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Informative Parent Training on Parental Advocacy and Legal Rights for Families with Children with Special Educational Needs

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to illustrate the effectiveness of the programme of informative parent training which is about the rights of families of children with special educational needs (SEN), and which is presented via the direct instruction method. The research was designed in a semi-experimental model consisting of a single group pre-test and post-test design. The study group consists of 11 mothers and four fathers of children with SEN who continued to a private special education and rehabilitation centre in Ankara. Interview forms and the "Legal Rights Information Test" were used to collect data for this research. The pre-test and post-test scores obtained within the scope of the research were analysed in the SPSS software suite, and social validity data were subject to content analysis and descriptive analysis. The dependent variable of the study, which is the level of knowledge about the legal rights of families of children with SEN, was found to have increased following the informative parent training provided for families (t = -8.573, p < .001). The pre-test average score (17.73) of The Legal Rights Knowledge Test of families was lower than the post-tests averages (31.47), the difference being statistically significant. Most of the families participating in the research argued that the content, process, and materials of the training program were beneficial to them and suggested similar training for other families.

Keywords:
Special education, Parent training, Legal rights, Children with special educational needs

1. Introduction

Family, which is the cornerstone of society, is a social institution which is in touch with other societal foundations. Families go through important processes throughout their children's lives. When a disabled individual is a member of the family, however, these processes will be different. Disability is a condition whereby an individual has difficulty in interacting or due to which the individual cannot adapt, either wholly or in part, to their society and environment because of some form of injury sustained before, during, and after birth (Ataman, 2009). Thus, the difficulties that may arise due to the nature of disability will require individuals with SEN and their families to cope with various quite serious issues (Boulet, Boyle, & Schieve, 2009; Wright & Taylor, 2014; Zisser & van Stone, 2015).

The main purpose of families and educational institutions is to prepare children for adulthood and social life regardless of the children having any such disabilities (Anderson, 2001; Meral, 2011). Socialization is the process of being part of the society in which one lives. However, children with SEN face various obstacles due to the very nature of society itself during the process of socialization (Ahmedi, Khodadadi, Anisi, & Abdolmohammadi, 2011). The difficulties that children with SEN face can also affect their families in a negative way (Ewles, Clifford, & Minnes, 2014). Thus, parents of children with SEN can experience more specific difficulties caused by the nature of these disabilities in addition to the problems experienced by other

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families while raising their children (Davis & Gavidia-Payne, 2009; Kurtzer-White & Luterman, 2003). The problems that children with SEN and their families can face can be categorised as being health-related, care-related, educational, economic, social and psychological in nature. In this process, many different needs of the affected families arise, many of which they would be unable to deal or cope with on their own; accordingly, social services need to be provided. However, in order to determine what services are to be offered families, it is necessary to understand what the needs of the individual families are; in that, clearly identifying the needs of families is very useful in determining the feature, content, type, and method of the services that will need to be provided (Sucuoğlu, 1995). Here, Bailey and Simeonsson (1998), who have conducting a number of leading studies in the field, have stated that families of children with SEN need help to explain the situation to others, gain appropriate knowledge and skills, access to social services and, of course, financial support.

According to Zuckerman et al. (2014), families with children with SEN typically lack information and advocacy with regard to the services that disabled people are nominally provided with. Similar results have been obtained in a number of studies conducted in Turkey (Akçamete & Kargın, 1996; Evcimen, 1996; Kargın, 2001; Mert, 1997; Öztürk, 2011). According to Çitil's research, as carried out in Turkey with 342 parents, the most series needs of families of children with SEN centre around improving the quality of education of their children, supporting them financially, improving the social services available to them, raising social awareness, increasing their socialization possibilities, regulating their environments, improving their Social Security and employment rights, informing them about their own rights, and in providing psychological support (2016). Given these results, parents who have accepted the status of their children and are looking for solutions for their future development need support with many issues (Wright & Taylor, 2014). In this context, families need to be familiar with issues like the type of disability, how to diagnose their children with regard to their difficulties, how to make educational assessments, what type and level of education they will receive, support and special education services, etc. (Coren, Hutchfield, Thomae, & Gustafsson, 2010). They may also need assistance in how to support their children's continuing education at home, how to provide a suitable educational environment for them, how they should behave, and how to teach skills that will make their everyday lives easier (Çitil & Doğan, 2019; Wade, Llewellyn, & Matthews, 2008). In addition, they need to be informed about how they can cope with the difficulties which they will face in social life, how they can benefit from social services, and what their legal rights and responsibilities are (Wright & Taylor, 2014). It seems unlikely that they will either have or be able to develop the knowledge and skills mentioned here above on their own recognisance (Davis & Gavidia-Payne, 2009).

