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Difficulties, Benefits and Recommendations of Mainstreaming Practices

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Abstract

This research was conducted in order to uncover the challenges and benefits experienced by and recommendations of the families whose children with special needs continued mainstreaming practices for at least five years. This is a qualitative case study. The research was conducted by in-depth interviews with thirty-three families. As a result of research, it has been determined that the families experienced difficulties collaborating with executives, mainstreaming students with their teachers, providing sufficient information to the student, about negative attitudes and behaviors, exclusion and bullying from students with normal development, self-confidence, learning problems, behavior problems and obsessions from children with special needs, and the lack of acceptance of the children within the family. In the study, the mainstreaming practices have been determined to be beneficial for executives to understand individual differences, for teachers to understand the different learning styles, tolerance and being patient, for students with normal development to ensure self-confidence, socializing, communication and fitting into society, and for families to develop appropriate attitudes for their children and monitor the development areas where the children are sufficient and insufficient. It has been observed that the families recommended the executives to be cooperate with executives, support students who are successful at mainstreaming with teachers, be understanding and attentive, include students with normal development in games and activities, be tolerant, support the students with special needs in their social skills and self-confidence development, and families to cooperate, be open to communication, and promote their practices.

Keywords: Mainstreaming, Family, Difficulties, Benefits, Suggestions

1. Introduction

Law for Children in Need of Special Education numbered 2916 (1983) and Decree numbered 573 (1997) within the legislative framework integration applications In Turkey are applied in line with the "Special Education Services Regulation (2018)" which is renewed and published every couple of years. Having been applied for nearly forty years in Turkey, the mainstreaming practices are defined as "full-time education provided for individuals with special educational needs alongside their peers while receiving support services or part-time in special education classes so that they can interact with all sorts and ranks of individuals and ensure that they achieve their educational goals as much as possible (MEB, 2018)." In mainstreaming practices, as stated in the definition,

children with special needs are educated by providing support education services alongside their peers who are developing normally.

Families of children with special needs have a prominent place in mainstreaming practices. That is because they are a crucial factor, for the cooperation between school administration and teachers in and successful execution of mainstreaming practices. In addition, families are the ones who have information about a child with special needs, share it with teachers when necessary, and support the child's achievements in school at home and in other settings. Besides, the acceptance and adaptation of families with the child, the support they provide in the education and development of the child, and the natural role of educators in giving the child the desired behaviors are important in mainstreaming practices. On the other hand, reasons such as the legal rights in the implementation of mainstreaming practices make families an important part of the integration practices (Gulec Aslan, 2016; Keceli-Kaysili, 2008; Pistav Akmese and Kayhan, 2014; Yildiz, 2017).

Both in many countries of the world and in Turkey, the participation of families in mainstreaming practices is guaranteed by law. Moreover, it is possible to come across many studies on families in the literature on mainstreaming practices. In this section, several example studies have been given as example of research conducted with families on mainstreaming in the national and international literature in recent years. As per these studies, Unal and Iflazoglu Saban (2014) investigated the attitudes of the families of disabled students (who continue the mainstreaming practices) towards mainstreaming. They have found that, in general, families have a positive attitude and that the majority of them are satisfied with the mainstreaming education their children receive. Tryfon et al. (2019) investigated the perspectives of parents towards mainstreaming education. They have observed that the majority of families want their children to participate in mainstreaming activities with their peers, that these activities develop their children's social skills, but that there is a low level of cooperation with the teachers. Cifci Tekinarslan et al. (2018) have determined in their studies to determine the needs of the parents of students receiving mainstreaming education that parents need social support, information, assistance and adaptation. Hanssen and Erina (2021) investigated the families' insights towards mainstreaming education for children with special educational needs. They stated that many families believe the degree of collaboration with teachers is limited and the teachers do not possess the knowledge and experience for working with students with special needs. Yazici and Durmusoglu (2017) investigated the problems and expectations of families with a child with special needs, in which they have found out that the individuals in the community feel pity for, do not understand, and present perplexity towards children with special needs, that they face architectural and educational problems, and that they have expectations from teachers, executives, local governments and civil society organizations regarding these issues. Looking at these studies conducted in the literature, it has been seen that families have different thoughts, opinions, satisfaction levels, difficulties and expectations regarding mainstreaming practices.

