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Parents of Students with Disabilities Views in Learning Physical Education in Special Needs School

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to find out the experience and parents' participation in Physical Education from the view of the parents of students with disabilities. This study applied a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative method. The sample of this study was parents of students with disabilities in Special Needs School. 5 people (3 men, 2 women) who were selected as a sample using the purposeful sampling technique. The instrument was used from a previous study which used Seidman's interviewing guidelines (Seidman, 1998). The findings show that that parents were actively involved in students' learning in the various environments: at home, school and community and involved through continuous communication and active participation both at school and outside of school. Parents-teacher collaboration strongly supports Physical Education and promotes student learning development. All parents appreciated the benefits of inclusion and physical activities. These findings provide additional support to the need of developing home-school collaboration in Physical Education.

Keywords

Disability, Phenomenology, Qualitative Study, Physical Education

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The objective of this study was to find out the experience and parents' participation in Physical Education from the view of the parents of students with disabilities. This study applied a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative method. The sample of this study was parents of students with disabilities in Special Needs School. 5 people (3 men, 2 women) who were selected as a sample using the purposeful sampling technique. The instrument was used from a previous study which used Seidman's interviewing guidelines (Seidman, 1998). The findings show that that parents were actively involved in students' learning in the various environments: at home, school and community and involved through continuous communication and active participation both at school and outside of school. Parents-teacher collaboration strongly supports Physical Education and promotes student learning development. All parents appreciated the benefits of inclusion and physical activities. These findings provide additional support to the need of developing home-school collaboration in Physical Education. Keywords: Disability, Phenomenology, Qualitative Study, Physical Education

Introduction

In Indonesia, parents' involvement is regulated in the Ministry of Education and Culture, Regulation of Minister of Education and Culture No 30/2017 by the term of parents' involvement on the education "Parents' involvement is a process and/or family's way to participate in the education administration in order to reach the national education goal." (Regulation of Minister of Education and Culture No 30/2017). Although there is no research about parents of students with disabilities involvement in Physical education [PE] in Indonesia, however, the results of research about parents of students with disabilities involvement in PE in some developed countries are already available. Children's achievement and performance were influenced by parents' involvement (An & Hodge, 2013; Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1996; Epstein, 2010; van Voorhis, 2003), other researchers found that the student's behavior and performance were influenced by parents' involvement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Gettinger & Guetschow, 1998). Parents also played an important role in supporting the participation rights of children with disabilities in physical activities inside and outside of the school (An & Goodwin 2007; Svendby, 2017).

Parents' involvement, according to Pate and Andrews (2006, p. 1) is having an awareness of and involvement in schoolwork, understanding of the interaction between parenting skills and student success in schooling, and a commitment to consistent communication with educators about student progress. In other words, the form of parents' involvement in school includes (a) attending a meeting held by the school, (b) enrolling in a parenting class, (c) being a guest speaker in school, (d) actively participating in end-school

year performance, (e) participating in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, and any self-development program activities, (f) willing to join the school committee organization, (g) participating actively in some events held by the school committee, (h) being a member of school violence prevention organization (Regulation of Minister of Education and Culture No 30/2017).

In 1997, the first education and culture minister, Dewantara (1997) stated that “family is the first and principal school”. Parents’ involvement and role have been regulated and implemented through some state laws such as Law No 20/2003 on the National Education System, Regulation No 17/2010 on the Education Management and Provision, Regulation of Minister of Education And Culture No 23/2015 on Good Character Development, Regulation of Minister of Education and Culture No 75/2016 on the School Committee. Specifically was regulated in Regulation of Minister of Education and Culture No 30/2017 Article 7 on the forms of parents’ involvement in the family environment, they are (a) developing the character values in the family environment, (b) encouraging students’ learning motivation (c) Fostering students’ literacy and (d) facilitating students’ learning needs.

Parent-teacher cooperation will alleviate the negative effects of the bureaucratic process at school (Bacon & Theoharis, 2013). The advice from parents is as important as advice from the teacher. Parents can share the vital information, for example, students’ strengths and weaknesses, behavioral attributes, learning styles, parents also can provide support to physical education inside and outside of the school (An & Goodwin, 2007). Further, with the support of parents, physical education teachers can fulfill any students’ needs in a special education setting. In brief, parents’ involvement is significant because students with parents support show positive achievement in school (Turnbull et al., 2006).