One of the most effective measures to be taken to meet the above-mentioned requirements is parent training (Wade, Llewellyn and Matthews, 2008). Parent training is a programme intended to help families gain the effective methods and techniques that can be used to teach their children the skills and concepts they need and how to control their behaviour (Tavil & Karasu, 2013). The purpose of parent training, which is a systematic and conceptual-based process, is to ensure that parents have sufficient skills for, and to inform them about, different aspects of the parenting (Schulz, 1987; Tavil & Karasu, 2013). Parent training programmes can help parents learn the parenting skills which they need (Coren, et al., 2010). It should not be surprising, then, that parent training has emerged as an important topic in the literature on children with developmental disabilities (Matson, Mahan, & LoVullo, 2009).

There are many studies in which academicians have developed the concepts for various parent training programmes and teach families different skills through different methods and techniques or offer counsel. It is understood that most studies related to parent training have considered the skills families need to teach their children about self-care, both in terms of in-home skills and those needed in daily life (Cavkaytar, 1999; Çakmak, 2011; Elmalı-Alptekin, 2011; Işıl, 1994; Özcan, 2004; Sarı, 2003, Sönmez-Diler, 2008; Şabanova, 2000). In addition to these issues mostly frequently encountered in this field of the literature are those on training offered to parents to cope with problematic behaviours in their children (Berbercan, 2010; Brookman-Frazee, Vismara, Drahota, Stahmer, & Openden, 2009; Gökçe, 2017; Sayın, 2014; Scahill, et al., 2016; Sucuoğlu, Küçüker & Kanık, 1993; Tavil, 2005), those that strengthen the children's communication skills with parents and experts (Aktaş, 2015; Ertürk-Mustul, 2015; Kargın, 2001; Koca, 2016; Konuk-Er, 2011; Özen & Kırcaali-İftar, 2000), those that strengthen the parents' abilities to cope with the anxiety they face, for example, psychological problems such as stress and depression that arise as a result of learning about their children with SEN (Ardıç, 2013; Brookman-Frazee, et al., 2009; Çin, 2001; Konuk-Er, 2011; Sarı, 1999; Vardarcı, 2011), and training for families of children with SEN that are more informative and include content about the characteristics and education of these children (Birkan, 2001; Özgür, 1993; Sardohan-Yıldırım, 2017; Sarı, 1999; Yücel, 2006). As can be seen above, parent training studies for families with children who have special need are mostly concentrated on teaching self-care skills, changing certain modes of behaviour, etc.

There is little information about whether parents are familiar with available resources (e.g., programmes, support, training), and what information they find useful and how they prefer to access resources (Gilson, Bethune, Carter, & McMillan, 2017). In this context, parents may not be aware of their rights, nor of the services appropriate to their children (Leiter, & Wyngaarden-Krauss, 2004). The purpose of any parent education programme is to improve children's quality of life (Crockett, Fleming, Doepke, & Stevens, 2007). However, these families firstly need to know their rights in order to take advantage of the support offered by social services, alleviating their problems related to education and finance, and be able to understand how their legal rights might be defended (Burke & Hodapp, 2016). Many parents with children with disabilities find themselves in unfortunate situations when entering the world of special education. Parents often face bureaucratic educational structures and must know their rights to receive adequate service (Bacon & Causton-Theoharis, 2013). A consideration of the associated literature suggests that the process of knowing and defending the legal rights of parents with children with disabilities is referred to as 'parental advocacy'. Munro (1991) defined effective advocacy as "a non-violent empowerment and support process where families with disabled relatives can express dissatisfaction constructively and offer creative solutions to existing problems in human services systems" (cited in Ewles, Clifford, & Minnes, 2014). Parental advocacy is necessary to ensure that children receive the services they need to maximize their potential for development (Scifres, 2012; Wright & Taylor, 2014).