It is possible to encounter different difficulties in terms of families, teachers, students and executives in mainstreaming practices. Examining the studies in the literature conducted for determining the difficulties encountered by the teachers, it can be observed that the teachers face problems taking care of and making time for their mainstreaming students and that the mainstreaming students face educational and behavioral issues (Akalin, 2015; Deniz and Ilik 2021; Pijl et al., 2008; Rakap et al., 2010; Sarac and Colak, 2012). Some studies also emphasize teacher inadequacies regarding the difficulties encountered in mainstreaming practices (Hanssen and Erina, 2021). Similarly, Unal and Iflazoglu Saban (2014) have found that teachers in mainstreaming classes are lacking in terms of knowledge about mainstreaming and special education, do not have sufficient experience, and are unable to allocate enough time to mainstreaming. The results of some research have also indicated that teachers have negative attitudes about mainstreaming practices (Rakap and Kaczmarak, 2010; Saloviita, 2018). Paseka and Schwab (2019) have found that, in terms of mainstreaming practices, the families have a quite positive attitude towards mainstreaming a student with physical or learning disability, and a neutral attitude towards mainstreaming a student with behavioral disorder or mental disorder. This finding is similar to the results of previous research conducted in the field (Leyser and Kirk, 2004; Tafa and Manolitsis, 2003). In another study, Aktan et al. (2019) investigated the level of social acceptance of primary school students towards mainstreaming students, and they have discovered that mainstreaming students are being perceived as problematic in terms of academic and social aspects and are not socially accepted by their peers, and that it is necessary to improve teachers' competence levels and inform the students and families in order to increase the social acceptance towards individuals with special needs. Similarly, many studies have revealed that the children with special needs in mainstreaming practices face

social adaptation problems, loneliness, peer rejection, and poor peer relationships (Chamberlain et al., 2007; Kabasakal et al., 2008). In another survey, Yilmaz and Batu (2016) have pointed out the issues of insufficiently informing people in mainstreaming practices, parents not accepting their children's special status, and students with normal development having negative attitudes toward students with special needs. As can be seen from the research examples given above, various difficulties can be encountered in mainstreaming applications.

Many research results from around the world mention the countless benefits of mainstreaming practices. Researchers have stated that students with special needs are more successful, have improved social skills through mainstreaming practices, and provide benefits for students with normal development as well (Tryfon et al., 2019; Bakkaloglu et al., 2018). It has been observed that students with normal development, female students (social and communication skills of whom the students with special needs improved) (Downing and Peckham-Hardin, 2007), and students who previously contacted students with disabilities are more positive (Dellanna et al., 2019). Additionally, it has been shown that skills have been achieved such as tolerance, cooperation, respect for differences, and seeing their own inadequacies and accepting towards children with special needs through mainstreaming (Arslan and Altintas, 2014; Sharma and Mahapatra, 2007). It has been observed that the inappropriate behavior rate of the children with special needs decreased and their learning rates, friendships and social development improved because of the mainstreaming practices (Sharma and Mahapatra, 2007), and that the research about the benefits of mainstreaming in the literature focused more on students with special needs students with normal development, there are less research studies on parents and teachers, and the number of research studies on the executives is limited.

It is possible to come across various recommendations regarding mainstreaming practices in the literature. According to Falkmer et al. (2015), teachers can be both the main facilitators and barriers to mainstreaming practices. Teachers should get to know students well and try to improve their social relationships. Additionally, teachers, other employees and families should cooperate. In some studies conducted on the solution of the problems encountered in mainstreaming practices, it is stated that it is necessary to reduce classroom capacities, and include physical, instructional and behavioral arrangements in schools and classrooms. In addition to these, it has been recommended to conduct studies in order to inform all stakeholders of mainstreaming practices, increase support trainings, support the positive behaviors of mainstreaming students, improve the cooperation between all school staff, students and families, and ensure that students with normal development have more positive behaviors and attitudes towards students with special needs (Yilmaz and Batu, 2016).

