

ERD 2016: Education, Reflection, Development, Fourth Edition

## Israeli Parents' Involvement in the Hearing Impaired Children Formal Education: Preliminary Data

Galia Taller-Azulay<sup>a\*</sup>, Alina S. Rusu<sup>a,b</sup>

\* Corresponding author: Galia Taller Azulay, galitaller2806@gmail.com

<sup>a</sup>Doctoral School Education, Reflection, Development, Babeş-Bolyai University, Sindicatelor 7, Cluj-Napoca, 400059, Romania

<sup>b</sup>Department of Special Education, Faculty of Psychology and Sciences of Education, Babeş-Bolyai, alina.rusu@ubbcluj.ro

### Abstract

<http://dx.doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2016.12.24>

This article investigates the level and the components of the involvement of Israeli parents in the formal education of their hearing impaired children (HIC), especially the involvement of fathers. Our preliminary data collected from 41 Israeli parents indicate several similarities and differences between parents, in relation to gender, individual grieving process and coping with the birth of a HIC. The research also addresses the level and means of communication between parents and teachers of hearing impaired children. Our preliminary results indicate that in the Israeli studied sample, fathers are less involved than mothers in the school education of their children with special needs. This difference between genders may indicate that the less the fathers take care of their children, the less they might need and request help from relatives or friends. This aspect can be different for mothers, because the majority of childcare is under their responsibility and sometimes they need more support from their surroundings. The analysis of the qualitative interviews might bring further light on the similarities and differences between parental involvement of Israeli adults in the special education of the hearing impaired children, in relation to parental style and coping with crisis abilities.

© 2016 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.uk

**Keywords:** Hearing impaired children; parental coping style; special education; paternal involvement

### 1. Introduction

In the Declaration of Independence, Ben Gurion (the first Prime Minister of Israel in 1948) emphasized the importance of the principle of equality and set it as a supreme value: "The state of Israel ... will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of

religion, race or sex. Guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture" (The Israeli Declaration of Independence, 1948). In Israel there are nowadays a few laws made for children with special needs, one of these laws being the 1988 Special Education Law. The purpose of this law is to improve conditions for special education children and facilitate their inclusion. This law enables parents and specialists in the field of special education to find the directives that determine the right of children with special needs to equal treatment in education and in society.

There is no doubt that when a special education child is born, his/her whole family changes accordingly to the birth episode of an individual with special needs. Laski and Karaj (2011) argue that parents of special needs children experience the same levels of grief as those experienced by sick people. Several differences between parents can be observed in Israel regarding their interaction with the educational system, in terms that the mothers are usually the ones who attend parents meeting at school. Also, most of the time when a teacher phones a student's home s/he would ask to speak with the mother (Balzar, 2012). According to Balzar (2012), fathers are less involved in the education of their children because of their jobs, which normally do not enable them to be available during the day or due to the role division between parents within the household.

Hearing impairment may influence language acquisition, the quality of communication, realization of learning potential, development of social skills and abilities, emotional development and self-confidence, identity development and many other abilities related to quality of life, individual autonomy and social functioning (Bronski and Zaichick, 2001). Therefore, the birth of a hearing impaired child represents a sum of challenges for the parents and his/her extended family.

## **2. Special Education**

The main goal of special education is to enable any student with disabilities to fully fulfil his potential so that as an adult he may live a socially and economically independent life" (Avisar, 2010). In the past, it was often feared that people with special needs would infect "normal" people and therefore, they were removed to different places (The Open University, 2015). In biblical times, too, we learn that a known moral standard existed, according to which "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind" (From the Book of Leviticus), which shows that, even in biblical times, there was the will and need to provide basic rights to people with disabilities. We learn that as far back as the biblical times, rules and commandments were set, which emphasized how societies should treat a person with some type of disability (The Open University, 2015; Melamed-Cohen, 1996).

Before the development and implementation of Special Education Law, there was a sense of feeling in Israel that the regular education system was not providing a suitable response for the special needs of children with disabilities (Plaut, 2005). However, in the last ten years and with the help of some new laws, the special education schooling system was established, which provides inclusive services for individuals aged 6 to 21 years. These special schools are divided by age groups, with each class having 8 to 10 students, along with a teacher and an assistant. A para-medical team is also part of the school, which provides various services, such as: occupational therapy, speech therapy and other various

therapies (The Open University, 2015). The 1988 Special Education Law was one of the first law designed to improve the state of children with disabilities in Israel. Among the orders of this law, one can find orders stating the rights of children with special needs to be treated equally in education and by society. Additional laws were set after the implementation of this Law, which addressed the need for equality for people with special needs in Israel.