There are also many legal regulations regarding the rights of the disabled in the US, where, according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), parents may need to acting as advocate to provide appropriate services to their children (Burke & Goldman, 2017). Special advocacy training is becoming increasingly widespread among lawyers in the US – and indeed abroad – to address both the need for some to defend such children's interests and a standard uniformity for parents' rights, and getting benefits from government (Burke & Goldman, 2017). In order to encourage parents to participate in special education, IDEA provides funding for Parent Education Institutes where they can learn about barriers, special education policy and other issues related to the education of their children (Ong-Dean, Daly, & Park, 2011). Some institutions in the US serve families in terms of special education rights and advocacy. For example, Parent Training and Information Centres [PTIs], Community Parent Resource Centres and Protection and Advocacy Agencies (P & As). Besides, there are education models such as the SEAT project and VAP which are offered to those who want to volunteer their advocacy in the field of special education (Burke, 2013). Such centres, agencies and programmes all focus on strategic advocacy. Here they teach parents with children with disabilities how to exercise their rights through special education law, policy and procedures (Burke & Hodapp, 2016).

Disabled citizens and their families have many legal rights in various areas, such as education, employment, tax, transportation and accessibility in Turkey. In addition to international regulations, such as the United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, there are legal regulations specific to Turkey, notably Law No. 5378 on the rights of individuals with disabilities and Decree No. 573 on the law of special education (Çitil, 2017).

There are many social services available in Turkey to meet the needs of families who have children with SEN. However, there are no independent centres, such as PTIs in the USA, that offer support for families with children with disabilities or that teach them advocacy skills. Informing families with disabled children is maintained through parent training. The "Regulation for Special Education Services", which regulates the educational services of children in need of special education in Turkey, provides legal guarantees regarding the training of disabled children's parents. This regulation carries certain obligations for these children's schools, special education centres, and guidance and research centres. However, the Ministry of National Education has not yet developed a standard or programme for this subject, even though the parent training is a legal framework. For this reason, the educational services offered to the families of children with SEN in Turkey are somewhat inadequate.

Living as an independent, productive and happy individual in society is, of course, as much the right of a disabled person as an able-bodied. Therefore, it is a very important requirement for children with SEN and their families to know their rights to ensure they are in a better position in terms of social life (Burke & Hodapp, 2016). For example, knowing the educational rights of the child with disability in the individualized education programme meeting can be beneficial to families' ability to make the right decisions (Burke & Goldman, 2017) because, according to some studies, parents have difficulty in understanding the jargon used in special education meetings and, therefore, defending their rights (Burke, Goldman, Hart, & Hodapp, 2016). Therefore, it is important to raise families with knowledge and rights advocacy skills pertaining to special education (Goldman, Burke, Mason, & Hodapp, 2017). Although the ultimate goal of parental advocacy is to ensure that children with disabilities receive an appropriate education, little empirical research has been conducted into the effects of such advocacy (Burke et al., 2018). In Turkey, in particular, there have been very few studies conducted in this area. It can be seen that only Balta (2010) has carried out an informative education study for families with children with disabilities in Germany, and determined what support is available in the field of special education, leisure activities, the Special Education Law in Germany, and how they can meet their rights and needs. Further, Sardohan-Yıldırım (2017) made certain interventions in families' learning and defending their legal rights in action research conducted to empower families with children with disabilities. Therefore, the main focus point of this study is to develop a training programme for parents of children with SEN to help them gain awareness of their legal rights.

This study aims to determine whether the informative parents' training programme on the legal rights of children with special educational needs in Turkey is effective for families of children with SEN. To this end, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. Does the programme increase the information available to participating families with regard to legal rights?
2. What are the views of the participating families towards the programme (social validity findings)?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study was designed using a semi-experimental model consisting of a single group of pre-test and post-test design. The effect of the experimental process we intend to carry out in this research design will be tested on a single group. The measurements of the subject's dependent variable are obtained by using the same test subjects and the same measurement tools pre-test (i.e., before the application), and post-test (i.e., after the application) (Balta, 2010, 28). The significance of the difference between the pre-test and post-test values belonging to a single group is tested in this research pattern (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016). The dependent variable of the study is the level of information about the legal rights of children with SEN, whilst the independent variable is the "Parent Training Programme" which informs parents about the legal rights of children with SEN.

2.2. Participants

The sample consists of 11 mothers and four fathers who have disabled children attending a private special education and rehabilitation centre in Ankara. The average age of the parents participating in the programme is 32. Five of the participants are primary school graduates, five are high school graduates, one is a secondary school graduate, one has an associate degree, and three are university graduates. All the mothers are housewives, and the jobs of the fathers were identified as electronic technician, civil servant, engineer and security guard. It was observed that the participants had an average of two children.