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner proposed that the developing child is surrounded by layers of relationships, like a set of nested Russian dolls (Bronfenbrenner, 2006; Bronfrenner & Morris, 2006; Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; McInerney, 2014). In Bronfenbrenner’s ecology system theory, the ecological environment is pictured as a web arrangement of structures, each contained within the next. Bronfenbrenner placed the individual in the center and four system called microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem followed. (Figure 1).

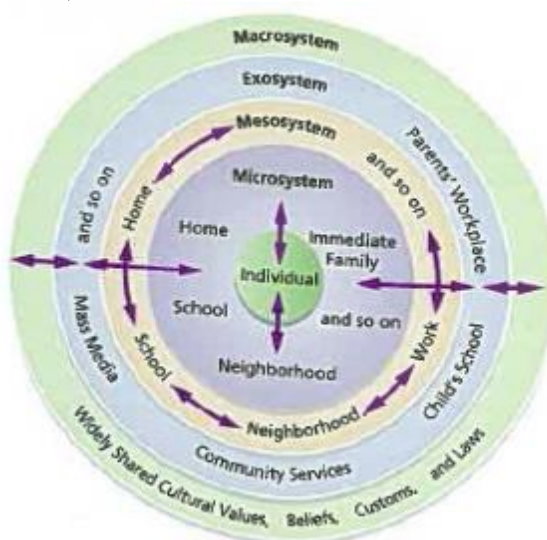


Figure 1. The five systems in human development. Adapted from *Educational Psychology Constructing Learning* by McInerney D. M., 2014, *Educational Psychology Constructing Learning*, Pearson.

In this model, each system has different importance in influencing the developing individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Tudge et al., 2009; McInerney, 2014).

The individual interacts directly with the microsystems, which consist of daily activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations in children's lives, such as interactions with parents, friends, and teachers. Relationships in a microsystem are bi-directional and mutualistic, and the individual reaction is influenced by others' treatment, and vice versa. The microsystem is the most interrelated and the most significant level of the EST (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, 1977).

In the mesosystem, the interactions and associations of the child happen in between two or more settings, for example in the family and the school, or the family and the peer group. The cross-relationships and lateral connections occur between these small settings. A mesosystem is a web of microsystems where the interactions may influence positively or negatively in child's developments. For example, a child's development will be affected negatively by the undeveloped relationship between parents and school. Thus, development is the result of the interactions between complex sets of microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Leonard, 2011).

The next level is exosystem. The exosystem consists of two or more settings, such as the parents' workplace, the child's school, and community services. These settings are out of the individual but influence the development. These structures are the major institutions of society that are deliberately structured, that evolve at the local level and influence the developing person. For example, a child's parents' achievement in workplace will influence the child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, 1977).

The fourth level is the macro. The macrosystem describes the culture and social context where the child lives. These settings influence the child development. For example, one child's development that interacts with urban culture may have different with child that live in rural communities. In social context, the political system may influence to the child's development although these setting influence the child's development indirectly it has the significant impact to child when the child gets older (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, 1977; Leonard, 2011; McInerney, 2014).

The last level of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is the chrono system. He proposes that child development is affected by time. For example, child that develops today, their development may be shaped by the interference of technological device and social networks (McInerney, 2014; Leonard, 2011).

The development of human behaviour depends on mutual interactions between a person and the persons in their immediate environment that are known as 'proximal process' (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Cognitive development was the result of 'mechanisms of organism environment interaction' and the 'proximal processes' (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). The effective proximal processes support the bioecological theory and explain outcomes such as the realisation and development of individual potentials and acquiring knowledge and skills. The model explains that when proximal processes are weak, it will affect to the realization of effective psychological functioning (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994).