### **3. Parental Involvement in education of children in Israel**

Regarding the educational system in Israel, one can see that more and more parents want to be involved in their children's school and activities. The first step for this trend is reflected in the several laws that were created due to parents' pressure and their need to become involved in the formal education of their children (especially of the children with special needs). It is generally acknowledged that there is no unique and comprehensive definition of the term "Parental Involvement" (Taller-Azulay & Rusu, 2015). It depends on whom we ask regarding this term: parents, children, teachers or principals (Fischer, 2010). Lavanda (2009) argues that the professional literature lacks any clear definition of the term Parental Involvement as it regards a number of activities, which might change in frequency and which are expressed on various levels (social, educational, everyday life etc.).

Lavanda (2009) describes five different types of parental involvement (Lavanda, 2009):

- Parents as observers – parents do not take an active part in what happens in school, but rather they observe from the sidelines.
- Parents as service providers – parents are not directly connected with the educational process, but rather through activities such as volunteering, which are not an essential part of the educational process (in terms of curricular links).
- Parents as learners – parents are involved in extra-curricular activities for organized for parents.
- Parents as partners in the educational process – parents are involved in the activities taking place in their child's classroom and are not interested in the school as an organization.
- Parents as objective setters and decision makers - these parents are divided into three groups: (a) Apparent involvement – parents who agree with the decisions of the school staff; (b) Partial involvement – parents who leave the final decision to the school; (c) Full involvement – parents and school staff are equal partners in the decision making process.

Friedman (2010) argues that there are three types of positions regarding parental involvement, as there is a fine line between involvement and interference:

- The closed door position: it refers to the perception that teachers are able to handle any decision and actions regarding the child and that the parents should obey any directive given by the staff.
- The open door position (on the opposite side to the closed door): this position refers to a close contact between parents and school staff.

- The balance theory (the safe educational position): this theory maintains reciprocity between parents and the educational staff, noticing that, with this position, the school maintains a safe distance from parents, so that educational tasks are not negatively impacted by the involvement of the parents.

#### **4. Fathers and Parental Involvement**

In the past, the responsibility of educating children was placed most on the mother who appeared to be the dominant character out of the other family members. Nowadays, more studies examine the paternal roles and fathers' involvement in the education of their children (Sung and Park, 2012). In the past the roles in the family were very gender-biased, with the mothers considered as being the central characters in regards to the rearing of the children. Hence, the mother's role was to take care of the children and the father's role was to provide financially for the family. The word "parenting" was mainly associated with the word "motherhood", because the mother's responsibility was to take care of the children (Inbar, 2012).

If in the past, fathers were often associated with labels such as "hard to reach", "the invisible parent", and "shadow" (Carpenter and Tower, 2011), today, the "new father" is required to adopt a maternal character in order to care for the children (Goldenhirsh, 2014). The "new father" appears to be more aware of himself, tries to express more emotions and tries to be more present with his children and create relationships with them (Inbar, 2012). The father's roles depend on the period of individual ontogeny in which they live, which is why we can find in the definitions of a father's role the words: caring, partner, teaching, supporting and protective (Inbar, 2012).

Mothers and fathers contribute in various ways to the development of children. Mothers devote their time for tasks related to the care of children, and fathers participating in activities related to recreation. For example, there are considerable differences in the nature of play, with mothers tending to use intermediary objects, while fathers tending to be more involved in physical play (Hofferth, 2003).

In this article, we present the research questions and research hypotheses related to dealing with the birth of hearing-impaired children in Israel and the parental involvement of the parents in the education of their special needs children, with a special emphasis on the role of fathers who have children with hearing impairment. The questions and hypotheses are part of a larger study of the parental involvement of Israeli parents in the formal education of hearing impaired children. In this article, we will present the preliminary results regarding the quantitative part of the research, which consists of three questionnaires that were distributed to forty-one of the parents. The questionnaire were included based on several dimensions depicted from the literature in the area of special education, as well as based on a pilot study targeting the needs of Israeli parents of hearing impaired children.

#### **5. Research goal and questions**

The purpose of this research is to examine how the Israeli parents (fathers and mothers) of hearing impaired children deal with disability and which are the dimensions of their involvement in their

children's lives later on the school. A special attention will be given to the fathers, because this subject is supported by very few studies in the area of special education and because previous observations indicated that Israeli fathers tend also to be involved in the formal education of their children with special needs.