2.3. Tools of Data Collection and the Development of Educational Program

The content of the data collection tools and training programme used in the scope of the research are as follows:

2.3.1. Implementation Process and Informative Parent Training Programme on Legal Rights to Families of Children with Special Educational Needs

Name of The Programme: Parent Training Programme That Informs Families of Children with SEN About Their Legal Rights

The Programme Designer: Parent training programme was designed by a researcher.

The Programme Practitioner: The Parent Training Programme was implemented by the researcher with scientific studies on legal rights.

The Type of Programme*:* This programme is a kind of informative consultancy based on the institution and group.

The Features of The Participants of The Programme: The target group of the programme consists of parents who have children attending a private special education centre in Ankara.

The Duration of The Programme: The Programme consists of four sessions. Each session is scheduled for 60 Minutes. Two sessions were held in the institution on Monday and Wednesday afternoons.

Target Group of The Programme: Families of children with SEN.

Objectives of The Programme: The overall aim of this programme is to let the parents know the legal rights and responsibilities of families with children with SEN. For these purposes, the information required to answer the following questions will be provided.

1. What are the legal rights and responsibilities of parents for the education of their children with SEN?
2. What are the legal rights and responsibilities of families related to the employment of their children with SEN?
3. What are the legal rights and responsibilities of the parents related to the economic rights of children with SEN (tax exemptions, salary) for families?
4. What are the legal rights and responsibilities in terms of social, political and transportation issues of children with SEN?
5. Where and how can families of children with SEN learn their legal rights?

The Stages of The Programme: The preparation and implementation phases of the programme are listed in the following sequence.

1. Determination of parents attending parent training sessions
2. Creating the content to be presented in the programme
3. Preparation of materials to be presented to families
4. Creating questionnaires and interviewing forms for the evaluation of the families
5. Determination of methods and techniques to be used
6. Planning parent training sessions
7. Carrying out the sessions
8. Evaluation

The Evaluation of The Programme: In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme, the "Family Information, and Programme expectations form", "Legal Rights Information test", and "Programme Evaluation Form" were applied. These were further developed by the researcher.

Methods and Techniques Used in the Application of The Programme: The programme was implemented in the form of a direct instruction method and question-answer method with families. The practitioner informed the working group using Microsoft PowerPoint presentations and provided a discussion session conducted with the question-answer method. Since the programme is not an applied one, no homework was been given to families after any of the sessions.

Material Used in the Application of The Programme: Separate Microsoft PowerPoint presentations were prepared and used for each session. Also, a booklet was distributed to families during the training period. The "Legal Rights of Disabled Children in Turkey" booklet, prepared by the researcher, was distributed to the parents at the time of the training sessions and collected after their completion. After the post-test, the parents were given the booklet as a gift by the researcher.

The booklet consists of more extensive information covering the content of the training. There is related legislation as well as the rights and responsibilities of families in each chapter. Moreover, information such as official websites and contact addresses, which are the institutions and organizations responsible for the legislation and services related to addressing disabilities, are given in the margins of the booklet. The booklet was enriched with visuals and written in plain language. A total of 28 pages of booklets were printed on thick cardboard cover, coloured and glossy paper.

The Application of the Programme: This programme was implemented over four sessions.
First Session: The researcher first introduced himself and met the families. Later, he introduced the purpose of his research, the content, and process of the training programme. Families agreed in writing that they were willing to work with the researcher and that they would attend each session. After that, the family Information Form and pre-test were distributed by the researcher. This first stage took approximately 60 minutes. After a 10-minute break, the second part of the first session was started. After this stage, the researcher started lecturing about the subject. In the first session, the negative situation of families and individuals with disabilities experienced in the historical process and how they gained their current legal rights were discussed. Further, the issue of where and how to learn about the legal rights of their children was discussed. This session also lasted 60 minutes.
Second Session: A brief five-minute review of the previous session was given at the beginning of the second session. In this session, which lasted about an hour, the processes of the education of their children were discussed and the rights they had had in these processes were explained to the parents.
Third Session: The third session took place two days after the second session. In this session, families were told about the legal rights and responsibilities related to the economic rights (tax exemptions, salary) of children with SEN. After this session, which lasted about an hour, a 20-minute break was taken, and the last session was started.
Fourth Session: The last session was held to discuss matters of social-, political- and transportation-related legal rights and responsibilities of children with SEN. At the end of the session, which lasted about 50 minutes, the researcher asked families whether they were curious about anything or if there were another subject they would like to discuss. After a 10-minute question-answer session, the researcher thanked the families and ended the session. After a 10-minute break, a post-test and programme evaluation and satisfaction form were given to the families.

