

# Parental Roles in Early Childhood Special Education for Children with Disabilities: A Case Study of Dera Ghazi Khan

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## Abstract

*This study explores the role of parents in supporting their disabled children's engagement in early childhood special education programs. Parents are expected to participate in several sessions and collaborate closely with special education teachers to develop individualized plans tailored to their child's specific needs. This research helps examine the factors that influenced and restricted parental engagement by various obstacles, including societal challenges, parent-teacher dynamics, children, and families. This study investigates the role of parental involvement in the education of children with disabilities, focusing on three primary objectives: (1) to examine the extent and nature of parental responsibilities in supporting their children's educational needs, (2) to explore how parental involvement influences engagement and participation in educational activities, and (3) to identify the factors that impact parental engagement and support for special education. Using a quantitative research design, the research examines the relationship between socioeconomic factors, parental involvement, and children's access to and participation in special education services. A correlational research design was employed to analyze quantitative data collected from 120 parents through structured questionnaires. The study's findings emphasize that are actively involved in their children's educational experiences; they can assist their children in flourishing by supplying them with the resources necessary to achieve academic and social success.*

**Keywords:** Disability, Early Childhood Education, Special Education.

## Introduction

The role of a parent in one's life is a wonderful and joyful experience. It is also considered a significant duty of parents. The role of a parent comprises all the responsibilities that come with it, including the role of an educator. Although many people acknowledge the significance of parental involvement, encouraging and maintaining it cannot be easy. Meeting every child's requirements is becoming increasingly challenging for educators as schools continue to become

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more diverse. Larocque et al. (2011) acknowledged that educators lack the expertise and experience necessary to effectively collaborate with a diverse range of parents, even though families play a critical role in designing a school that meets the needs of their children.

The study of parental involvement in education is significant due to the extensive rhetoric surrounding it and the diverse array of PI practices. Various obstacles influence and restrict parental engagement, including societal challenges, parent-teacher dynamics, children, and families. It is believed that the precise causes of the rhetoric-reality divide must be identified in order to advance the practice of parental involvement in education. Develop more effective procedures for optimizing parental involvement in education, an essential component of the learning process (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Afzal et al., 2022).

The research further explores parental engagement's influence on special children's active participation in educational activities. While many studies emphasize school-led education, this research focuses on the home environment and parental support as key determinants of academic outcomes. Parents are the first and most significant teachers that their children have. Their involvement in their education will facilitate and expedite learning, leading to better educational outcomes. Parental involvement has a beneficial effect on preschoolers' developing literacy abilities, such as their auditory processing, receptive and expressive vocabulary, ability to recognize rhymes, recognition, print understanding, and pre-writing skills (Oranga et al., 2020; Afzal et al., 2024).

Wahyuni (2022) reported that in supporting their children's learning experiences, parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) are highly involved and influential. When parents are actively involved in their children's education, they have a more positive perception of their children's academic achievement in mainstream elementary schools. More parental involvement in their children's schooling is associated with parents who have a positive outlook on their children's accomplishments. As a result, students with special educational needs (SEN) may find it easier to thrive in inclusive classrooms.

Shaukat (2022) argued that there is a dedicated budget in Pakistan that aims to meet the diverse needs of children with disabilities, as mandated by current legislation. However, like many other developing and industrialized nations do not allocate a sufficient budget to meet the needs of children with disabilities. Theorized that it may help committed teachers improve student achievement by strategically applying motivating strategies. The education system, particularly first-year educators, would benefit from licensure as a quality assurance measure. So long as they are started and kept up with a strong dedication to accountability and transparency standards, these projects constitute a massive step towards making the country's education better.

The education of exceptional children has garnered increasing attention in recent years due to its critical role in promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities in society. Despite global advocacy for inclusive education, the effective engagement of parents in the educational journey of special children remains underexplored, particularly in sociocultural contexts where traditional educational responsibilities are viewed as the sole domain of schools (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Afzal et al., 2023). This research addresses this gap by focusing on parental responsibilities, involvement, and the factors influencing their engagement in the education of exceptional children. Children with disabilities are an integral part of every society, yet they often face significant challenges, especially in developing countries like Pakistan. Governments must create policies that ensure these children become productive members of society. The present study focuses on the role of parental involvement in the early childhood special education of children with disabilities. These children encounter numerous difficulties, not only due to their disabilities but also because

of societal attitudes that often stigmatize and marginalize them. In marginalization, this is a pressing issue, with many parents viewing their disabled children as burdens due to the emotional and mental strain involved. The lack of adequate developmental policies and resources further exacerbates the situation, leaving children with disabilities in a more vulnerable state. Ensuring that children with disabilities have access to education, care, and the resources they need is their fundamental right. This study aims to explore the current challenges faced by children with disabilities. It examines the responsibilities of parents in their participation in early childhood special education, focusing on Dera Ghazi Khan.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study focused on the following objectives.

