondents were male, and the rest were females. The respondents were divided into different age classes where the modal class was 20-25 years having a frequency of 45. It was observed that the family counselling had a positive impact on 80% of the children. This improvement was found in their social, physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities. It was concluded that regular family counselling sessions are recommended for the students having special needs for better results.

Keywords: Family Counselling, Behaviour Management, Sibling Support, QOL Quality of Life, MIL Mild Intellectual Disability, PID Profound Intellectual Disability



Introduction

Special children are those who have special needs. They include those who have a disability or chronic illness, those who are struggling with an addiction, and those who have experienced trauma. Special children have unique needs, and their parents will have to work harder than other parents to meet these needs. One way that parents can help their special children is by getting them involved in family counselling. Family counselling is a process that helps parents and children work together to meet the needs of the children.

Children with special needs are often at a risk in society. They encounter barriers in school and social situations, such as being bullied and not being taken seriously. While the world is changing, these children are not always welcome in society.

Parents of children with disabilities face increased stress and difficulty in comparison to parents of children without disabilities. Studies have found that parents of children with disabilities are less pleased with their parental role, report less self-efficacy, and have an increased risk of experiencing psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression. The well-being of mothers of children with disabilities is more vulnerable than fathers, and the responsibility for looking after the children with disabilities often falls to mothers in comparison with fathers, resulting in higher stress. This stress has a negative effect on the ability of parents to develop good relationships with a child with disabilities, providing less support, more punishments, and more problematic behaviours from the child. When parents manage to develop a positive family environment, the development of children with disabilities is optimal.

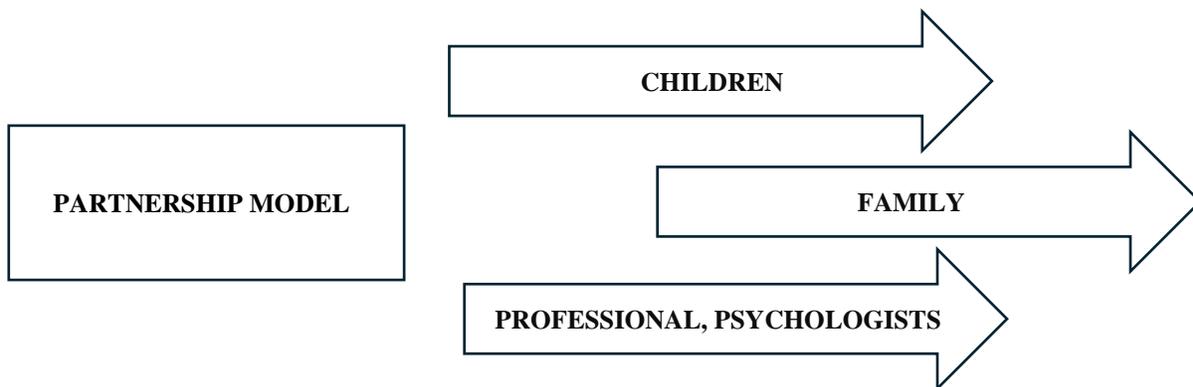
Studies have found that children raised in families with high levels of cohesion, harmony, and child support succeed in more adaptive ways than those raised in families with less cohesion. This suggests that parents of children with disabilities need more assistance than just support for their children's disabilities. The emotional or educational support of the entire family or parents of children with disabilities has been found to lead to less experiencing of stress and more effective adaptation to their child's disabilities.

The "partnership model" is a collaborative strategy that emphasizes the necessity of considering the requirements of each family member. Professionals such as educators, healthcare providers, and social workers collaborate with parents to support the child's well-being and development under this paradigm. It acknowledges that parents are main caregivers and experts on their children,



and that their opinions and involvement are critical in decision-making processes. Between professionals and parents, the partnership model encourages open communication, active listening, mutual respect, and collaborative decision-making. It attempts to build a more inclusive and effective support system for the kid and the entire family by identifying and addressing the needs of both professionals and parents.