This research is limited to the families of a total of thirty-three students with learning disabilities, mental impairment, physical impairment, autism spectrum disorder, and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder who practice mainstreaming. Compared to other research conducted in the research area, it differs from other research in some obvious respects. The first of these differences is that the research was conducted with families who have been involved in mainstreaming their child with special needs for at least five years. The second is that there are no studies on the difficulties faced by, benefits for and recommendations of families regarding executives, teachers, students with normal development, and the children with special needs and their families. It is expected that the research is significant in these aspects and will contribute to the field.

The main goal of this research is to uncover the challenges and benefits experienced by and recommendations of the families whose children with special needs continued mainstreaming practices for at least five years. Therefore, the parents were given questions to discover the challenges they faced, the benefits of mainstreaming practices and their recommendations about mainstreaming practices regarding the executives, teachers, students with development, children with special needs and their families.

2. Method

This is a qualitative case study. Yildirim and Simsek (2013:45) define qualitative research as research in which qualitative data collection methods such as interviews, observations and document analysis are used, and a qualitative process is followed to present perceptions and events in a realistic and holistic manner in the natural environment. The main case is principal, and it is aimed to reach the truth about the situation in qualitative research. There are three types of data collection methods widely used in qualitative research. These are interviews,

observations and written document analysis (Yildirim and Simsek, 2013:46). The "interview technique" was used to obtain the qualitative data for this research. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview form, the content of which was developed by the researchers.

2.1 Identify Subsections

The research was conducted on a total of 33 people, 21 mothers and 12 fathers, who have continued the mainstreaming practices of their child with special needs for at least five years in Kayseri provincial center in Turkey in 2022. The participants were determined by purposeful sampling method. The ages of the children with special needs range from 14 to 19. The diagnoses of the children with special needs in the study are given in Table 1.

Table 1: The diagnoses of the children

Diagnosis	Number
Special Learning Difficulties	11
Mental Incompetency	9
Physical Incompetency	5
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	4
Autism Spectrum Disorder	4
Total	33

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that among the children in the study who attended mainstreaming practices, 11 were diagnosed with special learning disabilities, 9 with mental incompetencies, 5 with physical incompetencies, 4 with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, and 4 with autism.

2.2 Data Collection Tool

The data for the study were collected by semi-structured interview technique, a qualitative research method. Primarily, the researchers have prepared questions related to the subject to be investigated. The first section includes demographic information about the participants, whereas the second part focuses on the difficulties they face in mainstreaming practices, their benefits and recommendations. The researchers also consulted two Turkish Lecture teachers and two measurement and evaluation experts to determine whether the questions were easy and expressed clearly. Additions and subtractions were made in the interview form in accordance with the opinions received from experts. Afterwards, the questions in the semi-structured interview form were submitted to the two families and a preliminary interview was conducted. In line with the opinions received from the families, the interview form has been reorganized by making changes in the content and places of some questions.

The questions in the semi-structured interview form are given below.

- 1) **What are the difficulties you face in mainstreaming practices?**
 - a) What are the difficulties regarding executives?
 - b) What are the difficulties regarding teachers?
 - c) What are the difficulties regarding peers with normal development?
 - d) What are the difficulties regarding your child with special needs?
 - e) What are the difficulties regarding your family?
- 2) **What are the benefits about mainstreaming practices?**
 - a) What are the benefits about executives?
 - b) What are the benefits about teachers?
 - c) What are the benefits about peers with normal development?
 - d) What are the benefits about your child with special needs?
 - e) What are the benefits about your family?
- 3) **What are your recommendations about mainstreaming practices?**
 - a) What are your recommendations about executives?
 - b) What are your recommendations about teachers?

