

A B S T R A C T

Title: FILIPINO MOTHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON AUTISM, ON THEIR CHILD-REARING PRACTICES, AND THE ON EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ROLE OF THE SPECIAL SCHOOLS TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN.

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Summary

This study deals with the Filipino mothers' perceptions on autism, on their autistic children's handicap, behaviors, and on their abilities/potentials along the following: 1. control of aggressive behavior; 2. encouragement of reciprocity; 3. appropriate closeness; 4. acceptance of emotional complexities; and 5. comfort in perceiving and meeting the child's physical needs. It also determines the differences among the respondents which are grouped according to the following:

1. age, 2. educational-qualification, 3.type of employment, 4. umber of children in the family, 5. combined monthly income, 6. closeness of family, 7. number of hours spent with the child, and 8. number of years in years in school.

The study also evaluates mothers' opinions on the effectiveness of the roles performed by the special schools towards the development of their autistic children. This study likewise determines the correlations between mothers' frequency of contact with their autistic children, their child-rearing practices; and their perceptions on autism.

This study will help mothers realize the value of their observations and assessments on their autistic children's handicap, behaviors, and abilties/potentials in relation to the development of more positive child-rearing practices what are relevant to their children's developmental needs in the family context.

The findings of the study can be a source of reference and information of school administrators, special education teachers, and guidance counselors in the preparation of more responsive educational plans and intervention programs, and future researchers on special children, particularly the autistic.

The results can also be a modest contribution in the meager body of literature on autism in the Philippine setting.

The respondents in the study are 50 mothers of identified and diagnosed autistic Filipino children enrolled in the public and private special schools/learning centers and therapeutic centers in Metro Manila under the supervision of ASP.

To confirm their children's autism, the respondents were asked to accomplish a modified Behavior Diagnostic Checklist prepared to suit the Philippine context.

To determine their perceptions on autism and on their child-rearing practices, two researcher-designed-instruments were developed, validated, and used in a one-on-one interview with the respondents. The interview focussed more on the effectiveness of the role on special schools towards the development of autistic children.

Findings

1. There are significant differences in the mothers' perceptions on autism when they are grouped according to the following variables:

- a) age

- b) educational qualification
 - c) type of employment
 - d) number of children in the family
 - e) combined monthly income
 - f) closeness of family
 - g) number of hours spent with the child
 - h) number of years in school
2. There are significant differences in the child-rearing practices of mothers when they are grouped according to the following variables:
- a) age
 - b) educational qualification
 - c) type of employment
 - d) number of children in the family
 - e) combined monthly income
 - f) closeness of family
 - g) number of hours spent with the child
 - h) number of years in school
3. There is a significant positive correlation between mothers' frequency of contacts and their perceptions on autism.
4. There is a significant positive correlation between mothers' frequency of contacts and their child-rearing practices.

5. There is a significant positive correlation between mothers' perceptions on autism and their child-rearing practices.

A Majority of the respondents belong to the 25-35 years and 36-45 years age bracket. A large number of the respondents are baccalaureate degree holders, have college units, and at least MA units. Majority of the respondents belong to a small family with at least two to three children.

Most of the respondents are gainfully employed and had a combined monthly income of at least P10,000. Most of the families are very close and moderately close. A large number of respondents spend one to four hours with their children. Majority of the mothers have children with a maximum schooling of two years.

Autistic Filipino children are emotionally underdeveloped. They manifest emotional reactions inappropriate to given situations. Most of them have delayed/limited language development. Majority of them suffer from delayed cognitive and psychosocial development. They show lags in interpreting and responding to abstract things. Most autistic children have short attention span. They usually shift from one activity to another. Despite these behaviors, they show

facility in handling puzzles and discriminating sizes, shapes, forms, and colors of objects. Both verbal and non-verbal children comprehend simple and short directions and verbalizations given them. Almost all of these children possess self-help skills and occupational skills ranging from simple to moderately difficult ones. On socialization, autistic children lack the ability to relate to people. This is manifested by their failure to show eye-to-eye contact with others; and their lack of empathy, or the ability to understand and share other people's feelings and moods. These children exhibit their desire for orderliness and sameness in their activities or in certain aspects of their environment. Interruptions usually result to tantrums and aggressive behaviors.

