

Teachers' Attitudes Towards Parental Involvement in Israel: Comparing Teachers in General Education and in Special Education

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Abstract

This study examines teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement in five areas: general attitudes, passive involvement in the educational process, active involvement in the educational process, giving and receiving services, and school policy. The study mainly aimed to establish what the differences are, if any, between the attitudes of special education teachers and those of general education teachers towards these parental involvement areas. It also examined the correlation between spheres of involvement and teachers' background variables (age, seniority, academic level). The sample consisted of 157 teachers: 71 special education teachers, and 86 general education teachers. Teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire and to indicate desired areas of involvement as well as positive and negative experiences of parental involvement. Significant differences were found between the two research groups in all five areas of involvement. General education teachers had more positive attitudes towards parental involvement than special education teachers. The study highlights the importance of enhancing communication between teachers and parents, especially between special education teachers and parents.

Key Words: teacher, teachers' attitudes, parental involvement, special education, general education, Israel, services, school policy, students with disabilities

Introduction

This paper examined teachers' attitudes to parental involvement from the point of view of teachers working in special education compared to teachers in general education. The Ministry of Education in Israel supports a high level of parental involvement in the education processes. The Special Education Law in Israel allocates a significant place to parental involvement in the education of their child and defines the parents as full partners in the educational process at the schools. Thus, the importance of this study in examining teachers' attitudes to such involvement is established, while examining the difference between special education teachers and general education teachers. As authors, we share personal interest in this important issue. Since we train teachers, our goal is that future teachers will be aware of the significant importance of parental involvement in their educational work and will know how to involve parents in collaborative work that advances the student.

Literature Review

The literature review includes various models of parental involvement, parental involvement in Israel, pros and cons of parental involvement, and teachers' attitudes to such involvement. In recent decades the importance placed on parental involvement regarding what goes on at school, in Israel and around the world, has been constantly increasing (Strier & Katz, 2015). Many attempts have been made in order to understand the complexity of the relationship between teachers and parents. Parental involvement in school is defined as the interaction between the parents and the educational institution, both from a technical–organizational aspect and in the educational process (Fisher, 2016). Parental involvement is expressed in a wide range of actions, related to the manner of parental organization at the school and to the nature of their connection with the school staff. Parental involvement is the result of the desire to minimize the gap between the perception of home and the perception of the school (Fisher, 2018). Dor and Rucker-Naidu (2012) added that parental involvement is related to the parents' expectations and their beliefs regarding their children's academic and educational achievements. The purpose of parental involvement in school is to grow communication channels between the school and the parents and to create a forum for discussion which will enable the parents and the teachers to express their positions, views, and interests, as well as to participate in determining the policy of the educational institution (Miller et al. 2019; Park & Holloway, 2018). In this study, we wish to deepen the knowledge on parental involvement in the education system by performing an in-depth examination of the types of relations between teachers and parents

and their nature, in general education and in special education. This examination was performed while focusing on the teachers' point of view.

Models of Parental Involvement

In Israel, the Ministry of Education sees parental involvement as an essential goal of any education establishment and even emphasizes its importance as an integrative force driving both environments—school and home. The policy of the Ministry of Education in Israel emphasizes the advantages of parental involvement. A Ministry of Education paper published in 2018 (Ritvo et al.) emphasized that the principal and the educational staff are responsible for initiating the collaborative connections and are responsible for the existence of an active parent–teacher association (PTA) in every educational setting. Most principals, in various management levels, are required to lead their teams to act from a position of openness, respect, and trust in their communications with parents, and from that position create encounters, form organizational structures (such as parents' leadership), plan work strategies, and determine education goals. These actions will allow parents to feel part of the educational activity taking place in the establishment their children attend and to feel that they have an influential, involved role as partners, while not compromising the autonomy of the educational staff, their functional sphere, and their professional discretion. This partnership exists in two dimensions—private and systemic. In the private dimension, the principal and the educational staff carry on a continuous dialog with the parents to advance and nurture the student. In the systemic dimension, the staff and the parents interact and discourse on systemwide aspects of the education establishment such as vision, routine, activities, teaching methods, and so on. The education staff invites the parents to participate in a dialog regarding the partnership in both its systemic and private aspects. Inviting the parents into the discourse enables the parents to express their wishes and concerns and helps the staff be attentive to the parental voice (Ritvo et al., 2018).