Figure 1
Partnership model of a counselling session



Family counselling is a type of therapy that focuses on improving the health of a family unit, often by addressing issues like communication, conflict, and behavioural issues. It is a process that helps to improve relationships, communication, and family functioning in general.

Objectives of the study

The primary purpose of this thesis is to study the multiple benefits of family therapy for special children and their families. To that end, the following specific study objectives have been developed:

1. To investigate how family therapy impacts the emotional and psychological development of special-needs children.
2. To investigate how family counselling might assist families become more resilient and cohesive in the face of the challenges that come with raising a special needs kid.
3. To look at how family therapy influences the social and communicative capacities of special-needs children.



4. To assess how well family therapy treatments improve caretaker's knowledge and parenting abilities.
5. To assess the long-term viability and effectiveness of family therapy interventions for exceptional children and their families.

Literature Review

This part of the paper contains a literature review of related study discussed in the objective. It is used as a secondary data in the investigation at hand.

Raising a special child comes with its own set of challenges, and family counselling has proven to be a vital tool in providing parents and caregivers with efficient coping techniques. Caring for a special-needs child can cause stress and emotional strain. Counselling provides parents and caregivers with access to key stress-reduction tactics, emotional regulation techniques, and problem-solving skills that enable them to negotiate the particular problems they face on a daily basis (Smith et al., 2017; Johnson & Davis, 2019). The ability to manage stress and emotions affects not just the caregivers' mental health, but also the family dynamics and, by extension, the well-being of the exceptional child.

Special needs families frequently experience major transformations and life phases that call for adjustment. Hodapp and Ly's (2018) research highlights the need of family therapy during major life transitions like moving from early intervention to school or getting ready for adulthood. Families can prepare for these milestones and deal with any difficulties with the help of counseling.

Due to the responsibilities of providing care, families of special needs children may occasionally experience social isolation. Counseling for families can help prevent this isolation by putting families in touch with social networks and local services. According to research by Williams and Sharp (2019), it's crucial to foster a feeling of community and lessen isolation for both the child and their family.

Advocacy for a change in policy and better services for special needs children and their families can also benefit from family counseling. According to Roberts, et al.'s (2017) research, families who receive counseling frequently end up advocating for systemic changes to the healthcare, education, and disability services.



For exceptional children's emotional and psychological wellbeing, strong parent-child ties are crucial. Family counseling aims to strengthen these bonds by encouraging compassion and understanding. The quality of parent-child relationships was found to be improved by counseling interventions in a study by Poppes, et al. (2021).

Research Methodology

The study was to examine the effectiveness of a therapy intervention in a specific group of people. In this study, the effectiveness of a therapy intervention in a specific group was investigated using a before and after evaluation approach. To do this, the study employed a pre and post assessment design, evaluating participants outcomes before and after therapy. The purpose was to assess the effectiveness of the therapy by comparing participant results before and after the session.

Data Source

The data used in the study was gathered from primary sources. The key data for the quantitative method is gathered via an instrument delivered to parents.

Target Population

The target population of the study are the parents of children who are intellectually challenged including slow learners, autistics, attention deficit, emotionally and psychologically disturbed, etc.

Sampling Technique

The study employs a non-random sample technique since it is more convenient to record responses from each study respondent. Non-random sampling also employs convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is used to record the responses of all respondents who are easily accessible for the research.

Sample size

The sample size for research is set to be 100. This study had a total of 100 participants who are the parents of special children. They were chosen based on the criteria established and their willingness to engage voluntarily. This includes both men and women of various ages.