- c) What are your recommendations about peers with normal development?
- d) What are your recommendations about your child with special needs?
- e) What are your recommendations about families of children with special needs?

2.3 Data Collection

The researchers first reached out to parents who brought their children to special education and rehabilitation centers in Kayseri, Turkey. The families were informed about the research, and it was explained to the families that the children with special needs who will participate in the research should have been in mainstreaming practices for at least five years. In the research, it was explained secondly to the families that this is voluntary research, meaning that the research will consist of families who want to participate voluntarily. A total of thirty-seven volunteer families participated in the research. Since the answers given by the four families were found to be superficial, these participants were not included in the study by the researchers. In the process of data collection, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the families. The interviews were conducted in a quiet environment and each interview lasted between 17 and 28 minutes.

3. Findings

This section elaborates the findings in the tables below which include the difficulties faced by, benefits for and recommendations of families regarding executives, teachers, students with normal development, and the children with special needs and their families.

Table 2: Difficulties regarding the executives in mainstreaming practices

Difficulties	f
Lack of communication and cooperation with Counselling and Research Centers	6
Lack of communication and cooperation with Special Education and Rehabilitation Centers	4
Lack of knowledge about the terms related to special education	4

Table 2 shows the difficulties that families encounter with executives in mainstreaming practices. As observed in the table, it was found that families (13) have difficulties about cooperation with executives and other institutions, as well as about the terms of special education.

Table 3: Difficulties regarding the teachers in mainstreaming practices

Difficulties	f
Lack of information about the mainstreaming student	3
Failure to schedule and plan	2
Negative attitudes and behaviors	2
Reluctance towards mainstreaming students	2

It can be observed in Table 3 that among the difficulties the families (9) face regarding the teachers in mainstreaming practices are lack of information about the mainstreaming student, failure to schedule and plan, negative attitudes and behaviors, and reluctance towards mainstreaming students.

Table 4: Difficulties regarding the students with normal development in mainstreaming practices

Difficulties	f
Making fun of their academic failures	9
Exclusion	8
Peer bullying	7

Table 4 shows the difficulties that families (24) face with students who show normal development in mainstreaming practices. Families believe the difficulties they face are students with normal development making fun of the academic failures of mainstreaming students, excluding them in and out of the classroom, and peer bullying.

Table 5: Difficulties regarding the students with special needs in mainstreaming practices

Difficulties	f
Lack of self-confidence	9
Learning problems	6
Disagreements with peers	6
Problems of adaptation to class and school	5
Problematic behaviors	4
Obsessions	3

The difficulties faced by families regarding the students with special needs in mainstreaming practices are given in Table 5. It has been found that the most common difficulties experienced by families (33) regarding their children with special needs, in order, are lack of self-confidence, learning problems, disagreements with peers, problems of adaptation to class and school, problematic behaviors, and obsessions.

Table 6: Difficulties regarding the families in mainstreaming practices

Difficulties	f
Inability to accept the inadequacy of the child	7
Inability to devote time to a child with normal development	6

Table 6 shows the difficulties faced by families regarding the families in mainstreaming practices. It has been found that families (13) have difficulty in accepting the inadequacy of their children and devoting time to their child with normal development.

Table 7: Benefits of mainstreaming practices regarding the executives

Benefits	f
Communication skills with family and teachers	6
Understanding individual differences	5

Looking at the benefits of mainstreaming practices regarding the executives in Table 7, it can be observed that some of the families (11) find mainstreaming practices to be beneficial for the development of communicational skills between families and teachers, and for the ability to understand individual differences.

Table 8: Benefits of mainstreaming practices regarding the teachers

Benefits	f
Understanding individual differences	12
Knowledge about different learning styles	10
Developing and planning programs for special children	6
Tolerance, respect and patience	5

According to Table 8, it is seen that mainstreaming practices have many benefits for teachers. It has been found that benefits regarding the teachers include understanding individual differences, having knowledge about different learning styles, developing and planning programs for children with special needs, as well as tolerance, respect and patience, according to the families (33).