2.3.2. The Form of Expectation of The Programme and Information About the Family

The family information and programme expectations form is a short form developed by the researcher, aimed at determining appropriate demographic information relating to the families (marital status, age, education, child's characteristics, etc.) and consisted of five open-ended questions.

Also, this form consists of open-ended questions which include the reasons for participating in the programme, the areas in which families know their rights, the situations under which they had participated in such training before, the sources of information about learning their legal rights, and questions that would help them understand their expectations with regard to the parent training programme that they were going to participate in.

The questions in the related form were developed by the researchers in accordance with the research and its purposes. They were developed by taking the expert opinion of three different faculty members working in the field of special education.

2.3.3. Legal rights information test

The legal rights information test consisted of 40 multiple choice questions developed by the researchers. The legal rights information test was developed by examining the relevant literature and legislation and compiling important information that it was felt parents of children with SEN need to know. The tests were created with four choices and the test was grouped considering the easy, medium and difficult questions .. In the legal rights information test, 10 questions addressed the education-related rights of disabled people, 10 their employment and social security rights, 10 their economic rights (tax exemptions, salary), and 10 their legal rights and responsibilities on social, political and transportation issues. The "legal rights information test" was applied as a pre-test and post-test to measure the level of awareness of the legal rights of families.

2.3.4. Programme Evaluation Form (Social Validity)

The Programme Evaluation Form is a form created from 10 questions developed by the researcher by researching the related literature and, in accordance with the research objectives, was intended to gain the opinions of the participating families about the programme after its implementation and to determine its social validity. This form was distributed after the implementation of the parent training programme. In order to finalize the Program Evaluation Form, expert opinion was obtained from three faculty members working in the field of special education.

2.4. Analysing the Data

The pre-test and post-test scores obtained from the Legal Rights Information test applied within the scope of the research were analysed in the SPSS suite of programs. Correct answers by parents were scored '1', and incorrect answers were scored '0'. The scores of the participants obtained from the pre-test and post-test are reported in the tables in terms of means, percentages, and standard deviations. In order to determine the differences, the t-test was applied, and the statistical significance level was accepted as 0.05 in the analyses. The social validity data of the study were subject to content analysis and descriptive analysis, with the categories and codes obtained from the content analysis analysed and presented in frequency and percentage form.

The assumptions (normality and homogeneity) of a parametric test were tested for the data collected from the families for pretest before the application of training and post-test after the application of training. Table 1 shows the Shapiro-Wilk test results for the assumption of normality. The resulting p-value of Levene's test that shows the homogeneity of variance calculated for both pretest and post-test is less than the significance level (p<,05), suggesting that the obtained differences in sample variances have equal population variances.

Table 1. Pre-Test and Post-Test Shapiro Wilk Statistics

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	**Df**	**Sig.**
Pre-Test	0.93	15	0.29
Post Test	0.91	15	0.16

*p<,05

Table 1 shows that the data collected from both pretest and post-test meet the assumption of normality. Before the application of comparison tests, it was confirmed that the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of the variances were met. The scores obtained from the scales are continuous and in interval scale. Being independent of one sample from another sample (group), measuring dependent variable in ratio or interval scale, and meeting the assumption of normality and homogeneity of variances are required for the application of parametric tests (Köklü, Büyüköztürk & Bökeoğlu, 2007, s. 152-161). Within this context, paired-samples t-test was used to compare the scores obtained from the pretest and post-test.

3. Findings

The findings obtained from the process of implementing an informative parent training programme on the legal rights of families with children with disabilities are presented below under the headings of families about the programme, their level of knowledge about their legal rights before and after the programme, and their level of satisfaction with the programme.