- To examine the extent and nature of parental responsibilities in the education of exceptional children.
- To explore parental involvement's impact on special children's engagement and participation in educational activities.
- To identify the factors influencing parental engagement and support for exceptional children's education.

### **Review of the Literature**

Parents build expectations for their child's education by drawing upon their personal experiences and informal networks of other parents. Parents generally have high expectations regarding the quality of teaching, their child's academic advancement and well-being, homework assignments, fair disciplinary measures, and the assurance that their thoughts and beliefs would not automatically be altered upon learning about their child's "special" educational needs. If parents hold a divergent viewpoint from a professional opinion regarding their child, this could indicate that they alter their expectations, disregard the information, or modify their frame of reference. Parents of a disabled child will respond similarly when their expectations are not met. The primary factors contributing to conflict between schools and parents of disabled kids are the divergent perspectives on the child's needs and requirements (Hadjiyiannakou et al., 2007).

Barnes and Dia (2010) stated that a substantial amount of research has been carried out over the past thirty years on the premise that families with children who have intellectual or developmental disabilities often experience adverse outcomes, like elevated stress levels and parental despair. Nonetheless, family-specific outcomes have been inconsistent throughout research on this topic. Supporting the claim that disability is linked to negative consequences, multiple comparative studies have found that parents of disabled children suffer from more significant stress than parents of typically developing children. It is important to note that these studies did not consider changes associated with the diagnosis or the care requirements related to the impairment, even though they did find a correlation between childhood disability and parental stress or depression.

According to Mwita et al. (2014) it is crucial to embrace children with disabilities early and provide them with the necessary support to enable their participation in education. Children with disabilities need specialized education and supplementary assistance to ensure their successful engagement. Children can experience a range of disabilities, including impairments in hearing, vision, mental abilities, speech, and physical functioning. The support needs of children living with impairments vary depending on the severity of their disability due to the presence of different types of disabilities.

Mann et al. (2015) stated that parents of children with disabilities express apprehension regarding the school's ability to provide adequate help and ensure the safety of their children. Confident parents expressed apprehension regarding the well-being of their children with disabilities in mainstream schools and consequently opted for specialized education specialists. It also examines the role of parents in providing teaching and learning resources and how this affects the participation of children with disabilities. Parents' experiences and obstacles when seeking education and admittance for their children with disabilities. The current body of knowledge in the fields of sociology, disability studies, and education. It will provide suggestions for policymakers, educators, and parents. The Government must allocate resources to ensure educational institutions are accessible to children with disabilities.

Diana et al. (2017) said that the growing population of children with special needs presents an opportunity for Early Childhood Education (ECE) institutions to provide education for these children despite the limited availability of resources. A standardized early childhood education curriculum that specifically caters to children with special needs is expected to enhance the Government's inclusive education initiative by aiding teachers in developing appropriate programs for these children in inclusive classrooms. Hussin et al. (2017) said that students with special educational needs (SEN) necessitate inclusive teaching and learning methods within and outside the classroom. Inclusive education has experienced global expansion, especially in Malaysia. The Education (Special Education) Regulations 2013 address the educational advancement of students with special educational needs (SEN).

Sharafudeen et al. (2022) concluded that the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education settings, as well as the influence of parent variables (such as education) and child variables (such as age and severity of disability) on their perspectives. The perspectives of parents with children who have intellectual disabilities regarding the integration of their children into regular education. Additionally, the study aims to compare the attitudes of two distinct groups of parents: those with preschool-aged children and those with school-aged children. The environment in which an inclusion program is implemented considerably impacts the program offered to a kid. Inclusion programs presuppose that educators can employ developmentally suitable methodologies and that support services are accessible to students with disabilities in regular education classes.

## **Research Methodology**

This paper uses a quantitative research design to process the research for collecting, evaluating, and interpreting data. Quantitative approaches are used to test the hypothesis about the phenomenon. Researchers define the population, measure variation, and predict the type of causal linkages among the variables using systematic ways to accomplish this. A consistent study strategy and numerical measurements of variables characterize this method and are widely preferred in social sciences, especially when collecting survey data. The universe of the study was District Dera Ghazi Khan. For this study, a sample of 120 respondents (parents of special children) was selected through a multistage sampling technique for data collection. In the first stage, two tehsils were selected from District Dera Ghazi Khan purposively; in the second stage, 1 Special Education Department from tehsil D.G. Khan and one from tehsil Kot Chutta will be selected purposively; and in the third stage, 60 respondents (parents of special children) from each selected special education institution will be chosen by convenient sampling technique.