Parental involvement in school may be expressed in different ways. Raviv (2016) has classified the patterns of parental involvement into several main levels, according to the balance of power characterizing teacher–parent relationships. These levels have been defined as the central models of involvement:

1. **Parents as observers:** In this model there is a boundary border between the teachers and the parents. The parents do not take an active part in school activities, but rather observe them from the side. Actions of observation include reading school information pages, watching plays prepared by the children, and attending parent–teacher meetings. The parents are passive, dis-involved observers, putting their trust in the teachers to fulfill their

- roles properly. According to this model, the teachers and administrators hold all the power, and they are the sole decision-makers and policymakers.
2. Parents as service providers: Schools operating according to this model treat parents as a resource: the parents can benefit the school and promote it. Therefore, the parents are requested to donate material and spiritual resources to the school in order to expand the school's possibilities for activities and the educational variety offered to the students. The parental contribution can be specific to the class in which their child studies or to the entire school. In this model, as in the previous one, the school holds all the power and has the sole right to make decisions and set policies; however, the boundaries are less rigid, and the parents' entrance to the school occurs in more varied opportunities.
 3. Parents as partners in dialogue: This model is characterized by continuous dialogue, inquiry, and partnership between the educational institution and the parents. The parents are entitled to approach the educational staff on any matter and may express their opinion and act alongside the educational staff in order to affect a change. The parents and the teachers aspire for equality in resolving problems. The communication between the parents and the teachers does not revolve solely around the children's achievements and functioning, but rather also applies to concrete issues of policymaking and decision-making.

The models reflect different patterns of parental involvement in school, from a pattern characterized by passiveness and lack of mutuality to a pattern characterized by mutuality and cooperation. Parental involvement with its various types has advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Parental Involvement at School

Many researchers (including Boonk et al., 2018; Lusse et al., 2019; Smith & Sheridan, 2019) have emphasized the significant benefit that the student may derive from cooperation between his parents and his teachers, both in the educational field and the personal and behavioral field. Parental involvement contributes to nurturing the child's self-esteem, to developing social adaptation capacity, and to improving study habits. The academic achievements of students whose parents are involved in what goes on at school are higher, and the likelihood of violent expressions by these students is lower (Lusse et al., 2019; Smith & Sheridan, 2019). Moreover, parents who are actively involved in school show a personal example of contribution and action, thus reinforcing for their children the great importance of contribution to the community (Boonk et al., 2018). Furthermore, a meta-analytical study by Jeynes (2022) found that the components of parents' expectation for significant involvement

with the education staff in school had a significant influence over their children's academic achievements.

Studies show that parental involvement also contributes to the school and the teachers. Involved parents can assist the teachers in obtaining required equipment and organize meetings and lectures. In addition, parents can assist teachers to develop and enrich the curriculum and even provide them with emotional support, which may reduce professional burnout (Talmor et al., 2005). The parents may also benefit from the contact with the school, as they can use it in order to expand the relationship between themselves and their children. Parental involvement enables them to be more closely acquainted with the child's social relations, the children's society, its rules, and function (Paccaud et al., 2021). Moreover, parents who have joined the PTA deepen their familiarity with the school, have a better understanding of the way the educational system functions, and see themselves as active partners in pedagogical, social, and other aspects related to the school environment (Fisher, 2018). When the parents perceive the school as an accepting environment and the teachers express positive communication and encourage open discourse and transfer of information between themselves and the parents, then the parents feel more needed and show higher involvement (Park & Holloway, 2018). Involved parents can realize their own skills and tendencies and promote skills of creativity, leadership, and organization (Wanat, 2010). Therefore, all partners to the educational work at school benefit from parental involvement.

Alongside the many benefits of parental involvement, there are also disadvantages. For example, some studies found that parental involvement might undermine the teachers' personal and professional confidence, mainly when the teachers feel that the involvement encroaches on their professional expertise (Addi-Racah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008; Dor & Rucker-Naidu, 2012) or includes strong criticism of the school and the educational staff. Parents who exert pressure on teachers may cause the teachers to develop negative stances towards parental involvement and speed up processes of physical and mental exhaustion, even increasing teachers' burnout (Nygaard, 2019). The student might also be damaged as a result of the difficult relationship between the educational staff and their parents. Lack of coordination between the parents and the school might lead to conflicts and lower the student's self-esteem and academic confidence (Lusse et al., 2019).

Parental Involvement in Special Education Settings

Thus far, aspects of parental involvement in general education have been presented. In special education, there are other important considerations. The recognition of the right of parents of children with special needs to be involved

in their child's education is one of the cornerstones of the Special Education Law enacted in Israel in 1988. The law allocates a significant place to parental involvement in the education of their child and defines the parents as full partners in the educational process at the schools. Throughout the school years, parents are invited to participate in meetings and discussions which deal with various issues related to their child. In the amendment to the law in 2018, parents are even given the option of choosing the educational setting where their child will study. The effect of continuous disputes on the special education system far exceeds the effect of similar disputes on the general education system (Collier et al., 2015b). One main reason for the tension between parents and teachers in special education is the issue of expertise. Studies that examined the difficulties in parental involvement (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) found that many parents of children with special needs disagree with the professional staff with regards to the desired teaching methods.