The main objectives of the general investigation of the Israeli parents' involvement in the formal special education of their hearing impaired children have been described in details in a previous study (Taller-Azulay & Rusu, 2015) and they are the following: (1) To examine the levels and strategies of interaction between Israeli teachers and parents of hearing impaired children, and (2) To identify and describe the pedagogic, social, and emotional aspects of parents' involvement in the education of their hearing impaired children, by taking into account the gender differences between the parents. In this current study, we will refer only to the second objective, following the two research questions: (1) In what ways are the Israeli parents of hearing impaired children involved in their children's classes? (2) Are there differences between mothers and fathers regarding the level and quality of their involvement? The main hypothesis is that Israeli mothers and fathers of hearing impaired children deal differently with the birth of a hearing impaired child and this dealing is reflected in the level and quality of their involvement in the special education classes of their hearing impaired children.

## **6. Methods**

### *6.1. Study Population*

41 Israeli parents have individually received a package of three questionnaires. 17 of the parents were fathers and 24 of them were mothers of hearing impaired children from 3 schools from the Northern part of Israel (Kibbutz Motzkin and Haifa). The ages of the children varies between 6-12 years. The schools are Regional schools, which means that the children come school from all over north of Israel. Taxis pick them up from their home early in the morning and take them to school and back home at noon. The population of children with hearing impairment who were born to hearing families is relatively small in Israel, so even though we decided to hand out questionnaires to fifty parents, only 41 people agreed to fill in the questionnaires. The study was conducted on families in the north of Israel, from September 2015 till March 2016. Israeli fathers in our sample preferred not to participate, while mothers were more open and agreed to cooperate and to fill in the questionnaires.

### *6.2. Research tools*

The research tools used by this study include three different questionnaires, which each tapping different aspects regarding the parental duties of hearing-impaired children:

- **Parents involvement (questionnaires concerning parents involvement;** Fridman & Fisher, 1990):

The Parents involvement questionnaire (Fridman & Fisher, 1990) includes 73 questions, which are divided into four sub-scales for measurement of the parents' involvement phenomenon:

a) The level of the parents' identification with the school – the items refer to the parents' identification with the importance of education as means for social mobility and the children's success: items 1 – 17 (Fridman & Fischer, 1990).

b) The level of remarks made by parents regarding the school, school pedagogy and interpersonal relationships at school: items 18 – 41.

c) The level of active or passive involvement by the parents: items 42 – 58.

d) Show of trust in the parent and student by the school: items 59 – 64. Researchers recommend using the entire questionnaire in order to get an overall picture of the investigated dimension.

- **Parenting Styles - Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1981)**

Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1981) includes 30 statements, which are ranked on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1 – I completely disagree, and 5 – I very much agree. The questionnaire was developed in order to measure and examine the authority of both mothers and fathers over their children (boys or girls). The concept of parental authority was developed by Baumrind (1971), who describes the permissive, authoritarian and authoritative parental authority prototypes. This questionnaire has great potential as a valuable tool in the examination of parental permissiveness and authority.

The scale includes 30 items, which are divided into 3 parts: scale A, scale B and scale C, as it follows: Scale A includes 10 authoritarian, scale B includes 10 permissive and scale C includes 10 authoritative items. Responses to each of these items are made on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1- strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree (Buri, 1991). For example, Scale A: *While I was growing up my parents felt that in a well run home the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do*; Scale B: *Even if their children didn't agree with them, my parents felt that it was for our own good if we were forced to conform to what their thought was right*; Scale C: *As I was growing up' once family policy had been established, my parents discussed the reasoning behind the policy with the children in the family.*

- **Coping Resources (The Family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scale, Mccubin-Olson and Larsen, 1981)**

The Family Crises Coping methods questionnaire (FCOPES; The Family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scale, Mccubin-Olson and Larsen, 1981) was developed in order to examine the best way to solve problems, in regards with behavior and attitude, which said families adopt in reacting to problems or difficulties. The questionnaire entails 70 statements, which are divided into a number of feedback types. 30 of the items are answered using the Likert scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 = completely disagree and 5 = completely agree), and the rest are answered using: yes, no, I don't know. The F-COPES coping strategies are divided into five subscales: acquiring social support, reframing, seeking spiritual support, mobilizing family to acquire and accept help, and passive appraisal (Mccubin-Olson & Larsen, 1981).