Examples of proximal process are the active interactions between parents and children, children and teachers at school, and peer interactions. However, the outcomes of a proximal process effect will vary depends on the individual characteristics, the environment, and the developmental outcomes. (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). This approach has given rise to research models that look at process-person-context development. Researchers on children's development and relationship to their environment have adopted this approach from Bronfenbrenner's theory. For example, Tudge, Otero, Hogan, and Etz (2003) utilized Bronfenbrenner's advanced form of human development theory in their work on children's developmental interaction with their environment. According to the bioecological systems

theory, individual are developed by the complex system of relationship and influenced by multiple levels of surrounding environment (Berk, 2006).

Contexts of the Researchers

The first author has several years of teaching experience as a physical education as a teacher and lecturer. He also had experience as a trainer in Indonesia National Paralympics. During his experiences dealing with parents of student with disability, the first author has obtained information about physical education on parents' views. From the sort of information, the first author highlighted that even though the parents showed interest in their children participation in education, however they were not interested in involving on physical education. This phenomenon led to inquiry on how the parental involvement in physical education. Although the first author possessed the experience dealing with parents of students with but he did not have the means to experience the parental involvement thus, he invited parents to participate in the study and share their experiences. To gather the specific details on parents' experiences and to build the connection, he conducted the pre-meeting session before the three interview sessions.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

The qualitative approach was used to gain the understanding of parents' involvement from participants' experience. Phenomenology was used to discover the meaning of life experience of parents of students with disability in Physical Education. Hermeneutic phenomenology by van Manen (1997) was aimed to produce rich textual descriptions of the experiencing of selected phenomena in the life world of individuals that are able to connect with the experience of all of us collectively" (Smith, 1997, p. 80) As such, it helps us deepen our understanding of the essence or meaning of everyday experiences that are sought. With the approval from the Institutional Review Board at a supporting institution, informed permission was given by all parents.

Participants

The research sample was the parents of students with disabilities in Special Needs School 5 people (3 male and 2 female) participated in the interview. The ethnicities of the parents were; Sundanese (3 participants) and Javanese (2 participants) were willing to get involved in this research. More specifically, a purposeful criterion sampling strategy was used (Patton, 2002) to identify and recruit (a) parents who attend a meeting held by the school, (b) parents who enroll in a parenting class, (c) parents who become guest speaker in school, (d) parents who actively participate in the end-school year performance, (e) parents who participate in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, and any self-development program activities. . The five participants have met these criteria. The researcher protected the identity of participants by exercising confidentiality. Parent questionnaire respondents were coded as P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5. Purposeful sampling was used as it permits the sampling of participants who can provide in-depth information about a particular phenomenon, which maximizes the potential for discovering themes and patterns in the context under study (Erlandson et al, 1993).

In this research, the main phenomenon was parents' involvement of parents of students with disabilities. "Persons with disabilities are persons who has long-term physical, mental, intellectual and/or sensory impairments who may face various challenges and barriers in their

interaction with their surroundings to be able to fully and effectively participate together with other citizens on the basis of equal rights” (Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 8/2016).

Data Collection

Data from the interview, artifact, and researcher’s journal were gathered to discover parents’ view. Interview was used to gather data since interviewing is one of the most common and powerful methods that can be used to understand human experience (Fontana and Frey, 1994). A combination of multiple sources allows the researcher to better understand the importance of experience reflected (Erlandson et al., 1993).

The researcher collected the source of data by using semi-structured and face-to-face interview. The researcher considered the Ecology system theory in generating research questions about home, school and community environment. Interview guide was refined by consulting the extant literature and field testing the questions (An & Goodwin, 2007; An & Hodge, 2013; Epstein, 2010; Erlandson et al., 1993). Sample question: How do you describe your involvement in PE? How important is the parents' involvement in PE? How meaningful is it to interact with PE teacher? In 3 weeks, 5 parents completed three interview sessions that took 60-90 minutes for each interview (Seidman, 1998).