One of the issues which is often a cause for conflict between parents and teachers is the child's individualized education program (IEP). The legal requirement is that every student in a special education environment has an IEP designed for them by the student's educational team. This team must include the parents of the child. The parents' role during the meeting about the IEP is very important. Most of the research, which spans well over 30 years, has shown parents are often excluded, ignored, and in some cases, challenged during IEP meetings (Mueller & Vick, 2018). Studies examining parent's satisfaction of their involvement in designing their children's IEPs found that often parents felt that there were many barriers when working with schools. The parents tend to undermine the professionalism of the teachers and argue that they do not act to advance their children in the way best suited to them (Kurth et al., 2020; Slade et al., 2018).

The conflict between parents and teachers in special education is also related to the nature of the work of teachers in special education. Working with children with special needs requires addressing their wide range needs, since the performance of the student in the educational setting is highly affected by the way they function at home and by their relationship with their parents and siblings. Therefore, it requires significant teamwork and continuous contact between the teachers and the parents, much more than what is acceptable in general education. Oftentimes the relationship between the parents and the teacher in special education is very tense and highly charged. There are often communication difficulties between parents and teachers in special education; the teachers tend to be judgmental towards the parents and may even show disloyalty and disrespect to them (Collier et al., 2015a, 2015b; Gavish & Fleischmann, 2020; Kurth et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2019; Numisi et al., 2020).

Oftentimes the teacher in special education is a figure at whom parents let out frustrations stemming from the fact that their child has unique needs (White, 2021). Constraints and pressures related to fulfilling their many tasks might prevent teachers from creating an effective collaboration with the parents and may lead to negative attitudes towards parental involvement.

Teachers' Attitudes Towards Parental Involvement at School

Many studies (e.g., Fisher, 2016; Raviv, 2016) have examined the subject of parental involvement from the parents' point of view. Parental involvement at school may have a direct effect on the teachers' performance. Therefore, in order to obtain a deep understanding of parental involvement at school and its effects on the teachers' performance and on the education process, the issue must also be examined from the teachers' point of view.

The attitudes of teachers toward parental involvement are usually positive. Teachers show motivation to share with parents and even report a sense of empowerment due to parental involvement, especially when there is an atmosphere of mutual trust and appreciation between the teachers and the parents (Addi-Racah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008; Dor & Rucker-Naidu, 2012; Fisher, 2016). However, teachers appreciate parental involvement so long as it is suitable to their professional conduct. Increasing influence by parents might damage a teacher who feels that the parents criticize their work and intrude on their professional expertise.

Correlations have been previously found between teachers' demographic variables and their attitudes towards parental involvement. Young teachers with higher education express more positive attitudes compared with older teachers who do not have as much higher education (Gu & Yawkey, 2010). Variables related to the characteristics of the students also affect the attitudes of the teachers. Teachers perceive the relationship with parents of students with behavioral problems, attention disorders, and hyperactivity as more complex and associated with more conflicts (Thijs & Eilbracht, 2012).

Reviewing the studies done in the field shows that the concept of involvement has many facets, and it includes different types of communication between the school and the parent. The uniqueness of the current study is in examining the link between the type of educational setting (general education and special education) and the teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement, an aspect which has not been previously researched in Israel. Thus, the current study expands the knowledge about the teachers' point of view regarding parental involvement and contributes to understanding the ways in which it is possible to develop effective patterns of parental involvement. The hypothesis is that differences will be found and that the attitudes of teachers in general

education will be more positive towards parental involvement in comparison to those of teachers in special education. The study also examined correlations between attitudes to parental involvement and the teachers' background variables: age, seniority, and education.

Method

Participants

The sample included 157 teachers from various schools throughout Israel (general and special education). Of participants, 71 of them teach in special education establishments, and 86 teach in regular education schools; 75 teach in elementary schools (ages 6–12), and 82 teach in junior and senior high schools (ages 13–18). The special education sample included teachers who specialized in special education as part of their training and taught in schools dedicated to special education—a school for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and a school for students with intellectual disability—as well as teachers who taught in special education classes in regular schools: classes for students with ASD, with a learning disability, or with behavioral–emotional disabilities, respectively. The teachers who taught in regular education contexts are teachers who were trained to teach in regular education and taught typically developing students in regular education schools.

The two groups were compared by age, seniority, and academic level. Teacher's *t* tests revealed no differences between the groups, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Background Characteristics of Teachers in Both Study Groups

	General Education (<i>n</i> = 86)		Special Education (<i>n</i> = 71)		Group Differences (<i>t</i>)
	M	SD	M	SD	
Age	37.42	8.67	36.3	9.26	.78
Seniority	12.58	9.20	10.66	9.26	1.33

Teachers' academic level in general education schools was distributed in the following manner: BA degree (*n* = 57); 66.3%, MA degree and more (*n* = 29) 33.7%. The distribution among teachers in special education schools included: BA degree (*n* = 45) 63.4%, MA degree and more (*n* = 26) 36.6%. In tests performed to test the differences between the groups related to the background variables, there were no significant differences found related to this background variable ($\chi^2 = 0.14$).