3.1. Findings Related to the Expectation of the Programme

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Families with Disabled Children Regarding the Expectation Levels of the Programme

Features	Categories	*f*	%
The reason for joining the program	Acquisition of knowledge	14	93.3
	Curiosity	1	6.6
On what subject they have the least information about their rights	Education	6	40
	Self-care	3	20
	Employment	2	13.3
	All topics	5	33.3
Previously participated in training on legal rights	Yes	0	-
	Never	15	100
How they exchange information about legal rights	By special education centres	4	26.7
	By searching online	3	20
	By asking other parents	3	20
	Asking friends and relatives	2	13.3
	Lawyers	1	6.6
	Never	2	13.3
The expectation of the Program	Obtaining awareness of their legal rights	10	66.6
	Preparation for the future of the child	2	13.3
	To be more conscious	1	6.6
	To learn how to defend their rights	1	6.6
	To identify their deficiencies	1	6.6
Total		**15**	**100**

In Table-2, when the sources of information about the legal rights of the parents with children with disabilities and the expectations of the parent training programme they were participating in are analysed, 93.3% of the respondents answered "obtaining information" when asked about the reasons for participating in the programme, whilst one participant responded because he was curious. For the question "In which area do you think you are less knowledgeable about your legal rights?"33.3% of the participants stated that they did not know their rights adequately in all matters, 40% in education, 20% in care, and 13% in employment. All participants reported that they had not previously participated in a similar information programmes on legal rights. For the question "How have you been exchanging information about legal rights to date?", 26% of the participants (seven) were from private special education and rehabilitation centres, 20% were researching the internet, 20% were asking other families with disabled children, and 13.3% were asking their friends or relatives about their legal rights. 13.3% of the participants stated that they had not received any information from anyone or anywhere before. When asked about their 'expectations from the informative parent training program' about the legal rights they will participate in, 66.6% of the participants expressed their expectations of the programme as getting to know their legal rights, 13.3% of the participants expressed their expectations of the programme as preparing for their child's future, one said to be a more conscientious parent, another said to learn how to defend the parent's rights, whilst the final participant said to identify and fulfil their child's needs.

3.2. Findings on the Information Level of the Parents

As stated in the method section, before the implementation of the parent training programme, the Family Information and Program Expectations Form, whose findings were shared above, was first applied, after which the Legal Rights Information Test was applied to the families to determine their level of knowledge about the legal rights of families.

The same test was applied again as a post-test for the families subsequent to the training sessions. In this context, the pre-test and post-test scores obtained from the legal rights information test conducted for the families are presented in Table-2.

Table 3. Family Legal Rights Information T-Test Results; Pre-test and Post-test Scores

	N	$\overline{X}$	**Ss**	**t**	**P**
Info Pre - Test	15	17.73	5.910	**-8.573**	**.000**
Info Post- Test	15	31.47	4.033		

When Table-3 is examined, a statistically significant difference was found between the Legal Rights Information Test of the Families pre-test and post-test scores (t = -8.573, p < .05). Parents' Legal Rights Information pre-test mean scores (17.73) are lower than post-test mean scores (31.47) and the difference is statistically significant. In other words, according to this finding, obtained as a result of the analysis, the informative education on legal rights given to families with children with disabilities has been effective.

3.3. The Evaluation of the Programme and findings regarding Social Validity

The results of the programme evaluation and social validity that families indicated at the end of the programme are reported in Table-3.

Table 4. The distribution of the frequency and percentages of the parents' satisfaction with the programme

Question	**The Categories of Answers**	***f***	**%**
To what extent the programme meets expectations	Yes	14	93.3
	Mostly	1	6.6
Views on the content and duration of the programme	The content and duration were sufficient	10	66.6
	The duration was short	5	33.3
The subjects found useful in the programme	All of them	8	53.3
	Education	5	33.3
	Employment	4	26.7
	Social Security	2	13.3
	Health	2	13.3
	Transportation	1	6.6
The subjects found useless in the programme	Everything was useful	12	80
	Development through history	2	13.3
	The rights of higher education	1	6.6
Your suggestion and thoughts on the handbook 'The Legal Rights of Parents'	Very good / good / fine / enough	9	60
	Informative	2	13.3
	Fine but can be developed	1	6.6
	Phone services and web addresses are useful	1	6.6
	Reference guide	1	6.6
Satisfaction with participating in the programme	Yes	15	100
	No	0	-
Thoughts on the practicality of the use of this programme for other families	Yes	15	100
	No	0	-

The suggestions of the families on the programme	Implementations should be more frequent and repeated	12	80
	The duration period should be longer	2	13.3
	Examples and details should be increased	1	6.6