The results of the researchers' interview with mothers regarding their perceptions on autism, on their child-rearing practices, and opinions on the effectiveness of the role of special schools toward the development of their children shared that mothers would not have determined some developments on their children's behaviors if the special schools had not exist.

Hypothesis 1 is partially accepted since significant differences are found on closeness of family and on

number of hours spent with the child.

Based on the results, Hypothesis 2 is partially accepted.

No significant correlation between mothers' frequency of contacts with their children and their perceptions on autism. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is rejected.

Hypothesis 4 is accepted since there is a significant positive correlation between mothers' frequency of contacts with their autistic children and their child-rearing practices.

Hypothesis 5 is accepted since there is a significant positive correlation between mothers' perceptions on autism and their child-rearing practices.

Conclusions

Autistic children manifest moderate to severe lags along cognitive/intellectual, communication, psychological and fine motor development and they have negligible to mild lags along gross motor development.

Mothers of autistic Filipino children generally exhibit positive ways of controlling their children's aggressive behaviors; encouraging reciprocity from them; demonstrating appropriate closeness with them; and, perceiving and meeting their children's physical needs.

They generally, however, encounter difficulties in handling/managing the emotional complexities of their children.

Age, educational qualification, type of employment, number of children in the family, combined monthly income, and number of years in school are not positive factors in determining differences among mothers' perceptions on their children's autism.

The closer the family relationships are, the more positive the mother's perceptions are on the behaviors of their autistic children.

That the longer the hours the mothers stay with their autistic children, the more positive their perceptions are on their children's abilities/potentials.

That educational qualifications, combined monthly income, closeness of family, and number of years in school are not positive indicators in determining differences in mother's child-rearing practices.

That the older the mothers are, the more positive their child-rearing practices are in perceiving and meeting their children's physical needs.

In comparison with those employed and self-employed, non-employed mothers have more positive child-rearing practices in encouraging reciprocity, demonstrating appropriate closeness and perceiving and meeting the

child's physical needs.

That the fewer the children there are in the family, the more positive the mother's practices are in accepting their children's emotional complexities.

That the longer the hours mothers spend with their children, the more positive their practices are in encouraging reciprocity from their autistic children.

That frequency of contacts is not related positively to mothers' perceptions on autism.

That frequency of contacts is positively correlated to the child-rearing practices of mothers.

That perceptions on autism is positively related to child-rearing practices of mothers.

In addition to these conclusions, it is also concluded that the Perception on Autism Scale and the Child-rearing Practices Scale are valid instruments for measuring the perceptions on autism and the child-rearing practices of Filipino mothers of autistic children.

And definitely, all the 50 mother-respondents concluded and believed that their children would not manifest some development in their abilities/potentials without the existence of the special schools which provided them more knowledge in dealing with their autistic children.

Recommendations

A multidisciplinary approach to diagnosis and assessment of autistic children be adopted involving among others the following:

- a) parents
- b) special education teachers/administrators
- c) guidance counselors
- d) psychologists
- e) neurologists
- g) therapists (speech, physical, occupational)

A home-based parent educational/involvement program be planned, organized, and implemented to provide the following:

- a) a mini-course or informational drive on autism
- b) actual observations of skills training
- c) intervention strategies to develop more positive child-rearing practices
- d) educational approaches used by teachers which may be implemented in the home

An on-going school based teacher training program be conducted for competency development along:

- a) individualized educational plan (IEP) preparation
- b) behavior modification techniques

- c) teaching/educational approaches
- d) intervention strategies
- e) materials preparation
- f) human relations

A public awareness/information campaign be organized and implemented through the following:

- a) information dissemination about autism through the media, seminars
- b) establishment of a community-based learning and therapeutic center for autistic children, by either private individuals, non-government, and government agencies.
- c) hospitals' and drug companies' sponsorship of research contests on the different aspects of autism

Other studies be conducted to determine other factors affecting mothers' perceptions on autism and their child-rearing practices.

To young Filipino mothers who are not aware of the importance of rearing autistic children, an awareness program will give information/knowledge to be able to practice more positive interventions that may result to developments of their childrens' autism.

That the two instruments be used as valid tools by other researchers who wish to replicate the study on a larger scale and to enhance the scales' validity.