Research Tools

In the current study there were two types of questionnaires: (1) a questionnaire of personal background variables; (2) a questionnaire to examine the attitudes of the teachers towards parental involvement. The details of the questionnaires follow:

1. Personal background variables questionnaire: the questionnaire was constructed for the purpose of the current study and included four questions on the background variables of the tested: age, seniority, academic level, and the nature of the educational setting (special education schools or general education schools).
2. Questionnaire to examine the attitudes of the teachers towards parental involvement: for the purpose of examining the teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement, a questionnaire with 35 items was used, which included two parts:

- a. First part (items 1–32):

The first five items were taken from a questionnaire which was developed to examine the attitudes of teachers in primary school towards parental involvement in a study by Shamay (2008). The original questionnaire by Shamay included 38 items and was divided into five categories. Here we used the first category, which includes five items and refers to general attitudes towards parental involvement, for example: "I would like parents to be involved in the school more than they currently are." The credibility coefficient in this category: .73. The additional 27 items (items 6–32) were based on a questionnaire by Grimberg-Zehavi (2007). In the questionnaire by Grimberg-Zehavi the items were divided into four categories: passive level of involvement in the educational process, a level of involvement of providing and receiving services, an active level of involvement in the educational process, and a level of involvement in policymaking. For the purpose of the current study, all 27 items were used, but the phrasing of the request addressed to teachers responding on the current questionnaire was changed for the purpose of this study. Grimberg-Zehavi asked the responding teacher to state the level of involvement of their students' parents in different areas, as they see it. In the current study, the teachers were requested to state the level they would like the parents to be involved in the different areas. The instruction was phrased as follows: "To what extent are you interested in the involvement of students' parents in each of the following areas?" These items were divided into four categories:

- The teachers' attitudes towards passive parental involvement in the educational process (items 14, 31), for example: "Participation in lecture evenings for parents." The credibility coefficient for this category: .63

- The teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement related to providing and receiving services (items 9, 10, 18, 21, 28, 32), for example: "Resource recruitment"; "Decorating the school and the classrooms." The credibility coefficient for this category: .83
- The teachers' attitudes towards active parental involvement in the educational process (items 8, 15, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30), for example: "Activity in a class parent committee." The credibility coefficient for this category: .89
- The teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement policymaking at the school (items 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 27), for example: "Setting the educational goals of the school". The credibility coefficient for this category: .87

Credibility of .95 was obtained in an internal consistency test (Cronbach's alpha) in this study regarding the entire questionnaire. The respondents were requested to rate the level of their agreement with the statements presented in items 1–5 and the level of interest they have in parental involvement in the different areas presented in items 6–32. The rating was performed according to the Likert scale: 1 (disagree or not interested at all) up to 4 (greatly agree or greatly interested). Higher ratings indicate a positive attitude of the teacher towards parental involvement.

b. Second part (items 33–35):

In the second part of the questionnaire there were three open-ended questions which constitute the basis for analyzing the teachers' attitudes to parental involvement on issues they chose to address themselves, without being limited by the author of the questionnaire. When analyzing the findings of the study, these questions supported the data and also enabled the researchers to refer to issues which exceed the limits of the closed questionnaire. In the first question in this part (item 33) the teachers were requested to specify the areas in which they want parental involvement. In the additional two questions (items 34, 35) the teachers were requested to provide examples of positive and negative experiences regarding parental involvement (see Appendix).

Using the research tools selected for the current research, one can get a comprehensive view of teachers' position on parental involvement, specifically addressing the involvement areas mentioned above, as well as getting the teachers' personal expression through their answers to the open-ended questions.

Procedure

The researchers personally delivered the questionnaires to the teachers who agreed to participate in the study after receiving the approval of the school

principals. The purpose of the study was explained to the teachers, and they were asked to fill in the questionnaires independently during a free hour during the day or during recess. The teachers were requested to fill in the questionnaires accurately, so that the study results provide a situation report which is as credible as possible. They were also told that the questionnaire is anonymous, intended to be used solely for research, and does not include any identifying details. The questionnaire was completed in Hebrew and translated into English for publication purposes.

Results

The findings point to significant differences between the attitudes of teachers in general education and those of teachers in special education in all tested categories: attitudes towards parental involvement in general: $p < .001$, $t(155) = 8.32$; attitudes towards passive parental involvement in the educational process: $p < .01$, $t(155) = 3.07$; attitudes towards parental involvement related to providing and receiving services: $p < .001$, $t(155) = 7.69$; attitudes towards active parental involvement in the educational process: $p < .001$, $t(155) = 7.64$; and attitudes towards parental involvement in policy making at the school: $p < .001$, $t(155) = 6.77$. The findings are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Differences Between the Two Study Groups—General and Special Education Teachers in Five Areas of Involvement