When Table-4 is examined, the opinions of the participants regarding programme evaluation and satisfaction are as follows: while 93.3% of respondents answered yes to the question “Did this programme you attended meet your expectations on learning your legal rights?”, one of them said, “Mostly yes”, while for the question regarding the content and duration of the programme being sufficient, two-thirds of the respondents answered “Yes”; one-third stated that the duration should be longer. When asked “Which of the topics presented in the programme are useful to you?”, it was seen that the participants marked more than one option. In this context, 53.3% of the participants marked all of them, while one-third of the participants marked “education”, 26% marked “employment”, 13.3% “social rights”, 13.3% “health rights” and one parent marked “transportation” as being useful to them. The question "What are the issues that are not useful to you in the programme?", 80% of the participants stated that all the programme had been beneficial, while two stated that the historical process was not useful and one stated that the rights of higher education were not useful to them. All participants stated that there was no part of the researcher’s presentation that they had difficulty understanding. Finally, the presentation format was good enough for all the participants.

As an answer to the question “What are your opinions and suggestions regarding the booklet on legal rights of families given to you in the program?”, 60% of the participants said that they thought that the booklet was well presented, 13.3% said it was good but could be developed, one said it was good and very comprehensive, one stated that it was very useful to have the relevant institutions phone numbers and internet addresses in the booklet, and the other participant stated that the booklet is great work and he will carry it with him all the time. All the participants stated that they had been happy to participate in this programme and that they believed it would be useful to other families too. The most important suggestion made by the participants regarding the programme was that such programmes should be conducted more frequently. Some participants proposed organizing up-to-date courses with wider and more extensive timeframes since they wanted to know about their legal rights in various subjects. Also, one participant shared the view that it may be useful to offer similar programmes on disabled children to families without disabled children.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

According to the research findings, families do not consider that they are sufficiently aware of their legal rights. They try to learn their legal rights from different sources. None of the participating families had ever previously attended training on legal rights. Before participating in the training programme offered within the scope of this research, they expected that the level of information they were aware of regarding legal rights would increase as a result of this training. These findings are consistent with the limited studies in the literature (Çitil, 2016; Çitil & Doğan, 2019; Gür & Kurt, 2011). According to Gilson et al. (2017), little is known about how parents would prefer to access available resources (e.g., programmes, supports, training).

The level of information on the legal rights of families of children with SEN, which is the dependent variable of this study, was found to have increased after the informative parent training application offered to the families. In this context, it was observed that the training programme met the expectations of the families.

According to various reviews and meta-analyses in the literature, parent education has a considerable impact on children and their families (Beaudoin, Sébire, & Couture, 2014; Lee, Niew, Yang, Chen, & Lin, 2012; Wade, Llewellyn, & Matthews, 2008). Cohen et al. (2010) found in a review that the training offered to parents with disabled children improved their parenting skills. Burke et al. (2016) conducted parental advocacy training with Latin families. After the training, the group participants were shown to have significantly more special education knowledge (Burke, Magaña, Garcia, & Mello, 2016). Again, Burke et al. (2016) conducted another research under the Voluntary Advocacy Project (VAP). After a given form of training, the participants showed significant gains in their special education knowledge and advocacy skills from pre-tests to post-tests (Burke, Goldman, Hart, & Hodapp, 2016). In Rouleau's (2007) study, twelve parents participated in a total of 12 sessions for a total of 24 hours of training. As a result of the training, parents' knowledge about their legal rights in terms of understanding the Individualized Education Programme process had increased. When all these studies are evaluated, the results of this research are consistent with the literature. As a result of the research, two-thirds of the families argued that the programme and the duration were sufficient, but one-third argued that the duration was too short. This study was performed over four sessions and, excluding pre-tests, it lasted about four hours. Considering that some families think that the duration was short, it would be possible to increase the number of days over which the programme is run and extend the research's duration for a few more hours. In another study comparing training programmes, Burke (2013) found that advocacy training programmes differ according to duration, training emphasis and activities. Therefore, it remains unclear what kind of education significantly improves knowledge and advocacy skills (Burke, Goldman, Hart, & Hodapp, 2016). In this way, content development can be carried out, such as homework assignments that were not implemented in this research and helping parents to gain skills in researching legal rights. The parents' skill at defending their rights has not been examined in the research. In this context, descriptive and applied research could be undertaken. For example, research can be carried out involving the education of parents of children with SEN who do not know how to write a petition, the ability to apply to formal institutions such as CIMER (Presidential Communication Centre), or the ability to develop solutions for specific problems.

