Parent Perspectives on their Children with Autism

By Ashley Loria
Objectives

Discuss the following:

- background information pertinent to this study
- purpose for this research study
- methods
- results
- discussion/clinical implications
Objective

To determine:

- What types of educational settings are children with autism educated in?
- How satisfied parents are with their child’s education plan
- Are parent’s more likely to be satisfied if their child is included?
Autism Spectrum Disorders

- Autism Spectrum Studied
  - Autistic Disorder (classic Autism)
  - Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified
  - Asperger’s Syndrome
Special Education

- In order for children to receive special education services and receive an Individual Education Plan (IEP), they must carry the label of Autism.

- IDEA defines autism as:
  - A developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident by the age of three that adversely affects the child’s educational performance.
Inclusion

- IDEA, P.L. 108-466
  - Requires special education and related services for eligible children and ensures that they obtain a free appropriate education in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).
  - LRE is an educational setting where a child spends time in a classroom with typically developing peers.
Inclusion

- Concept that looks to implement all special education services in the mainstream classroom
  - By providing support services in mainstream environments
Current Research

- Controversy over Inclusion—Is it appropriate for children with ASD?

- Support for inclusion of children with ASD
  - Peers as role models for age-appropriate behavior
  - Peers provide opportunity to improve social interaction
  - Children with ASD who are included may have:
    - Higher levels of engagement and social interaction
    - Higher levels of social support by peers
    - More advanced individualized education plan goals than self-contained counterparts
Current Research

- Much research now supports inclusion of children with ASD.

- The following have been found to be acquired though engagement in activities similar to and with typically developing children:
  - Language
  - Self-help skills
  - Social behavioral skills
Current Research

- Research is lacking
  - Little research done to evaluate the academic outcomes of inclusion for children with ASD
  - Little research done on parental satisfaction of the educational placement for their child diagnosed with autism
Method

- Participants
  - 22 LEND faculty members were sent the survey via email
  - Email contained link to survey with introduction letter
Method – Response Rate

- 10 LEND family faculty members filled out the survey
  - 6 had a child with Autism
  - 0 had a child with Asperger’s
  - 1 had a child with PDD-NOS
  - 3 did not have a child with Autism
Table 1. Characteristics of participating children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AUTISM</th>
<th>PDD-NOS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>n = 6</td>
<td>n = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>4-females, 6-males</td>
<td>1 - male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Mean = 14.3 years</td>
<td>Mean = 4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range (8-21 years)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity</td>
<td>1 mild, 2 mod, 2 mod-severe, 1 severe</td>
<td>1 - moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Materials

- Online survey
- The survey was broken down into three sections
  - Section A – Please tell us about your child (7 - multi-choice)
  - Section B – Please tell us about your child’s school (3 - multi-choice)
  - Section C – Please tell us your opinion (6 – Likert scale and 2 open ended)
Methods (cont.)

- **Procedure**
  - Email was distributed to LEND Family Faculty members containing link to survey
  - Introduction letter stated the purpose of the study, and that the researchers were looking for parents of children with Autism
  - No personal information was collected
  - Initially there was no pilot survey

- [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DT5ZLD9](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DT5ZLD9) (Password: LEND123)
Results - Environment

What type of environment is your child educated in?

- Included in general education classroom (accommodations made): 33.3%
- Special Education classroom all day: 16.7%
- Special School for children with Autism: 33.3%
- Other (please specify): 16.7%
Results – Environment

How satisfied are you with the type of environment is your child educated in (as you specified in Section B)

- 5 - Extremely Satisfied
- 4 - Satisfied
- 3 - Neutral
- 2 - Unsatisfied
- 1 - Very Unsatisfied
Results - Accommodations

If accommodations are made for your child, check all that apply:

- Paraprofessional: 66.7%
- Modified curriculum in general education classes: 33.3%
- Modified curriculum in special education classes: 33.3%
- Speech-Language Services: 66.7%
- Occupational Therapy Services: 33.3%
- Social Skills Group: 33.3%
- Other (please specify): 33.3%
Results - Accommodations

How satisfied are you with the accommodations made for your child’s individualized needs (as you specified in Section B)?

- 5 - Extremely Satisfied
- 4 - Satisfied
- 3 - Neutral
- 2 - Unsatisfied
- 1 - Very Unsatisfied

50.0% Satisfied
50.0% Unsatisfied
Results – One – on – One time

How much of the school day does your child spend one on one with a paraprofessional?

- The entire school day: 66.7%
- 2-3 hours a day: 33.3%
How satisfied are you with the amount of time your child spends one on one with a paraprofessional (as you specified in Section B)?

- 5 - Extremely Satisfied: 25.0%
- 4 - Satisfied: 25.0%
- 3 - Neutral: 50.0%
- 2 - Unsatisfied: 25.0%
- 1 - Very Unsatisfied: 0%
Results - PPT

How satisfied are you with the way the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) addresses your personal concerns?

5 - Extremely Satisfied
4 - Satisfied
3 - Neutral
2 - Unsatisfied
1 - Very Unsatisfied

25.0% 25.0% 25.0% 25.0%
Results – Support Staff

How satisfied are you with the support staff at your child's school (special education teacher, speech-language therapist, occupational therapist, etc)?

- 50.0% Extremely Satisfied
- 25.0% Satisfied
- 25.0% Neutral
- 25.0% Unsatisfied
- 0% Very Unsatisfied
Results – Child’s Progress

How satisfied are you with your child’s progress since diagnosis?

- 5 - Extremely Satisfied
- 4 - Satisfied
- 3 - Neutral
- 2 - Unsatisfied
- 1 - Very Unsatisfied

Bar chart showing the satisfaction levels:
- 2 responses are Unsatisfied
- 1 response is Very Unsatisfied
- 1 response is Satisfied
- 1 response is Neutral
- 1 response is Extremely Satisfied
Results - Autism

- Of the parents who reported their children were included in the general classroom
  - 50% reported being Satisfied with this setting
  - 50% reported being Very Satisfied with this setting

- Of the parents who reported their children spent their entire day or most of their day in a special education classroom
  - 50% reported feeling Neutral about this setting
  - 50% reported feeling Unsatisfied with this setting
Results - Improvements

- More intense services
- IEP compliance
- More emphasis on communication
- More emphasis on activities of daily living
Results - Weaknesses

- Rely on parents to report when things are not going well
- Consistency of treatment
- Paraprofessional included at PPTs
- Follow through with concerns of parents
Discussion/Implications

- Satisfaction may be based upon each individual experience
- Parent suggestions can be useful for PPTs and school personnel
Lessons Learned

- The IRB process
- Current research about inclusion of children with autism

Next time I would consider:
- Using this as the pilot and changing the survey to then use a larger sample of parents for the study
- Compare Autism, PDD-NOS and Asperger's
- Using more open-ended responses to clarify parent’s responses on the multiple choice questions
- Ask more questions on the survey to obtain more information about educational setting