To supplement the interviews and to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings, photos and written documents were gathered (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Photographs from the participants about their activity in PE lesson were gathered to help recalling the things that have happened. Five parents of children with disabilities brought the documents of school meeting, students’ report and students’ book. These documents were used as the additional support for the interview data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The researcher wrote the note into a journal after each interview for recording her interpretations on understanding and nonverbal behaviors, descriptive and reflective notes about what was said that day, ideas for further questions, and her preliminary thoughts about themes (Patton, 2002). From these narratives, the researcher could return to the settings during data analysis.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process began after all data collection was completed. The thematic analysis was used to analyze the meaning of participants’ experience. Thematic analysis is defined as the common structures of the particular experiences under study and the primary mechanism by which understanding is achieved (Morse, 1994). The data analysis follows the following steps:

1. The interview was transcribed verbatim
2. The transcribed interview was read repeatedly by the author to gain the broad understanding
3. The text was organized based on the description of experiences and then labeled each.
4. The data were sorted by categorizing, coding, and highlighting based on their similarities.
5. Sets of similar phrases were grouped and organized into preliminary themes.
6. Examined these meanings for what they revealed about the phenomenon being studied
7. Re-organized the data into themes with description of each theme
8. Share the themes with parents to gain deeper understanding

9. Review the themes from the parents' suggestion

Trustworthiness

Credibility was established through a purposeful sampling for rich data source (a) parents of students with disabilities experiencing the physical education lesson (b) parents with active involvement, attending the meeting held by the school, joining the parenting class, being a guest speaker in school, actively participating in the end-school year performance, participating in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, and some self-development program activities, different sources of data (e.g., parents of students with disabilities), the two-phase of member check system to verify the interview transcript and the result of thematic analysis that reflect the experience of parents (Erlandson et al., 1993).

All parents were asked to review the interview transcript for the accuracy and representation. In the second phase, a letter and brief of the preliminary themes and their descriptions were sent via email. They indicated that their views and experiences have been represented well.

To ensure the validation of findings, various methods were used; interview information was supported by other sources such as photos, school's documents, and researcher's journal (Meadow & Morse, 2001).

Transferability was established through presenting description from all participants and their context and using purposive criterion sampling (Patton, 2002). Conformability, the objectivity of the data, was established through peer questioning process (i.e., first and second researcher (Creswell, 2007).

Results

Findings

Three themes occurred representing the meaning of parents of students with disabilities dealing with parents' involvement in Physical Education: (a) *being a motivator for the children*, (b) *understanding the big picture* and (c) *the undeveloped partnership in PE*

Theme 1 : Being a Motivator for the Children

The theme, being a motivator for the children, shows parents' understanding about the term of parents' involvement in education, including physical education. Parents are the representative on behalf of their children to communicate their children's needs, to monitor their children's learning and performance, and to work together with teachers who provide services to their children. Their experiences and perceptions are captured in the subthemes (a) *ensuring the students learning success* (b) *working together*

Ensuring the students learning success. The students were advised by the parents in the meaningful way to prepare their future. P1 mentioned that the positive achievement of students was highly influenced by his/her parents who encouraged them.

It is his own way of life, what is happening now will affect his future life, to shape his own identity, it must be planted from now on, so in the later days, he could do it independently. what my son is doing, I must get involved in its process. The parents' involvement is very important. I am aware that I am more than a motivator.

P2 explained that positive achievements of students were influenced by parents:

I want to know who get involved in the learning process. I want to know the school situation, and the most important thing is I want to contribute to the things that I can. Since my daughter is physically disabled who is in a wheelchair wherever she goes. My job now is to motivate her so she can be confident with all her imperfection for her future.

Working together. Parents actively ask about their children's progress and development, parents and teachers possess different main task and function, therefore parents and teachers must cooperate in students learning process. P3 explained her experience working together with the teacher:

I even give the video link on YouTube through WA (Messenger application) to the teacher about physical disability and how to deal with it. Because I am a retired teacher of special needs school. I have experienced as a teacher and as parents having a child with a disability. Parent and teacher cooperation is the most important part of the learning process at school.

P4 explained the importance of home-school collaboration.

Since I am former civil servant, I have a lot of time to bring my child to school and wait until home time. In my spare time, I used to communicate with his teachers. Even. I often go to the teacher's house and bring my child with me. Fortunately, one of the teachers is my own neighbor.