Data Collection Technique

To collect data, the instrument is used. The instrument was divided into three sections: demographic, primary concern, and assessment. Further evaluation was separated into two parts:

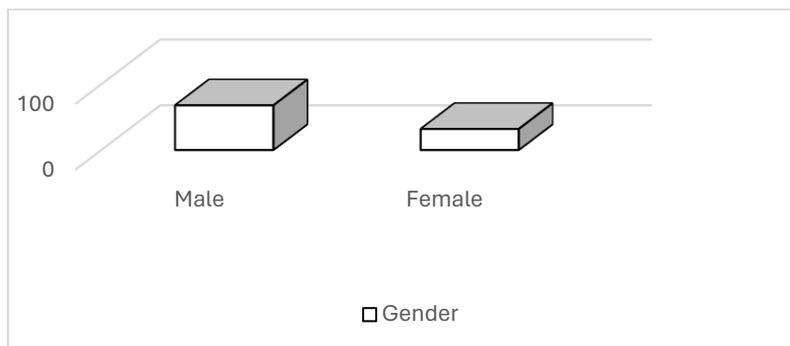


pre-assessment and post-assessment. All the questions were multiple choice. Questionnaires were provided to parents to record their responses.

Results of Demographic Detail

Table 1
Gender

Data Range		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	68	68.0	68.0
	Female	32	32.0	100.0
	Total	100.0	100.0	

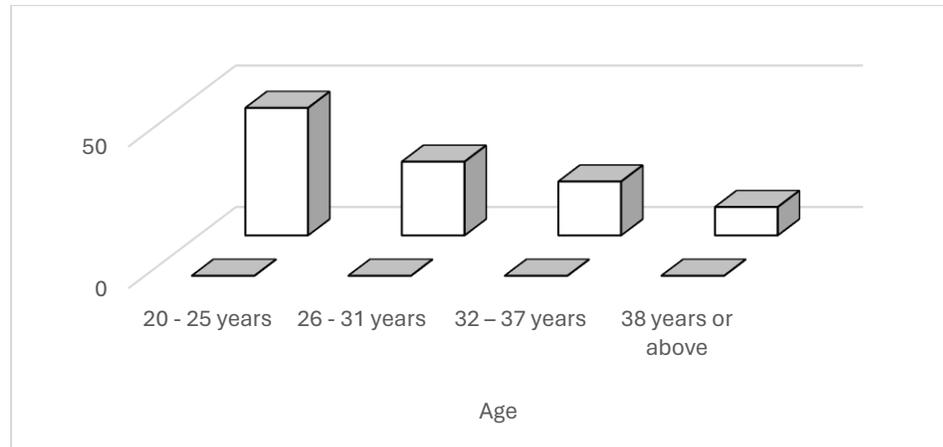


We have presented the demographic details of the respondents of the survey in tabular form and by graph, using descriptive statistics, which are as follows:

The above table represents that 68% of the respondents were male, whereas, 32% were female.

Table 2
Age (in years)

Data Range		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20 - 25 years	45	45.0	45.0
	26 - 31 years	26	26.0	71.0
	32 - 37 years	19	19.0	90.0
	38 years or above	10	10.0	100.0
Total		100.0	100.0	



According to Table 2, 26% of respondents are between the ages of 20 and 25 years, 26% are between the ages of 26 and 31 years, 19% are between the ages of 32 and 37 years, and the final 10% are 38 years of age or more.

Hypotheses

The following hypothesis has been established taking into account the main goal of our research.:

H0: Family counselling does not bring any positive change in the attitude of the parents and children.

H1: Family counselling brings positive change in the attitude of the parents and child.