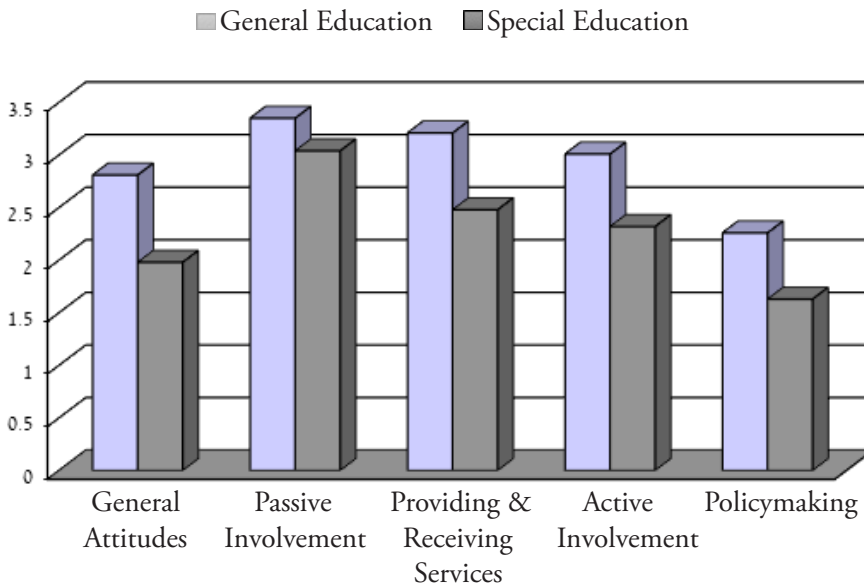


Figure 1 points to differences between the two study groups in all five areas of involvement, with the attitudes of teachers in general education towards parental involvement being more positive compared with those of teachers in special education. (A higher grade indicates more positive positions.) Therefore, the hypothesis was confirmed. Across both of the two study groups, the most positive attitudes are towards passive parental involvement, and the lowest level of interest from teachers regarding parental involvement is in policymaking.

In a Mann-Whitney analysis, no significant difference was found between the attitudes of primary school teachers and those of secondary school teachers regarding parental involvement, Mann-Whitney $Z = .98, p < .05$. In order to examine the correlations between the attitudes of teachers to parental involvement and their background variables (age, seniority, and academic level), Pearson analyses were calculated, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Pearson Correlations Between Teachers' Areas of Involvement and Their Background Variables in Both Study Groups

		Areas of Involvement				
	Back-ground Variables	General Attitudes	Passive Involvement	Providing & Receiving Services	Active Involvement	Policy-making
General Education	Age	-.13	-.11	-.19	-.17	-.03
	Academic Level	-.11	-.09	-.24	-.04	.06
Special Education	Age	*.24	.18	*.27	.21	.23
	Academic Level	.21	.16	.26	.09	.17

$p < .05$.

Note. Since there was a high correlation between age and seniority variables ($r = .86, p < .001$), only age variable is featured.

Table 2 shows that among teachers teaching in general education there was no correlation between attitudes and background variables. Among the group of teachers teaching in special education there was a significant positive correlation between teachers' ages and their attitudes towards parental involvement in general ($r = .24, p < .05$), and there was also a significant positive correlation between teachers' ages and their attitudes towards parental involvement related to providing and receiving services ($r = .27, p < .05$). These findings show that even though the attitudes of teachers teaching in special education towards parental involvement were more negative compared with teachers teaching in general education, the older the teachers in special education are, the more positive their attitudes are to general parental involvement and to providing and receiving services.

In order to better understand the attitudes of teachers to parental involvement at school, the questionnaire included three open-ended questions about areas in which they were interested in more parental involvement as well as positive and negative experiences related to this involvement. The teachers' answers to the open-ended questions were read by each researcher separately and divided according to the categories. The division of the answers into categories was confirmed by a third researcher. Table 3 presents the main areas as stated by the teachers in their responses to these questions. The sections that follow detail the subjects to which the teachers referred according to the categories which appear in Table 3:

Table 3. Areas of Desired Involvement, Positive and Negative Experiences in Both Study Groups

		General Education <i>n</i> = 81			Special Education <i>n</i> = 65		
Categories of Quantitative Questionnaire		Desired Areas of Involvement	Positive Experience	Negative Experience	Desired Areas of Involvement	Positive Experience	Negative Experience
General Involvement	Involvement at Home	10 (12%)	-	-	16 (25%)	12 (18%)	-
Providing and Receiving Services	Enrichment	51 (63%)	32 (39%)	2 (2%)	49 (75%)	23 (36%)	-
	Afterschool Activities	41 (51%)	15 (18%)	2 (2%)	33 (51%)	40 (62%)	3 (5%)
	Resources	30 (37%)	6 (7%)	-	-	-	-
Active Involvement	Involvement in the Educational Area	19 (24%)	5 (6%)	36 (44%)	21 (32%)	5 (8%)	16 (25%)
	Discipline	25 (31%)	28 (35%)	10 (12%)	14 (21%)	21 (32%)	9 (14%)
Polycymaking	School Regulations and Procedures	10 (12%)	-	18 (22%)	-	-	32 (50%)

Notes. (a) Only some participants answered the open-ended questions. (b) Some participants related to several areas of involvement.