Table 9: Benefits of mainstreaming practices regarding the students with normal development

Benefits	f
Understanding individual differences	9
Developing the senses of help and sharing	8
Accepting individual differences	7
Developing compassion	5
Ability to empathize	4

According to the families (33), mainstreaming practices have many benefits for students with normal development, as presented in Table 9. It has been found that students with normal development contribute to the ability to understand individual differences, develop senses of helping and sharing, accept individual differences, and develop compassion and ability to empathize.

Table 10: Benefits of mainstreaming practices regarding the students with special needs

Benefits	f
Supporting their self-confidence in a positive way	5
Socialization	5
Being happy among peers	4
Imitating children with normal development	4
The possibility of receiving support training outside the classroom	4
Ability to work collaboratively	4
Advances in cognitive, motor, language and social development	4
Adapting to the society	3

Table 10 shows the benefits of mainstreaming practices for students with special needs. According to the families (33), mainstreaming practices were found to be beneficial for students with special needs in terms of supporting their self-confidence in a positive way, socialization, being happy among peers, imitating children with normal development, the possibility of receiving support training outside the classroom, ability to work collaboratively, advances in cognitive, motor, language and social development, and adapting to the society.

Table 11: Benefits of mainstreaming practices regarding the families

Benefits	f
Being happy as the child succeeds more	10
More positive attitudes towards the child as the child succeeds more	9
Being satisfied about their child receiving education in the same environment as their peers	9
Ability to observe the areas of development where the child is adequate and inadequate	5

Table 11 shows the benefits of mainstreaming practices regarding the families as their children continue mainstreaming practices. It has been discovered that families (33) find opportunities to be happy as the child succeeds more, act more positive attitudes towards the child as the child succeeds more, be satisfied about their child receiving education in the same environment as their peers, and have the ability to observe the areas of development where the child is adequate and inadequate.

Table 12: Recommendations regarding the executives in mainstreaming practices

Recommendations	f
Cooperation with private educational institutions and organizations should be increased	6
There should be more activities among students	6
They should be interested in and supportive to mainstreaming students	5

The recommendations of the families regarding the executives in the mainstreaming practices are given in Table 12. It can be observed that families (17) recommended executives to advance the cooperation with special educational institutions and organizations, include more activities among students, and be interested in and support mainstreaming students.

Table 13: Recommendations regarding the teachers in mainstreaming practices

Recommendations	f
Supporting the successful aspects of mainstreaming students and paying attention to them in the classroom	8
Providing information about mainstreaming students to their peers in the classroom	7
Receiving more education and information about children with special needs	7
Being understanding and caring	6

Devoting a little more time to the adaptation of mainstreaming students	3
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Table 13 shows the recommendations of families about teachers in mainstreaming practices. According to families (31), the teachers should support the successful aspects of mainstreaming students and paying attention to them in the classroom, provide information about mainstreaming students to their peers in the classroom, receive more education and information about children with special needs, be understanding and caring, and devote a little more time to the adaptation of mainstreaming students.

Table 14. Recommendations regarding the students with normal development in mainstreaming practices

Recommendations	f
Being sensitive to students with special needs	12
Mainstreaming them in group games and activities	10
Being respectful, patient and tolerant	6
Learning about students with special needs	5

Table 14 shows the recommendations of families regarding students with normal development in mainstreaming practices. It has been observed that, in terms of mainstreaming practices, families (33) recommended students with normal development about being sensitive to students with special needs, mainstreaming them in group games and activities, being respectful, patient and tolerant, and learning about students with special needs.