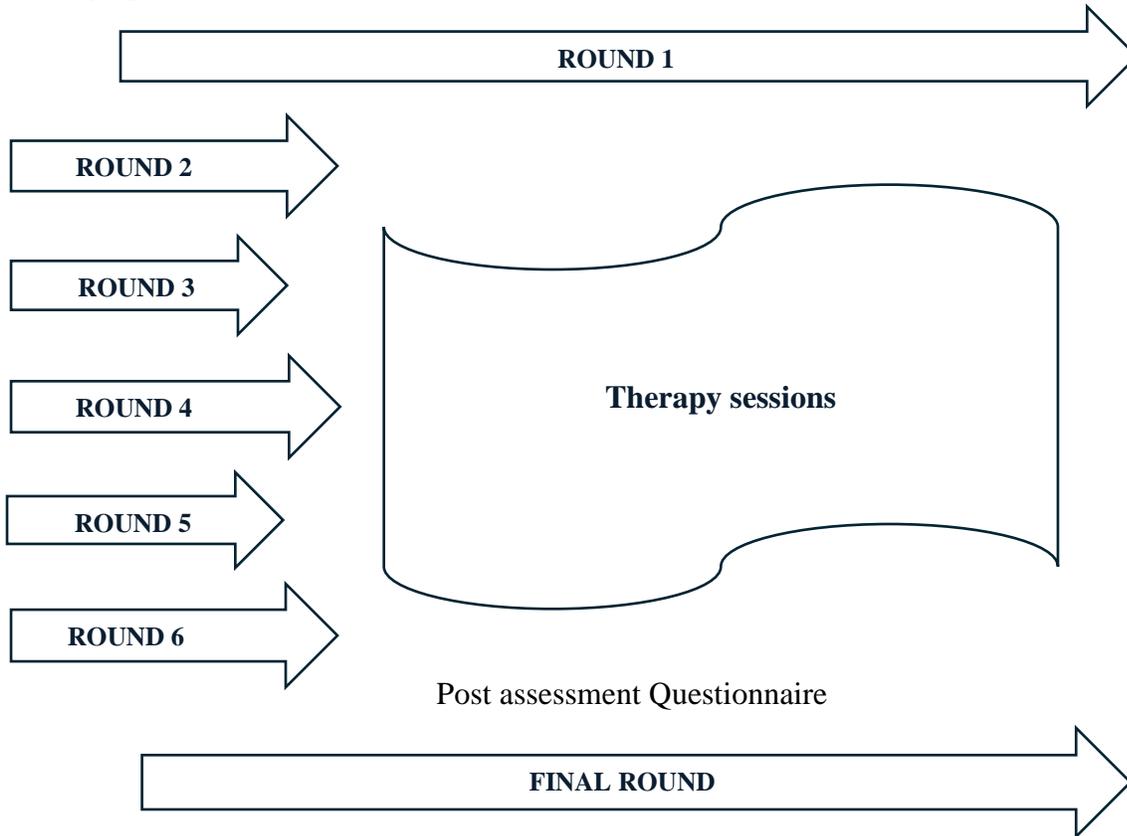
Data Collection and Analysis

The data was collected by the parents of children with special needs. The slots were divided into 4 groups having parents of 25 children. The demographic details and the pre-assessment questionnaire were filled in the first round. The parents and children were then provided with counselling sessions. Each family received 6 sessions overall. In the first month, 2 sessions were given and then 1 session per month. After the completion of 6th session, the post assessment questionnaire was filled out to evaluate the difference before and after the counselling session. It was observed that family counselling had a positive impact on 80% of the children. This improvement was found in their social, physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities.



Procedure of Data Collection and Analysis

Figure 2
Demographic Details and Pre-Assessment Questionnaire



Conclusion and Discussion

Discussion and Analysis

The data gathered through the semi structured questionnaire indicates that there is a wide diversity of parenting perspectives and experiences. Participants expressed a wide range of beliefs and emotions regarding various aspects of parenting, illustrating the position's multidimensional nature. Parenting is a person's experience defined by individual circumstances, support networks, and each child's unique characteristics.