### 6.3. Results

Statistical analysis was performed for each of the target variable as it was measured with the specific questionnaire: Parents Involvement, Parenting Style and Coping Resources. In this study we will refer only to the significant differences between Israeli fathers and mothers (further analyses of each variable will be published in a different article). Table 1 shows the means and standard deviation values for the main variables in the study, as well as the values of the reliability coefficient (alpha Cronbach) for each questionnaire. The dependent variables are the level of parental involvement, Parenting Styles and Coping Resources. The independent variable is represented by the gender of parents, i.e. Israeli fathers (N = 17) and Israeli mothers (N = 24).

**Table 1.** Reliability coefficients calculated for each of the scale used in the study.

	N	Reversed Items	$\alpha$ Cronbach	Min.	Max.	average	Sd
Parental Authority scale A	38		.63	5.00	37.00	25.87	7.28
Parental Authority scale B	37		.82	5.00	44.00	30.73	7.83
Parental Authority scale C	38		.88	5.00	44.00	32.16	9.83
Ours	40	26, 28	.86	2.03	4.47	3.15	.60
Family	39	3, 4, 16, 19, 20	.84	1.15	2.30	1.63	.36
Friends	39	2, 6, 7, 18, 20	.59	1.20	2.30	1.61	.29
Interactions	39		.64	3.10	5.54	4.03	.50
Relationships	39		.92	1.70	4.65	2.75	.66
Involvement	39		.77	1.00	4.00	2.44	.83

*Note:* The three parental authority scales (A, B, C) are components of the PAQ (Buri, 1991); Ours, family and friends are dimensions from The Family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scale (McCubbin-Olson and Larsen, 1981), where Ours means "in our family", "family" means asking from support from the family, while "friends" means asking from support from the friends in crisis situations; Interactions, Relationships and Involvement are aspects taken from the Parents involvement questionnaires (Fridman & Fisher, 1990).

The main hypothesis of the study presented here was that mothers and fathers deal differently with the birth of a hearing impaired child, which leads to a different level of involvement in the education of their children with special needs. A significant difference can be found between mothers and fathers regarding the variables Relationships and Parental involvement (Table 2). Thus, we can see that the biggest difference between mothers and fathers is at the level of relationships with the school dimension: [(M=2.36, SD=.47, t(37)=3.73, p<.001] for men; M=3.05, SD=.64 for women]. The other differences between mothers and fathers is at the level of their involvement in the education of their children. The Israeli women were significantly more involved in the school system of their hard of

hearing children than the Israeli fathers [(M=2.00, SD=.79t (32.32)=3.18, p<.01] men; M=2.77, SD=.70 women)].

**Table 2.** The differences variables, between men and women (independent t-test).

Significant difference	Fathers		Mothers		
	Sd	Average	Sd	Average	
t (35)=.05	6.83	25.79	7.73	25.65	Parental authority scale A
t (34)=.34	6.92	31.54	8.43	30.61	Parental authority scale B
t (27.8)=.33	10.01	31.36	10.11	32.48	Parental authority scale C
t (37)=1.37	.47	3.10	.61	3.35	Ours
t (37)=.75	8.42	30.94	8.12	28.91	Family
t (37)=.27	.32	1.62	.28	1.60	Friends
t (36.04)=.25	.48	4.01	.53	4.05	Interactions
t (37)=3.73***	.47	2.36	.64	3.05	Relationships
t (32.3)=3.18**	.79	2.00	.70	2.77	Involvement

\*\* p<.01 \*\*\* p<.001

## 7. Discussion

Our preliminary results reveal that there is a significant difference between men's and women's involvement in the education of their children with special needs, with the Israeli mothers being more involved than the fathers.

The results on the variables that did not reach statistical significance in terms of differences between the Israeli mothers and fathers were not included in our interpretations, such as: the connection between occupation and gender, the connection between gender and the birth of another deaf child and the connection of gender and Religious Preference. However, the fact that not statistical differences were found between Israeli mothers and fathers in most of the variables we investigated here is a very important aspect of our investigation, which will be addressed in the next publication. Also, correlations between variables will be made in order to find which are the predictors for the parental involvement in the education of hard of hearing children in the investigated Israeli sample.

In the light of our preliminary data (i.e. most of the data did not indicate differences between parents), according to Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2005), the parents' concern and their love for their children appear to be similar. The difference between parents can be found and expected in their approach to the task of caring for children (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Bellotty and Burwick (2005) argue in their article that the father's involvement is very important to the child's well-being, in terms that



children do better in school and they have greater empathy when there is a high level of both maternal and paternal involvement.