Table 15. Recommendations regarding the students with special needs in mainstreaming practices

Recommendations	F
Preparing appropriate programs for themselves and receiving appropriate trainings for these programs	8
Social skills should be improved	6
Self-confidence development should be supported	6

The recommendations of the families regarding the students with special needs in the mainstreaming practices are given in Table 15. It has been discovered that, in terms of mainstreaming practices, families (20) recommended preparing appropriate programs for students with special needs and receiving appropriate trainings for these programs, and that their social skills should be improved, and self-confidence development should be supported.

Table 16. Recommendations regarding the families in mainstreaming practices

Recommendations	f
They need to know their children in every way	6
Supporting their children in every field such as education, sports, music	5
They should value mainstreaming students and make them feel that value	4
Being attentive and investigative for mainstreaming students	4
Being open to cooperation and communication with executives and teachers	4
Being patient	4
Supporting their children and peers to adapt	3
They should encourage mainstreaming practices	3

Table 16 shows the recommendations of families regarding other families whose children attend mainstreaming practices. It has been seen that families (33), in terms of mainstreaming practices, presented their recommendations, in order, about the need to know their children in every way, supporting their children in every field such as education, sports, music, valuing mainstreaming students and make them feel that value, being the researchers for mainstreaming students, being open to cooperation and communication with executives and teachers, being patient, supporting their children and peers to adapt, and encouraging mainstreaming practices.

4. Discussion

This section discusses the findings, difficulties encountered in mainstreaming practices, their benefits and recommendations in comparison with the field literature.

Difficulties

It was determined that the families participating in this research encountered difficulties in mainstreaming practices in the sense that teachers had insufficient knowledge about the mainstreaming student, negative attitudes and behaviors, and unwillingness. The results of this research have been observed to be compatible with those of some other studies regarding the negative attitudes and unwillingness of teachers towards mainstreaming practices (Rakap and Kaczmarak, 2010; Saloviita, 2018) and information deficiencies (Hanssen and Erina, 2021).

Parents have stated that mainstreaming students have difficulties in matters such as being excluded, peer bullying, and their academic failures being mocked by students with normal development. This finding is similar to the results of the studies by Yazici and Durmusoglu (2017), who investigated the problems and expectations of families in the literature and who have found out that individuals in the society are inconsiderate towards children with special needs, and those of Aktan et al. (2019) who investigated the social acceptance level of primary school students towards mainstreaming students, which discovered that the mainstreaming students are being perceived as academically and socially problematic, socially rejected by their peers, and face difficulties during mainstreaming practices such as social adaptability issues, loneliness and peer rejection (Baydik and Bakkaloglu, 2009; Chamberlain et al., 2007; Kabasakal et al., 2008).

In the research, families mentioned learning problems, lack of self-confidence, adaptation problems, problematic behaviors and obsessions as the difficulties they had with their children with special needs. Some studies show that students with learning problems have lower self-esteem than those without, and this negatively affects their self-confidence (Al Zyoudi, 2010). In these research findings, parents often emphasized a similar point for their children in mainstreaming practices and stated that their children have learning problems and lack of self-confidence. It can be said that this finding supports the view which suggests that students with special needs have low self-esteem compared to their peers. It can also be observed that the results of this research are similar with those of other research which have found out that problematic behaviors and obsessions of students with special needs pose a problem in mainstreaming practices (Akalin, 2015; Deniz and Ilik 2021; Pijl et al., 2008; Rakap and Kaczmarak, 2010; Sarac and Colak, 2012).

The families expressed their inability to accept the inadequacy of their children among the difficulties they experienced about themselves. The research results present the existence of the issue that families of children with special needs have difficulty accepting their children's situations (Yilmaz and Batu, 2016). It is a frequently encountered situation that the research results show similarity at this point. However, the fact that the issue of non-acceptance of families is prolonged in terms of time and, in particular, delaying the education of children can lead to greater losses. It should be noted that families should be careful in this regard.

Benefits

In the findings of this research, it has been concluded that mainstreaming practices are useful for administrators, teachers and students exhibiting normal development to understand individual differences. Similarly, in other research results (Arslan and Altintas, 2014; Sharma and Mahapatra, 2007), this finding has been observed quite commonly. These results suggest that mainstreaming practices help to understand individual differences in most people.