General Involvement

Involvement at Home

The teachers referred to subjects related to parental involvement at home, for example, general education, emotional aspects, empowerment, and supporting the child's motivation to learn. It should be noted that this is the only area which the teachers raised where the emphasis is placed on the interaction between the parent and the child and not between the parent and the teacher. Among the teachers in special education, there was a higher expectation for involvement at home (25%) compared with teachers in general education (12%). The group of teachers interested in parental involvement at home also reported positive experiences in this area, for example: "the parents understood that their child requires emotional therapy, and this helped a lot."

Providing and Receiving Services

Enrichment

The teachers referred to parental involvement related to initiative and holding enrichment activities in school, for example, lectures, classes, "enriching parent activities," activities around holidays, and workshops. Most of the teachers, both in general education (63%) and in special education (75%), mentioned enrichment activities as their preferred area of parental involvement. For example, a teacher in special education stated: "sharing the organization of activities in the class on special days, 'routine breaker' days." Teachers in both study groups reported positive experiences in this area. For example, a teacher in regular education said: "a lecture to my class on the professional occupation of one of the fathers was fascinating and interesting, and I was grateful for the participation."

Afterschool Activities

The teachers also mentioned activities that fall under the responsibility of the parents after school, such as trips, family trips, parties, bazaars, youth movements, and social activities. Approximately half (51%) of the teachers in both study groups saw great importance in holding afterschool activities. A teacher in special education stated that "mostly in special education, the parents need to be involved in the social area and keep social connections in the afternoon as well." Teachers in both study groups reported positive experiences in this area, and a higher prevalence of positive reports was noted among teachers in special education (62%). For example, one teacher mentioned "the Purim market at the school – the parents were involved and obtained free inflatables, candy, and a falafel stand. They also manned the stations and helped in the event. This involvement saved the school personnel and money."

Resources

The teachers referred to developing the structure of the school, equipment, and money. Only teachers in general education expressed a desire for parental involvement in this area, and even reported positive experiences, for example: “in the financial area, in the area of the school visibility, decoration, and painting the study room.” Teachers in special education did not refer to material resources.

Active Involvement in the Educational Process*Involvement in the Educational Process*

The teachers described assistance in homework preparation, applying and exercising the studied material after school hours, preparation for tests, and tracking academic achievements. Both study groups stated that parental involvement is important to academic achievement: 24% of teachers in general education, and 32% of teachers in special education. A teacher in general education stated that “I would like for them to take responsibility for high achievements in the studied subjects, applying the knowledge learned, and doing the assigned exercises with the children.” Alongside the desire for cooperation on academics, there were reports of frequent occurrences of negative experiences in both study groups, and in particular by teachers in general education. Thus, for example, one said, “Parents also criticize the study methods. This year, for example, they shamed a math teacher on WhatsApp when they decided that she does not teach as they would like.” A teacher in special education wrote, “the parent’s desire for their child to study math according to their age when the child has significant academic gaps, and they will only be frustrated and will not benefit from it.”

Discipline

The teachers raised the subject of boundaries placed by the parents, punishing and enforcing behavior rules expected at the school. In special education the expectation is for cooperation in forming and applying involvement plans in the behavioral area. Some stated that parental involvement is important for discipline: 31% of teachers in general education, and 21% of teachers in special education. For example, a teacher in general education asked that the parents “be more in touch with their children’s disciplinary problems.” Teachers in both special education and general education reported positive experiences in parental involvement in this area. A teacher in special education stated that “when there was positive or negative feedback for behavior according to the behavioral plan set, there was also change in the child’s behavior.” Both study groups, the teachers in the general education and the teachers in the special

education, reported negative experiences in similar and low frequencies (12% and 14%, respectively). For example, a teacher in special education wrote that “parents who don’t understand the needs and behavior of the child are involved in the behavioral plan and eventually ruin it and disrupt it.”

Policymaking

School Regulations and Procedures

The teachers referred to parental involvement in setting rules of the school. Only teachers in general education stated that they were interested in parents’ involvement in this area. While this issue was not raised at all in the answers of teachers in special education, it is possible they are not interested or do not expect parental involvement in this area. As for the experiences the teachers had, the teachers in general education reported negative experiences in this area at a higher frequency than their interest in parental involvement in this area. The teachers in special education also reported negative experiences. About half of them referred to this in their responses, for example, a teacher who taught in a school in which the policy was that parents do not participate in their children’s birthday party, remarked about “parents who make decisions contrary to the school regulations, such as the participation of parents in the child’s birthday in the classroom.”