The survey shows that parents mostly liked the content presented in the programme curriculum, finding it to be perfectly adequate. In similar studies in the literature, parents reported a high level of satisfaction with similar programmes (Beaudoin, Sébire, & Couture, 2014; Burke, Magaña, Garcia, & Mello, 2016; Suppo & Floyd, 2012). Besides, most studies show that families participating in parent education experience increased positive parent-child interactions and reduced parental stress (Suppo & Floyd, 2012). However, a few of the participants stated that the historical process was not useful. One participant parent also stated that the content on Higher Education Rights was not useful too. Here, it is seen that the age and type of disability of the child influences the perspective of the families. For example, parents who have a 20-year-old child with a severe mental disability may not need to know the rights of higher education students with SEN. The extent to which parents consider various types of information useful can vary according to demographic factors (e.g., child's age, disability type, socio-economic status, etc.) (Gilson, Bethune, Carter, & McMillan, 2017). According to Leiter and Wyngaarden-Krauss (2004), parents with children with severe and multiple disabilities may have different needs and additional service requests. For this reason, the training programme on the legal rights of families with children can be differentiated by considering the characteristics of the target group.

The booklet on the legal rights of families of children with SEN was prepared and distributed for this research. According to the research findings, families stated that this booklet was very useful. Young, Morgan, Callow-Heusser & Lindstrom (2016) conducted an intervention study on parents only in the form of a 'brochure' and 'brochure + training'. As a result of the research, the members of the group who received 'brochure + 60 minutes of training' showed a much higher level of transition information. It has been observed that it is useful to give courses on the legal rights of families of children with SEN based on direct and face-to-face participation backed up by institutions, as in this research. However, many parents may not participate in such training and courses for various reasons. According to Çitil's (2016) research, 72.5% of mothers have never participated in informative activities such as conferences, panels, symposiums, and training courses. 15.8% of mothers and 6.1% of fathers who have children with SEN participate in such activities once a year (Çitil, 2016). It has been seen that the chances of parents participating in such a training programme on legal rights are actually quite low, as only a small number of parents attend informative training. Therefore, it might be useful to prepare and distribute informative printed materials on the legal rights of parents of children with SEN. However, Fitzgerald and Watkins (2006) found that the readability of handbooks on parents' rights exceeded many parents' reading skills and created a potential barrier to the development of some parents' advocacy skills. For this reason, these materials should be prepared in a language suitable for the target audience.

It has been observed that some researchers, government agencies and non-governmental organizations have set up websites and various social media groups and discussion forums on this subject to help families with of children with SEN learn their legal rights. These initiatives are undoubtedly very useful. Shachar and Neumann (2010) conducted a meta-analysis comparing the academic performance of studies completed between 1990 and 2009 in distance education courses. In 70% of the 125 studies included in the meta-analysis, students who took courses with distance education (compared to formal education) achieved greater educational attainment. (cited by Burke, Goldman, Hart, & Hodapp, 2016). However, Shachar and Neumann's research results may not be applicable in the case of Turkey. Besides this, according to Çitil's (2016) research, half of the mothers of children with SEN and two-fifths of fathers do not use the internet at all. It is seen that those who use the internet for research or obtaining information are very limited.

Only 20% of the participants of this research use the internet to exchange information on their legal rights. According to the research, people prefer to ask employees of special education and rehabilitation centres or they prefer to learn via their immediate surroundings. Considering all these results, it is useful to provide face-to-face training and counselling for the parents of children with SEN. Besides, they should be provided with a combination of different methods such as printed materials and websites. Different methods should be used and tried for parental advocacy training. For example, Plunge (1998) used video training to give parents information about their legal rights, special education processes, communication with school professionals, and the development of Individualized Education Programmes, and has achieved effective results. Suppo & Floyd (2012) also proposed alternative methods and techniques for parents living in remote and rural areas.

One of the biggest limitations of this research is it is being conducted with a single group. For this reason, it would be beneficial to have a larger sample of similar studies, differentiated according to different types of disability, expanded content, different training methods, and control group variations (Young et al., 2016). As mentioned above, the parent training programmes for parents of children with SEN are extremely limited. Among these training programmes, it can be seen that there are very few studies involving legal rights (Balta, 2010; Sardohan-Yıldırım, 2017). For this reason, it can be said that the practice and research that aims to teach families their legal rights and responsibilities will contribute greatly to the quality of life of families of children with SEN, as well, of course, as its contribution to the literature.

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