Students with special needs interact with a wider range of students with various abilities in mainstreaming practices. Mainstreaming practices help all students get opportunities to improve their communication skills. Therefore, students with special needs will have opportunities to gain experience, strengthen communication skills and adapt to various levels of social interaction. In this research, it has also been found that mainstreaming practices positively support the communication skills of children with special needs in particular. This finding supports other studies conducted in the field (Downing and Peckham-Hardin, 2007). In the research, it can be said that students with special needs are the ones who benefit the most from the mainstreaming practices. It has been determined that mainstreaming practices benefit students with special needs in many ways, such as supporting their self-confidence, socialization, communication, imitation, cognitive and motor development, and adapting to

the society they live in. This finding seems to be consistent with most research results conducted in the field (Bakkaloglu et al., 2018; Downing and Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Gok and Erbas, 2011; Tryfon et al., 2019). These results show that mainstreaming practices have great benefits for special needs students, and it seems that more special needs students will participate in mainstreaming practices in the future.

It is known that in their families, they have benefited significantly from mainstreaming practices. The results have shown that families provide benefits in terms of developing positive attitudes towards the child, happiness brought about by being together with their peers, and being able to observe the areas of development where their children are adequate and inadequate in mainstreaming practices. These findings are similar to the research results in the literature (Unal and Iflazoglu Saban, 2014; Tryfon et al., 2019).

Recommendations

Parents, teachers and administrators should know that students need to work together and develop successful communication skills. In the research findings, it was determined that cooperation is important, and it is recommended to the families of children with special needs to continue mainstreaming practices. Families, administrators and teachers have a significant impact on children's school lives according to Paccaud et al. (2021). Therefore, cooperation between them is a crucial factor in the education of children. With cooperation, it has positive effects on children's learning skills, motivation and mental health. In addition, cooperation provides support in both academic and emotional terms. It has been observed that the cooperation deficiencies noted in the research results in the field literature (Falkmer et al., 2015; Gok and Erbas, 2011; Hanssen and Erina, 2021; Tryfon et al., 2019) and the recommendations of the families participating in this research on cooperation with each other. In the literature, some researchers have stated that teachers lack the necessary knowledge and experience to work with students with special needs (Hanssen and Erina, 2021; Unal and Iflazoglu Saban, 2014; Gok and Erbas, 2011). One of the recommendations made by the parents for teachers in this research was related to the lack of education and knowledge about children with special needs. This result is similar to the research findings made in the literature. Teachers who have mainstreaming students in their class can at least get information about this student, know their needs, and how they can better benefit from mainstreaming practices by being exploratory about their issues, which can make families happier.

It has been found that parents recommended students with normal development to treat students with special needs with respect and tolerance, include them in their games and activities, and be more sensitive. It has been seen that these recommendations of families about children with normal development are consistent with the findings and recommendations of some researchers (Aktan et al., 2019; Chamberlain et al., 2007; Kabasakal et al., 2008; Yilmaz and Batu, 2016). Providing information and support to students with normal development by administrators and teachers about mainstreaming practices and their students can enable students to avoid negative attitudes and behaviors. Moreover, joint activities and assignments can enable students to connect with each other.

The families recommended on issues such as preparing a program for students with special needs in mainstreaming practices that are appropriate for their own development, educating them, and improving their social skills and self-confidence. It has been observed that these recommendations improved social and communicational skills of students with special needs in mainstreaming practices, mitigated problematic behaviors, increased learning rates and friendships, and were compatible with previous research in the literature (Bakkaloglu et al., 2018; Downing and Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Sharma and Mahapatra, 2007; Tryfon et al., 2019). These wishes of the families regarding the students with special needs in the mainstreaming practices can be accepted as an indication that they have positive expectations from the mainstreaming practices.

