

Parental satisfaction with Early Intervention Services for children with visual impairments and multiple disabilities in Thessaloniki of North Greece

Dr Neofotistou Konstantina
Doctor of Adapted Physical education
Director of Early intervention program of Syzoi
Thessaloniki, Greece

- **Early Intervention (EI)** results in significant benefits for children:
 - EI supports the communication, play and behavior of children.
 - Greatest impacts are mentioned when parents are involved in the intervention.
- An important criterion for the success of EI, is the forming of partnerships with families and working collaboratively with them.
- In home environment, parents feel they have better control and EI providers become more familiar to family culture and living conditions.

- Limited number of studies has assessed the satisfaction that parents feel with EI services.
- Parent satisfaction constitutes a key component of any evaluation of early intervention services.
- Quality of EI services, the structural aspect of EI services and the relationships between parents and professionals influence parent satisfaction.

- **Syzoι** is a non-profit “Association of Parents and Friends of People with Visual Impairments and Additional Disabilities”.
 - In Thessaloniki of Greece, the only home based intervention program.
 - The last 12 year, infants and children with visual impairments and with multiple disabilities participate in early intervention services.
-

The **fundamental objective** of this program is:

- Timely evaluation and optimization of each child.
- Support, information and guidance for parents.

The **main areas** which are supported are:

- body perception,
- visual perception,
- orientation - mobility,
- daily skills,
- counseling to families.

- **Until now** there is no study that has estimated parent's perceptions about EI services in Greece which creates a significant gap in assessment and adjustment of the program.
 - **It is essential to** rate parent's satisfaction in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention program.
 - **It is important to** examine parent's views of their partnership with EI providers because cooperation between parents and EI providers is critical for the success of EI.
-

- **The purpose** of this study was to examine the satisfaction level of the parents whose children participate in the specific EI program.
 - **Two objectives:**
 - a) to determine whether services were responsive to family needs and priorities.
 - b) to identify whether specific characteristics of the families were associated with parent satisfaction.
-

Participants-Procedure:

- 15 mothers of children up to age of 5 years (mean age 4.1) with impaired vision and additional disabilities.
 - Participants were recruited from the EI program which operates in Thessaloniki.
 - Parents were asked to complete a questionnaire including basic characteristics.
 - Parents' perceptions of EI services were assessed using a modified version of the Project Dakota (Iversen, Shimnel, Ciacera, Prabhakar, 2003; Kjerland & Kovach, 1990).
-

- **The instrument** contained 36 questions in five subscales:
 1. program and staff responsiveness,
 2. growth in knowledge and skills in helping the child,
 3. growth in understanding normal behavior and problems,
 4. utilization of community resources,
 5. building a support system through participation in the program.
 - The survey was scored using a four-point Likert scale with responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.
-

Statistical Analyses

- The survey was analyzed using the SPSS 20 statistical package.
 - Frequencies and means were used to describe parents' perceptions of the program effectiveness in meeting family needs.
 - Non-parametric test were used to assess differences in satisfaction related to:
 - parents education level.
 - children's characteristics.
-

Results

- Parents were satisfied with EI program in all the domains.
 - No statistically significant differences were found when comparisons were made among the parents and children characteristics.
-

Discussion

- Results of this study are consistent with past studies which refer to high levels of parental satisfaction to parents of children with developmental disabilities.
- High scores on parents' responses indicated that EI services are the appropriate in meeting and supporting families' needs.
- High levels of parental satisfaction were scored in all the domains, in contrast, most studies report less satisfaction with access and utilization of community recourses.
- Satisfaction is not related to parent's educational level.

Discussion

- The severity of visual impairment was not related to parental satisfaction.
 - No relationship was found between the time participation in EI program and parental satisfaction:
 - One possible explanation could be the small sample of the study and the short time in which the specific EI program operates.
-

Conclusions

- Parents who participated in EI program are very satisfied with EI services.
 - The high degree of satisfaction demonstrates the importance and the necessity of the active parent participation.
 - This suggests the need to estimate frequently parents' perceptions in order to examine and improve the effectiveness of EI services.
-