The data was collected exclusively through a questionnaire, which functioned as the primary study instrument. The questionnaire included both open-ended and close-ended enquiries regarding the

study's objectives, in addition to multiple-choice queries. To check the accuracy of the research tool, pretesting will be done on 25 respondents. The chi-square test was utilized to investigate the correlation between dependent and independent variables using SPSS software to analyze the data.

## Discussion and Findings

Interpretation and data analysis are the most essential part of social research. It briefly described research findings and the extent level to confirm the hypothesis. Senior Citizens' respondents were interviewed during the survey. The statistical form of findings is explained below. The respondents were classified according to age, number of children, family types, educational level and occupation level. The data indicates that most participants, 50.8%, were 30 and above years old. The frequency distribution of marital status showed that a significant proportion of 40.8% of the participants were married, 16.7% of the participants were separated, and 13.3% of the participants were divorced. In addition, 44.2% of the participants lived in a joint family system, 41.7% were in a nuclear family system, and only 14.2% were living in an extended family system.

The demographic data showed that 12.5% of the participants were illiterate, 28.3% of the disabled child's parents were up to primary school, 14.2% of the interviewees were up to matric, 18.3% of participants were graduates, and 16.7% of survey participants were post-graduates. The data about the occupation group showed that 30.0% of participants were unemployed, 20.0% were in private jobs, 23.3% were in government jobs, and 26.7% were in household chores.

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their disability**

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Number of disabled Children</b>	Boys	77	64.2
	Girls	43	35.8
	Deaf	42	23.5
	Dumb	4	3.3
	Blind	26	21.7
<b>Type of Disability</b>	Physical Disable	28	35.0
	Mental Disable	20	16.7

*n=120 respondents*

The above data in the table 2 highlights that Significant proportion 64,2% of the participants have disable sons and 35.8% of the respondents had disable daughters. The result showed that the Significant proportion 35.0% of the children were physical disable, 3.3% of the children were dumb, 21.7% of the children were blind, 23.5% of the children were deaf and 16.7% of the children were mental disable.

**Table 2: Impact of Parental Involvement on the Educational Development of Children with Disabilities**

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Understanding of Child's Needs</b>	Strongly Agree	70	58.3
	Agree	22	18.3
	Neutral	13	10.8
	Disagree	15	12.5
<b>Educational Plans according to child's needs</b>	Strongly agree	44	36.7
	Agree	37	30.8
	Neutral	23	19.2
	Disagree	16	13.3
<b>Child's Confidence</b>	Strongly agree	52	43.3
	Agree	56	46.7
	Neutral	6	5.0
	Disagree	6	5.0
<b>Skills learned at School</b>	Strongly agree	56	46.7
	Agree	36	30.0
	Neutral	11	9.2
	Disagree	17	14.2

*n=120 respondents*

As shown in the table that majority of the respondents 58.3% were strongly agreed, 18.3% participants were agreed, 10.8% participants were neutral about understanding their child's needs. 12.5% interviewee was disagreed that they do not understand their child's needs. As for as the educational plan according to the children needs, it is clear from table 3 that 36.7% participants were strongly agreed, 30.8% participants were agreed, their educational plans were according to their child's learning needs. Only a small number of parents, 19.2%, were neutral that educational plans were according to their child's learning needs. Moreover, 13.3% of the parents disagreed that educational plans were not according to their child's learning needs. The results are relevant with previous studies and literature that showed, a parent serves as a child's initial educator and continues to be the most effective educator throughout their lifetime (Bhuyan and Joshi, 2021).

The responses by the participants showed that Significant proportion 46.7% of participants agreed, 43.3% parents were strongly agreed that their child was being confident to communicate with others. Only 5% of participants were neutral and the same percentage of parents disagreed that child was being confident to communicate with others. The results are relevant with previous literature and studies; efficient communication is recognized as being linked to the best possible health results (Sahay et al., 2013).