Here are some of the most significant findings:

When paired with sensible recommendations, family counseling for children with special needs can be very useful. First, it's critical for family members to actively engage in direct and compassionate conversation, creating a setting where worries and feelings can be freely



expressed. The need to practice patience and understanding in the face of difficulties, as well as setting reasonable expectations and goals for the kid and the family as a whole, cannot be overstated. A professional counselor can assist parents in developing effective behavioral methods that are specific to their child's needs through collaborative problem-solving. Additionally, fostering sibling participation and giving them the necessary resources and instruction can increase inclusivity and lessen any potential sentiments of neglect. Regular sessions and constant application of the strategies acquired can promote a healthier family dynamic, improving the general wellbeing of both parents and special children.

1. **Family Sacrifice:** While many participants rejected or strongly disagreed with the statement about doing anything for their child(ren) if necessary, it is important to note that many others agreed or were indifferent. This means that there are differing perspectives on the extent to which parents are willing to make sacrifices for their children.
2. **Cost Effectiveness:** Family Counselling is associated with improvement in short-term outcome compared to 'usual care'. Patients are satisfied with counselling, and it may not be associated with increased costs.
3. **Cultural Competence in Family Counselling:** Cultural competence in the context of family counselling refers to the ability of therapists to realize, appreciate, and successfully work with families from assorted cultural backgrounds. The skill comprises recognizing and respecting the unique cultural values, beliefs, traditions, and practices that each family brings to the therapy setting. A culturally competent therapist acknowledges the impact of culture on family dynamics, communication styles and perception of mental health issues. He/she ensures that the interventions are respectful and related to the family's cultural context.

Conclusion & Recommendation

Family counselling is an effective way to study the multiple benefits for special children and their families. It is concluded that:

- Family Counselling impacts the emotional and psychological development of special-needs children.
- It assists families to become more resilient and cohesive in the face of the challenges that come with raising a special needs kid.
- Family therapy influences the social and communicative capacities of special-needs children.
- It improves caretaker's knowledge and parenting abilities.



Family counseling for special children can be incredibly beneficial when accompanied by thoughtful recommendations.

1. Firstly, it's crucial for family members to actively engage in open and empathetic communication, fostering an environment where concerns and emotions can be shared freely. Setting realistic expectations and goals, both for the child and the family, is paramount, as is practicing patience and understanding in the face of challenges. Collaborative problem-solving, guided by a professional counselor, can help parents develop effective behavioral strategies tailored to their child's unique needs. Moreover, encouraging sibling involvement and providing them with the necessary support and education can promote inclusivity and reduce potential feelings of neglect. Regular sessions, combined with consistent implementation of learned techniques, can foster a healthier family dynamic, enhancing the overall well-being of both special children and their parents.
2. Parenting education and support programs: Create and execute comprehensive parenting education programs that give information, methods, and resources to help parents negotiate the obstacles of raising children. These programs may address themes such as child development, effective communication, disciplining tactics, and parent self-care.
3. Improved access to mental health services: Increase access to mental health services for parents, ensuring that they have resources and support to handle stress, feelings of overwhelm, and other mental health difficulties that may occur. This might include giving counselling, therapy, and support groups that are especially geared to the needs of parents.
4. Parenting support groups and communities: Help to establish parenting support groups and communities where parents may interact, exchange experiences, and offer mutual support. These organizations can provide a secure environment for parents to discuss issues, seek advice, and learn from one another's experiences.
5. Parenting technology and resources: Create and promote easily available internet platforms, mobile applications, and resources that offer parenting advice, assistance, and support. These resources can provide parents with information on child development milestones, behavior control approaches, and self-care measures.



6. Advocacy and policy: Advocate for policies that help parents, such as affordable daycare, parental leave, healthcare access, and family-friendly workplace practices. Collaborate with politicians to ensure that parents' needs and problems are considered when establishing social and economic policies.
7. Collaborative partnerships: Encourage collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including as government agencies, non-profit organizations, healthcare providers, and educational institutions, in order to establish comprehensive and coordinated parental support networks. Pooling resources, knowledge, and views can result in more effective and comprehensive approaches to parent assistance.

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