To summarize, the findings of the study show that there are significant differences between the attitudes of teachers in special education and those of teachers in general education in all five areas of involvement which were studied. Teachers in general education showed more positive attitudes towards parental involvement compared to teachers in special education. These findings appeared both in the quantitative part and the qualitative part of the current study. Among both study groups, providing and receiving services was an area of parental involvement which appeared more than any other area as a desired area of involvement and as an area in which the teachers had positive experiences.

Discussion

In this study, the attitudes of teachers who teach in two different settings (general education and special education) towards parental involvement at the school were examined. Analysis was conducted with reference to five aspects of parental involvement: (1) parental involvement in general, (2) passive parental involvement in the educational process, (3) parental involvement related to providing and receiving services, (4) active parental involvement in the educational process, and (5) parental involvement in policymaking at the school.

A quantitative analysis of the answers to the first part of the questionnaire which included closed questions showed a similar trend in the rating of teachers' attitudes to parental involvement among both study groups: the most positive attitudes, which appeared at the highest frequency, were attitudes toward passive involvement in the educational process (such as participation in ceremonies, lecture evenings intended for parents, and parent-teacher meetings) and toward providing services (such as recruiting resources and decorating the classroom). The attitudes which appeared at the lowest frequencies in the teachers' responses were toward active involvement in the educational process (such as participation in a class parent committee and organizing activities) and toward policymaking at the school (such as activities for determining the school's values and goals).

The teachers' responses in both study groups to the second part of the questionnaire, which included open-ended questions, reinforced the findings from the first part. Among both study groups, providing and receiving services was the area of parental involvement which appeared more than any other area as a desired area of involvement and as an area where the teachers had positive experiences, and the teachers often referred to enrichment activities. The teachers in general education also referred to material resources. This finding is consistent with the model of "parents as service providers," according to which the teachers view the parents as a resource (material or spiritual) which may promote the school, but the teachers have control (Raviv, 2016).

Active involvement in the educational process, both in the academic field and the behavioral field, was considered by both study groups as an area where parental involvement is desired, but to a lesser degree than passive involvement. Many teachers stated that they had negative experiences in this area when parents intervened in areas related to teaching methods. Reporting negative experiences was the highest in the area of policymaking, as well as parental involvement in policymaking, which is less desirable among teachers, especially among those in special education. These findings are consistent with findings of previous studies reporting positive attitudes of teachers to parental involvement, so long as it does not intrude on their area of expertise (Addi-Racah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008; Dor & Rucker-Naidu, 2012; Fisher, 2016; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

It seems that active involvement in the educational process and involvement in policymaking at the school are regarded as an undesirable intrusion to the work methods as well as the professional areas of the teachers. Passive parental involvement or providing services create fewer conflicts between the teachers and the parents; as long as the parents do not take an active part at what goes on at the school, the teachers have no significant reason to fear an intrusion

into their jobs. It seems that teachers find it difficult to implement a dialogue model with the parents, one which enables the parents to influence content, processes, and decision-making at the school.

The findings of the study show that even in areas where teachers are interested in parental involvement, they report a significant percentage of negative experiences, which can be expressed in a difficult, complex, or challenging relationship with the parents. The findings support the assumption that teachers tend to fear significant parental involvement since they do not have the tools to direct it properly, therefore they feel more threatened and less empowered (Addi-Racah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008; Dor & Rucker-Naidu, 2012).

The hypothesis of the current study was that differences will be found between the attitudes toward parental involvement of teachers in special education and teachers in general education. This hypothesis was confirmed: the attitudes to parental involvement of teachers in general education were found to be more positive than the attitudes of teachers in special education in all five aspects of involvement. It should be noted that teachers in special education did not state at all that parental involvement in policymaking and in setting the school goals are a desirable area of involvement, and half of them even reported negative experiences in that area.

It is possible that these findings can be explained by the nature of the work of the teacher in special education and the intense and demanding relationship between the teacher and their students' parents. Following the intense parental involvement, teachers might often find themselves criticized, which may invoke feelings of rejection of parental involvement and have an adverse effect on their stances towards it. The intense relationship between teachers and parents in the special education settings often become highly charged and filled with conflict. This might be expressed as judgment, lack of trust, and disrespect of the teachers towards the parents, and as suspicion from the parents, difficulty in acting in the child's benefit, and the parents attacking the education system (Collier et al., 2015b; Kurth et al., 2020; Numisi et al., 2020). It is also possible that the characteristics of the students affect the attitudes of teachers in special education towards parental involvement. The research literature found that teachers who teach students with disabilities, and in particular behavioral disabilities, more often perceive the relationship with the parents as problematic and complex (Thijs & Eilbracht, 2012).