Further a significant number of participants, 76.7% agreed and strongly agreed that children reinforce skills at home which once learned in school. The data were distributed among the population as 46.7% participants strongly agreed, and 30.0% participants agreed that their child reinforce skills learned in school at home. There are 9.2% participants were neutral that child reinforce skills learned in school at home 14.2% participants were disagreed that child reinforce skills learned in school at home. The results are relevant with previous literature and studies that showed, regarding mentally challenged students, it is important for their curriculum to include a social skills curriculum (Asif & Fazil, 2010).

**Table 3: Nature of Parental Responsibilities in the Education of Children with Special Needs**

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Proper Physical Care</b>	Strongly agree	24	20.0
	Agree	60	50.0
	Neutral	28	23.3
	Disagree	8	6.7
	Strongly disagree	0	0.0
<b>Therapies for Children</b>	Strongly agree	38	31.7
	Agree	43	35.8
	Neutral	13	10.8
	Disagree	15	12.5
	Strongly disagree	11	9.2
<b>Promoting Societal Acceptance</b>	Strongly agree	63	52.5
	Agree	20	16.7
	Neutral	10	8.3
	Disagree	8	6.7
	Strongly disagree	19	15.8

*n=120 respondents*

The above data showed that Significant proportion 35.8% of participants were agreed, 31.7% participants were strongly agreed, that they are providing therapies to their child. 10.8% of participants were neutral and 9.2% participants disagreed that they are providing therapies to their child. The results are relevant with previous studies and literature that showed, children encounter several challenges such as burden, distraction, interruption, tardiness, or risk factors that hinder their optimal growth without the need for specific therapy or intervention (Bariroh, 2018).

According to the data in table 3 reflects that significant proportion of results indicated 67.5% participants agreed and strongly agreed that they are providing therapies to their child. The data shows that Significant proportion 35.8% participants were agreed, 31.7% participants were strongly agreed, 10.8% participants were neutral, and 9.2% participants disagreed that they are providing therapies to their child. The data in the table shows that Significant proportion 52.5% participants were strongly agreed, 16.7% participants were agreed, 8.3% participants were neutral, 6.7% participants disagreed, and 15.8% participants strongly disagreed that they are promoting societal acceptance for their child. The results are relevant with previous studies and literature that showed, children encounter several challenges such as burden, distraction, interruption, tardiness, or risk factors that hinder their optimal growth without the need for specific therapy or intervention (Bariroh, 2018).

**Table 4: Factors Influencing Parental Engagement and Support in the Education of Children with Special Needs**

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Feeling of Pleasant and Positive</b>	Strongly agree	39	32.5
	Agree	58	48.3
	Neutral	8	6.7
	Disagree	10	8.3
	Strongly disagree	5	4.2
<b>Negative Image</b>	Strongly agree	38	31.7
	Agree	42	35.0
	Neutral	23	19.2
	Disagree	10	8.3
	Strongly disagree	7	5.8
<b>Community People Behavior</b>	Strongly agree	47	39.2
	Agree	29	24.2
	Neutral	18	15.0
	Disagree	10	8.3
	Strongly disagree	16	13.3

*n=120 respondents*

The data showed that a significant proportion of results indicated 80.8% participants agreed and strongly agreed that their children felt positive and motivated after school based healthy activities. The highest proportion, 48.3% participants agreed, 32.5% participants strongly agreed, that their children felt positive and motivated after school based healthy activities. However, 6.7% of participants were neutral that their children felt positive and motivated after school based healthy activities. The data showed that Significant proportion 35.0% of participants agreed with a significant proportion of participants, 31.7% participants were strongly agreed, that they try their best of secure their child from negative image in society. 19.2% of participants were neutral in that they try their best to secure their child from negative image in society. 8.3% participants disagreed, and 5.8% participants strongly disagreed.

The data showed that Significant proportion 39.2% participants were strongly agreed, 24.2% participants were agreed, that their community people behave polite with your child. 15.0% participants were neutral that their community people behave politely with your child. 8.3% of participants disagreed, and 13.3% participants were strongly that their community people behave politely with your child. The Significant proportion of results indicated 63.4% participants were agreed and strongly agreed that their community people behave polite with their child. The results are relevant with previous literature and studies that showed negative cultural beliefs lead to a situation where many individuals will actively avoid direct personal interaction with people who have disabilities, unless they are immediate family members (Musengi and Mudyahoto 2010).