P5 confirmed the importance of parent-teacher cooperation.

I am a housewife that almost every time keep close to my child. When he was at Grade 1 at Special Needs School, I always communicate with his teacher in my spare time. As parents, we have to cooperate with the teachers to know my child's development.

Theme 2: Understanding the Big Picture

The theme, understanding the big picture, representing the parents' approach associated with their involvement in their children's education program and school program. They give direct or indirect support for their children's learning. These were described in subtheme (a) *continuous communication*, (b) *Being supportive parent at school*, (c) *networking with other people*.

Continuous communication. The way to develop parents' involvement is by having continuous communication both in verbal communication and written communication that is done by parents – teacher interaction. P1 explained that parents' involvement in educational unit is the main circumstance where parents can observe the learning process directly so parents can assist to develop the best practice for my son:

Attending the school and parent meeting, my child and I came to join the meeting in order to get the information about my child's learning development. In the meeting, I filled the learning development log, filled follow up action to learning development record, and fill the attendance list.

The meeting was only held once in a semester, so the parents initiate to arrange the meeting once every three months. P2 is one of the mothers who attended the meeting once every three months to obtain the information about her child's learning and self development.

I will arrange the meeting once every three months. In the last meeting, we will arrange for the next three months meeting. I gathered at school, any parents who wish to join were welcomed. During the meeting, there were many positives things discussed.

P3 get involved in parents' involvement activity held by the school: "I get involved only for Ika, I felt proud that I could sit and listen to the teacher." Safrudin is Imron's parents, he explained: "I always come to the meeting whether I was invited or not, because I wanted to know how my child."

Parents communicated verbally, communicated through Whatsapp messenger and daily notebook. Whatsapp messenger is familiarly used as a communication tool among parents these days. Parents thought it was the easiest way to communicate with the teacher.

P5 explained: "I used to send Whatsapp message if I could not bring my child to school. Besides, I often communicate with physical education teachers in many ways, because I think using whatsapp messenger was the easiest way to communicate".

Being a supportive parent. Parents stayed at school almost every day waiting for their children, but instead of waiting outside, the school invited parents to observe their children inside the school. AhliJuhdi, regularly in PE lesson, always observed his child near the field. Neneng explained that she always asked about her child's development before and after the lesson. Yamin even followed the learning process from PE lesson to other lessons. Safrudin would come if there was an invitation from school. Tati was around school all the time, but she would be available if the teacher needs her help.

Networking with other people. Parents worked together with society to develop and to preserve the education process, and it is the responsibility of government, society, and family to administer and control the quality service of education.

P1 supported the parents' involvement program policy that has been implemented by school. P2 monitored the parents' involvement program implementation. P3 suggested the improvement of the parents' involvement program. P4 actively participated in evaluating the parents' involvement program. P5 initiated organizing the school committee to get involved in planning and making decisions that support education administration effectively and productively.

Theme 3 : Collaboration Undeveloped in Physical Education

The last theme was Teacher-parents collaboration was undeveloped in Physical Education. It exposed the absence of collaboration between parents and PE teachers. Although the parents appreciated the benefit of physical activities to their children development, however parents' involvement in PE lesson was very limited. This absence of collaboration was caused by lack of interest in physical education and parents prefer to communicate with other professional such as special education teacher and classroom teacher. These were described in subtheme (a) *lack of interest in physical education*, (b) *collecting information from others*

Lack of interest in physical education. Parents preferred the other lessons than Physical Education. Therefore, physical education was not a topic of discussion in the family. Parents showed more interest if their children would participate in extracurricular activities for example, Special Olympics.

P1 preferred other lessons than physical education: “Since my child was deaf, I prefer academic lesson than physical education which put emphasis on physical activity.” P2 also had more interest in academic achievement. P3 prioritized academic achievement than physical education as well.

Collecting information from others. Parents mostly received the information from other people, although they revealed that their relationship with the physical education teacher was very good. P1 explained that he communicated with the class teacher regularly instead. He explained:

I had several meetings with class teacher either in school or out of school. The class teacher explained about what the students did in physical education. For this reason, I did not need to talk with Physical education about the students’ activity in the field.