The current study also tested the correlation between teachers' background variables (age, seniority, academic level) and their attitudes to parental involvement. Among the teachers in general education, no correlations were found between their attitudes and the background variables, while among the teachers in special education, a positive correlation was found between their ages

and their attitudes. It was found that the older the teachers in special education were, the more positive their attitudes were toward general parental involvement and toward providing and receiving services. This finding is surprising in light of the research literature which reports an opposite trend, according to which young teachers show more positive attitudes toward parental involvement (Gu & Yawkey, 2010). It is possible that teachers in special education succeed over the years in recognizing the value of parental involvement in providing services, and the importance of the initiative and responsibility taken by parents to children in special education in areas which are beyond the general curriculum.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the research findings, it is possible to recommend areas for further research as well as practical recommendations:

1. The current study did not examine the component of burnout among teachers with regards to parental involvement. In studies performed in the subject, a significant correlation was found between parental involvement and their burnout (Nygaard, 2019). Following the increased level of parental involvement at school, it is recommended in a future study to deepen the examination of the effect of parental involvement on teacher burnout.
2. In order to obtain a multidimensional image of parental involvement, it is recommended to receive parallel information from the parents. In addition, it is desired to examine the attitudes of teachers towards parental involvement among different groups of teachers: male teachers; subject-specific teachers teaching various subjects, such as literature, math; teachers who function as homeroom teachers; and so on.
3. It is recommended to deepen the knowledge by performing further studies according to the qualitative approach. These studies will enable an in-depth understanding of the unique attitudes of each group of teachers and the similarities and differences between them.
4. Following the findings, including a course about work with parents as part of the teachers' training is recommended. However, support is required not only during the training, but also during the first years in working in the educational system. Therefore, it is important to create programs for beginning schoolteachers in order for them to receive support in their work with parents, especially with parents of students with special needs. These programs should also encourage educational staff members to initiate activities with parents and to promote partnership with them.

To summarize, the findings of the current study extend the existing knowledge about the attitudes of teachers toward parental involvement and distinguish

between teachers in general education and teachers in special education. The findings support the conclusion that even when the teachers report desirable parental involvement, it is often associated with negative experiences. It is possible that, initially, the negative experiences of the teachers are the result of a flaw in their training process. Teaching students undergo little training on the role of parents in the educational process. Training in this area is important, since it may assist the teachers in understanding the reasons for conflicts and better navigating parental involvement (Koch, 2020; Smith & Sheridan, 2019).

Similar to the reports in previous professional literature, the current study shows that teachers find it difficult to accept parental involvement mostly in areas related to policymaking and setting school goals. Raviv (2016) recommends that schools create structured opportunities for parental involvement and recognize them as equal partners in decision-making. Such shared leadership requires empowering the parents, creating a relationship of trust, and recognizing their contribution to the educational process. However, empowering the parents to make involvement more effective is insufficient; it is also important to empower the teachers in an aspiration to balance the influence of both parties. When both parties are empowered, the attitudes of teachers towards parental involvement are more positive (Addi-Racah & Ainhoren, 2009).

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Appendix

A. Teachers questionnaire (Shamay, 2008). The teachers were asked to mark their level of agreement for each statement on a 1–4 scale: 1 (disagree) up to 4 (strongly agree).

1. When I share my decisions with parents, I feel I can influence the things that I care about the most.
2. When I cooperate with parents, I feel that the responsibility is taken away from me.

3. A good school is a school where parents are involved.
4. If it was up to me, I would have completely given up on parental involvement.
5. I would like parents to be involved in school more than they are today.

B. Teachers questionnaire (Grimberg-Zehavi, 2007). The teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they would accept parental involvement at each area on a 1–4 scale: 1 (not interested at all) up to 4 (most interested).

6. Establishing a formal curriculum.
 7. Introducing school innovations.
 8. Assisting teachers in solving disciplinary problems.
 9. Initiation of afternoon activities.
 10. Recruiting resources (finances, materials, equipment).
 11. Employing parents at enrichment classes.
 12. Determining the teaching methods used at school.
 13. Determining the additional program (enrichment).
 14. Participation in special activities (ceremonies, holidays).
 15. Organizing of trips and family trips.
 16. Determining school educational goals.
 17. Determining school regulations.
 18. School and classrooms decoration.
 19. Assisting students with difficulties with their homework.
 20. Lecturing about fields of expertise.
 21. Organization of bazaars, exhibitions.
 22. Assisting teachers in their children's classrooms.
 23. Active at the classroom PTA.
 24. Active at the school PTA.
 25. Cooperating in producing or writing in the school newspaper.
 26. Organizing social and cultural activities at school.
 27. Cooperation in determining school values.
 28. Social Committee activity: decoration, events, etc.
 29. Active on educational committees.
 30. Active in committees that are established for a specific interest.
 31. Attending evening lectures for parents.
 32. Organizing group transportation for students for different purposes.
- Open-ended questions:
33. State in which areas you would like the parents to be involved.
 34. Give an example of a positive experience related to parents' involvement.
 35. Give an example of a negative experience related to parents' involvement.