## 8. Conclusions

Our preliminary results indicate that in the Israeli studied sample, fathers are less involved than mothers in the school education of their children with special needs. Support of the hypothesis of the study can be found in Belzer (2012), who claims that the results on the lower level of fathers' involvement in the formal education of their children is mainly due to the work hours men have, which do not allow them to be available for their children. He also argues that there is a traditional division in which the mother takes a significant part in child care. Most & Ingbar (2012) argue that the fathers tend to transfer the responsibility to the mothers because they feel less confident in their parenting ability. In their own research of fathers' involvement, the researchers found that there is no difference in parental involvement.

This difference between the genders (i.e. mothers and fathers) as reflected by our preliminary data may indicate that the less the fathers take care of their children, the less they might need help from relatives or friends. This aspect can be different for mothers, because the majority of childcare is under their responsibility and sometimes they need more support from their surroundings. The analysis of the qualitative interviews might bring further light on the similarities and differences between parental involvement of Israeli adults in the special education of the hearing impaired children, in relation to parental style and coping with crisis abilities.

## References

- Ancestor, H., Heiman, T., Wiesel, A., Sandberg, S. (2015). The Open University - Issues in Special Education: blindness and visual impairment; deafness and hearing impairment: Autism Spectrum (updated edition).
- Avissar, G. (2010). Inclusion and accessibility: curriculum Planning and Implementation for Students with Disabilities. Tel Aviv: The Mofet Institute, p. 22.
- Bellotty, J., Burwick, B. (2005). Creating paths to father involvement: lessons from early head start. *Mathematica Policy Research*. <http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/>
- Belzer, M. (2012). Father's presence in the family. Orot College.
- Bible, Leviticus chapter 15, phrase 14.
- Bronsky, R., Wizchick, A. (2001). The connection between a prolonged decrease in hearing and psychological – educational aspects and educational needs (in Hebrew), in *Seeing the Voices*.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). The Ecology of Human Development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). Making Human beings human: bioecological perspective on human development. Pp. 3-15. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Buri, J. (1991). Parental Authority Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 57:110-119.
- Carpenter, B., Towers, C. (2008). Recognising fathers: the needs of fathers of children with disabilities. *Support for Learning*, 23:118–125.
- The Israeli Declaration of Independence (1948).
- Fisher, Y. (2009). Defining parental involvement: The Israeli case. *US-China Education Review*, 6:33-45. <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/>; retrieved on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June, 2016.
- Friedman, I. & Fisher, Y. (2003) *Parents and school: Positions and involvement level*; Self-reporting parent questionnaire. Jerusalem: The Szold Institute (in Hebrew).
- Friedman, I., (2010). Relations School - Parents in Israel, background work initiative to: <http://education.academy.ac.il>.

- Goldenhirsch, B. (2014). What the "New Father" can learn from grandfather – parental identity in an age of multiple identities. Taken from the Hebrew Psychology website <http://www.hebpsy.net/>
- Inbar, N. (2012). In the name of the Fathers. The involvement of divorce non-custodial fathers in their children's lives. Thesis Submitted for the MA Degree of Humanities Program in school counseling Tel Aviv Uni.
- Hofferth, S. (2003). Race/ethnic differences in father involvement In two parent families: Culture, context, or economy. *Journal of Family Issues*, 24:185-216
- Lasky, B., Karge, B.D. (2011). Involvement of Language Minority Parents of Children with Disabilities in Their Child's School Achievement. *Multicultural Education*, 19:29-34
- Lavanda, A. (2009). Parental involvement in post-primary community schools: examining the modal of the perceptions of the parental role, self-efficacy, openness to involvement by the school, the homeroom teacher and the child, time, power, knowledge and ability resources of the parents. Essay for the receipt of a PhD degree in philosophy.
- Mccubbin, H.I., Olson, D.H.& Laresen, A.S. (1987). F-COPES ( Family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scales). In H. McCubbin & A. Thompson (Eds.), Family assessment inventories for research and practice. Madisom, WI:University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- Melamed-Cohen, R., PhD (1996). The abnormal child and special education – according to Jewish sources. Jerusalem.
- Plaut, A. (2007). What is new? The history of educational frameworks for hearing impaired children in Israel 1932 – 2005. The Mofet Institute.
- Sung, M., Park, J. (2012). The effects of family support program including respite care on parenting strees and family quality of life perceived by primaty caregives of chiodren with disabilities Korea. *International Journal of Special Education*, 27:188-198.
- Taller-Azulay, G., Rusu, A.S. (2015). Parents' Involvement in Supporting Education of Hearing Impaired Children in Israel. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 209:189-194.