However, P2 had more trust for the class teacher rather than the PE teacher because she thought the physical education has limited expertise in special education.

I am concerned with the experience of dealing with disabled student that the physical education teacher has. I thought they had lack of teachers training compared with the class teacher. Furthermore, physical education teacher came from different backgrounds of education.

P3 explained further:

In physical education lesson, all classes consisted of 15-25 students were gathered; in fact, the students exactly had different type of disability. For this reason, I did not expect too much to physical education teacher. I expected the class teacher will help more in the field.

P4 had a clear view; he expected that the class teacher would take more effort than physical education teacher. “I do not expect too much to the physical education teacher, because they taught all type of disability”.

The finding reveals that parents are involved in their children’s learning process in various learning environment: home, school included physical education lesson, community, and in some ways of participation, communication and cooperation.

Parents obtained the benefit of parents’ involvement in PE learning, since it promoted the students’ learning and self-development. Nevertheless, the parents who did not have good collaboration with the PE teacher, even though they still appreciated the benefit of physical activities.

Discussion

This research had two purposes. First, it was to describe the experience and role of the parents of students with disabilities in their involvement in the PE lesson. The second, it was to describe the experience and meaning of the parents of students with disabilities in interacting with physical education teacher. Parents obtained the benefit of parents’ involvement in PE learning, since it promoted the students’ learning and self-development.

Parents’ involvement was developed by communication between parents and teacher (mesosystem), support to teacher and students (microsystem), participation in an organization (exosystem). Although parents articulated and comprehended the significance of home –

school cooperation, the cooperation between physical education and parents has not been developed. It was because they assumed that other lesson could improve the students' academic achievement. In this case, parents positioned themselves in macro system, to develop education at home, school, and community (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, 1977). *This study supported the previous literature where parents were a child motivator* was to influence the children effective learning at school (An & Goodwin, 2007; An & Hodge, 2013; McBride & Lin, 1996). These parents admitted that their children need extra help from parents to communicate their needs to the class teachers. Therefore, it was parents' responsibility to communicate the students' difficulty to the teachers. Parents and teacher had a limitation regarding to education background to teach their children. Therefore, to maximize students learning development, home-school collaboration was a significant way to do (An & Goodwin, 2007; Epstein, 2010).

Parents know their children's learning needs better. On the other hand, teachers have better knowledge of special needs education. For this reason, both parties must work together for their children's development (Epstein, 2010). Parents are the most important agent in children lives. So their role in education must be acknowledged as equal as what teachers have in education program (Sontag, 1996).

Parents have an important role in establishing the effective collaboration with the school was unending communication with the teachers (Mundschenk & Foley, 1994; Stoner et al., 2005). Parents involved directly in physical education learning process. For example, in the gymnastic lesson, parents volunteered to bring mattress to support the learning. In this case, parents have promoted the home-school collaboration in learning. Parents' involvement in society significantly influenced the children's learning and development, because basically, children as part of society communicated both directly or indirectly with people around in the context of different environments (exosystem). Parents also engaged in special education organization. In turn, their involvement in such organizations helps to promote public awareness to special education program (macrosystem).

Although parents appreciated the partnership between parent and teacher, the collaboration between parents and Physical education teacher was undeveloped. Parents had the issue of trust with the physical education teacher since the physical education teacher's background was not from the special needs education. Even though, they have accepted the basic knowledge of inclusive education. This trust issue was likely influenced by the view of society toward physical education teacher (macrosystem).

Parents had significant role of their children's learning and development. Therefore, the researcher suggests parents to establish the involvement in learning, for example establishing the communication with the teacher. The collaboration between parents and PE teacher is needed to promote the children's participation in physical education lesson in special needs school.

This research has two limitations. First, the author attempted to include both child's mother and father for the sample in this study, but only one of them can represent the parents' view. The second limitation was that this research only mentioned the experience of Sundanese and Javanese parents. The findings of this research may not be representative of the parents concerning the different economic income, single parents, or families from different ethnicity in Indonesia. Therefore, the researcher recommended further research on families with culture, background and perspective diversity.

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