*H1: More will be access to essential resources; Greater will be promoting societal acceptance*



**Table 5: Association between access to resources and promotion of societal acceptance**

Child had Access to Essential Resources for Education	Promotion of Societal Acceptance for their Child				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Strongly agree	63	20	4	0	0
Agree	0	0	6	6	0
Neutral	0	0	0	2	12
Disagree	0	0	0	0	7

*n* = 120 respondents

$\chi^2 = 191.141$ , ( $p = 0.034$ ),  $\gamma = 87.042$ , ( $p = 0.041$ )

Chi-square value (191.141) from the above given table displays a significant association ( $P = 0.034$ ) between access to essential resources for education and promotion of societal acceptance for their child. Gamma value (87.042) also revealed a positive relationship between these variables. So, the researcher accepts the hypothesis and concluded that variables have an association between them. It means “access to resources was associated with promotion of societal acceptance”. So, the hypothesis was statically accepted at 0.05 level of significance. According to the previous studies and literature parents played a pivotal role in involving their children in societal functions (Hyassat et al., 2024)

*H2*: More will be away from negativity; More will be participation in curriculum activity

**Table 6: Association between secure their child from negative image and participation in every educational curriculum activity**

Secure their Child from Negative Image in Society	Participation in Every Educational Curriculum Activity				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Strongly agree	38	0	0	0	0
Agree	8	34	0	0	0
Neutral	0	17	6	0	0
Disagree	0	0	8	2	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	4	3

*n* = 120 respondents

$\chi^2 = 250.849$ , ( $p = 0.043$ ),  $\gamma = 1.000$ , ( $p = 0.021$ )

Table number 6 reflects the Chi-square value (250.849) which has a significant association ( $P = 0.043$ ) between securing their child from negative image in society and participation in every educational activity. Gamma value (1.000) also revealed a positive relationship between these variables. So, the researcher accepts the hypothesis and concluded that variables have an association between them. It means “secure their child from negative image in society was associated with participation in every educational activity”. So, the hypothesis was statically accepted at 0.05 level of significance. Singh (2023) stated that inclusive education is a pedagogical strategy where students with special needs are educated alongside their non-disabled peers within the same educational setting. It enables them to keep them in a positive environment.

*H3*: More will be participation in school games; Greater will be feeling of positive

**Table 7: Association between participation in school games and feeling of positivity**

<b>Participation in Sports</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Strongly agree	21	45	0	0
Agree	0	3	19	0
Neutral	0	0	0	6
Disagree	0	0	0	6
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	5

*n* = 120 respondents

$\chi^2 = 212.887$ , ( $p = 0.018$ ),  $\gamma = 31.732$ , ( $p = 0.02$ )

The Chi-square value (212.887) in that table showed that there is a significant association ( $P = 0.018$ ) between participation in sports and feeling pleasant with them. Gamma value (31.732) also revealed a positive relationship between these variables. So, the researcher accepts the hypothesis and concluded that variables have an association between them. It means “participation in sports was associated with feeling of pleasant with them”. So, the hypothesis was statically accepted at 0.05 level of significance. Mwita et al. (2014) concluded that it is crucial for children with disabilities to participate in extracurricular activities to stay positive and engage with other through sports activities.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant role that parental understanding and engagement play in supporting children with disabilities. The findings reveal that over 75% of parents understand their children’s needs, which positively influences the children's developmental progress. Additionally, over 60% of parents report that their educational plans align with their child’s learning needs, and a substantial proportion provide equal attention, contributing to the children’s confidence in social interactions. Importantly, 80% of parents observed increased confidence in their children’s communication abilities, underscoring the impact of sustained parental involvement on growth.

Moreover, 76.7% of parents affirmed that skills learned in school are reinforced at home, and over 80% actively encourage participation in both educational and extracurricular activities, which promotes societal acceptance and inclusion. Findings also indicate that most participants live in joint family systems, with a significant proportion having sons, and that deafness is the most prevalent disability among children. Furthermore, vaccination was widely recognized as essential, reflecting parents' commitment to health and preventive care.

Conclusively, this study underscores that an understanding of children's unique needs, coupled with efforts to protect them from negative societal perceptions, facilitates active involvement in educational activities. The positive association between sports participation and parental well-being also emphasizes the importance of inclusive environments in fostering family cohesion and satisfaction. Furthermore, the findings show that there is a strong association between securing their child from negative image in society it is mandatory to participate in every educational activity. These insights point to the need for further research on supporting parents in diverse family structures to enhance the growth and social inclusion of children with disabilities.

## Recommendations

- Conducting longitudinal studies can provide insights into how parental involvement in special education impacts the long-term development of children with disabilities.
- Future research should compare parental participation in different regions to identify effective practices and address socio-cultural disparities in special education.
- Investigating gender roles in parental involvement could reveal how mothers and fathers contribute differently to the education of children with disabilities, influencing outcomes.

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