The difficulties encountered with executives in the field of mainstreaming practices, the benefits of executives and the limited number of studies containing recommendations about executives have attracted the attention of the researchers during the research process. Another detail that draws attention in this research is that the families express fewer opinions in terms of the difficulties they face in mainstreaming practices, but more opinions in terms of benefits and recommendations. The researchers interpreted the participation of families in terms of the number of questions about the benefits and recommendations of mainstreaming as an indication that they are satisfied with the mainstreaming practices in Turkey.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research was conducted in order to uncover the challenges experienced by the families whose children with special needs continued mainstreaming practices for at least five years regarding executives, teachers, students with normal development, and students with special needs and their families; the benefits of mainstreaming practices, and recommendations regarding the executives, teachers, students with normal development, and students with special needs and their families.

It has been concluded that the families experienced difficulties about cooperation with executives and other institutions, and the terms of special education; and that the teachers lacked information about mainstreaming students, do not prepare programs and plans, and have reluctance towards mainstreaming students with their negative attitudes towards mainstreaming students. In addition, it has been observed that mainstreaming students had difficulties with students with normal development who made fun of their academic failures, excluded and bullied them; and that the difficulties were the cause of lack of self-confidence, learning problems, disagreements with peers, problems of adaptation to class and school, problematic behaviors, and obsessions. The results revealed that the difficulties experienced by families about themselves are related to the inability to accept the inadequacy of their children and to devote time to their child, who is developing normally.

It has been concluded in the research that the benefits of the mainstreaming practices regarding the executives helped develop the communicational skills between the families and the teachers, and improve the ability to understand individual differences; helped the teachers understand individual differences and gather information about different learning styles; and helped the children with special needs prepare programs and plans, and be tolerant, respectful and patient. Families have been found to believe that students with normal development contribute to the ability to understand individual differences, develop senses of helping and sharing, accept individual differences, and develop compassion and ability to empathize. Mainstreaming practices have been determined to be beneficial for students with special needs in terms of supporting their self-confidence in a positive way, socialization, being happy among peers, imitating children with normal development, receiving support training outside the classroom, ability to work collaboratively, advances in cognitive, motor, language and social development, and adapting to the society. In addition, it has been observed that the families have benefitted from the mainstreaming practices since they were happy about their children's success, developed positive attitudes towards their children, satisfied that they were attending school alongside their peers, and was able to monitor adequate and inadequate development areas of their children.

Families recommended executives to advance the cooperation with special educational institutions and organizations, include more activities among students, and be interested in and support mainstreaming students. They have also recommended the teachers to support the successful aspects of mainstreaming students and pay attention to them in the classroom, provide information about mainstreaming students to their peers in the classroom, receive more education and information about children with special needs, be understanding and caring, and devote a little more time to the adaptation of mainstreaming students. It has been concluded that, in terms of mainstreaming practices, families recommended students with normal development about being sensitive to students with special needs, mainstreaming them in group games and activities, being respectful, patient and tolerant, and learning about students with special needs. It has been discovered that, in terms of mainstreaming practices, families recommended preparing appropriate programs for students with special needs and receiving appropriate trainings for these programs, and that their social skills should be improved, and self-confidence development should be supported. Additionally, it has been observed that families recommended the other families of students with special needs about the need to know their children in every way, about supporting their children in every field such as education, sports and music, valuing mainstreaming students and making them feel that value, being attentive and investigative for mainstreaming students, being open to cooperation and communication with executives and teachers, being patient, supporting their children and peers to adapt, and encouraging mainstreaming practices.

This research has been conducted on the families of thirty-three students with learning disabilities, mental impairment, physical impairment, autism spectrum disorder, and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder in Kayseri. Similar research can be conducted with the families of children who are in a single disability group.

Advanced research can also be recommended with the participation of families throughout Turkey. Provide dates defining the periods of recruitment and follow-up and the primary sources of the potential subjects, where appropriate. If these dates differ by group, provide the values for each group.

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