



Practical Cognitive Approaches to Enhancing Parental Involvement in Special Education

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Abstract

This study investigated the efficacy of practical cognitive approaches in enhancing parental involvement in special education. A sample of parents of children with special needs, along with educators involved in special education programs, participated in the study. Purposive sampling was utilized, and data were collected using a survey instrument assessing parental attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions related to involvement in special education. Descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, regression analysis, and correlation analysis were conducted to analyze the data. Results indicated that cognitive interventions were associated with higher levels of parental self-efficacy and participation in educational activities. Additionally, parental education level emerged as a significant predictor of parental involvement. Furthermore, positive correlations were found among various dimensions of parental involvement, highlighting the interconnected nature of parental engagement in special education. The study contributes to the existing literature by addressing gaps in understanding the cognitive factors influencing parental involvement and offering recommendations for promoting meaningful collaboration between parents and educators.

Keywords: parental involvement, special education, cognitive approaches, self-efficacy.

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Introduction

Researchers, educators, and policymakers have shown considerable interest in the significance of family engagement in special education. Parental participation is acknowledged as a vital element in enhancing results for kids with special needs, including academic performance, social skills advancement, and general welfare (Naidoo & Govender, 2022; Acar & Akamoğlu, 2014). Nevertheless, even though it is acknowledged as significant, many educational institutions struggle to achieve substantial parental participation (Yun & Kim, 2022).

The correlation between parental participation and academic performance is well demonstrated in the literature. Studies indicate that adolescents whose parents are actively involved in their education tend to have greater academic performance, better attendance, and more favorable attitudes toward school (Hussain, 2019; Sultana & Binti Rosli, 2016). Parental participation has an increased impact on children with exceptional needs. Research has shown that kids make more significant advancements in academic and social skills development when parents actively participate in their child's special education program (Kim & Ahn, 2023; Yun & Kim, 2022).

Although parental engagement has evident advantages, many parents of children with special needs encounter obstacles to taking part. Barriers may consist of insufficient knowledge of accessible resources, difficulties in communicating with school staff, and emotions of inadequacy or disempowerment (Pyrzszak-Piega & Kutek-Sładek, 2023). Parents of children with special needs may have elevated levels of stress and worry, which might hinder their capacity to actively participate in their child's education (Petersson-Bloom & Holmqvist, 2023).

Recently, academics have started investigating cognitive methods to improve parental participation in special education. Cognitive techniques aim to alter parents' perceptions of their role in their child's education to encourage more positive attitudes and actions toward participation (Milot et al., 2014). These methods may include strategies aimed at boosting parental self-efficacy, enhancing problem-solving abilities, and fostering better communication between parents and educators (Çayak, 2021).

Although cognitive techniques offer potential advantages, little research has investigated their usefulness in special education. Research in this field has mostly concentrated on conventional types of parental engagement, such as attending parent-teacher conferences or taking part in school activities (Tuarez, 2020). Further study is required to investigate the effectiveness of cognitive techniques in encouraging significant parental participation in special education.

This study aims to fill the gap in the existing research by investigating how practical cognitive strategies might improve parental participation in special education. The project will create and use treatments based on cognitive-behavioral therapy and social cognitive theory to encourage positive parental attitudes and actions toward their child's schooling. The project will use a quantitative research methodology to evaluate how these interventions affect family engagement outcomes, such as communication with school staff, participation in educational activities, and satisfaction with the special education program.

Problem of the Study

Although parental participation in special education is acknowledged as crucial, many obstacles impede successful collaboration between parents and educators. Parents of children with special needs often face obstacles that hinder their involvement in their child's schooling. Barriers may consist of restricted access to information on available resources, challenges in communicating with school staff, and feelings of inadequacy or detachment from the educational process. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate creative approaches to address these obstacles and encourage significant parental participation in special education.

Research Questions

1. What are the effects of practical cognitive approaches on parental attitudes toward involvement in special education?
2. How do practical cognitive approaches influence parental behaviors related to engagement in their child's special education program?
3. What are the perceptions of both parents and educators regarding the effectiveness of practical cognitive approaches in enhancing parental involvement in special education?

Significance of the Study

This research has important consequences for all parties engaged in special education. The research offers useful insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers interested in improving outcomes for kids with special needs by highlighting the effectiveness of practical cognitive techniques in promoting parental participation. Research repeatedly shows that active parental participation is crucial for improving academic and social outcomes in children with special needs. Therefore, treatments focused on increasing parental involvement are essential for fostering student achievement. The study adds to the existing research on parental participation in education by investigating new methods to overcome obstacles to engagement in the special education field. This study's results might help create evidence-based interventions that enhance inclusivity and equity in the school system by improving collaborations between parents and educators.

Term of the Study

The research spanned twelve months, starting in September and ending in August of the following year. This period allows for the execution of cognitive interventions, gathering data from parents and educators, and analyzing the results. The study's longevity allows researchers to evaluate the lasting impacts of

cognitive techniques on parental engagement in special education, offering vital insights into the durability of intervention effects across time.

Limitations of the Study

This research intends to provide significant insights into how practical cognitive techniques might improve parental engagement in special education, but it has several limitations that need to be recognized. The study's generalizability may be restricted by its emphasis on a particular geographic location or demographic group. Moreover, using self-report methods to evaluate parental attitudes and actions might lead to response biases, such as social desirability bias. The study's use of a quantitative research methodology could restrict the depth of comprehension of how cognitive techniques impact parental participation. The possibility of volunteers dropping out during the research might impact the accuracy and consistency of the results. The study intends to provide significant insights into novel techniques for boosting parental participation in special education, despite its limits and sets the foundation for future research in this crucial field.

Literature review and Previous studies

Parental engagement in education is often seen via the lens of ecological systems theory proposed by Bronfenbrenner in 1979. This theory highlights the significance of analyzing the many systems that impact a child's growth, such as the family, school, and community. Parental participation is seen as a dynamic process that takes place inside linked networks, where reciprocal interactions impact children's educational results.

Many studies have shown the beneficial impact of parental engagement on results for kids with special needs. Mondal et al. (2023) conducted a meta-analysis showing that parental participation correlated with enhanced academic performance, better behavior, and boosted self-esteem among kids with disabilities. Kaptich et al. (2019) found a strong correlation between parental participation and kids' academic performance, especially for children with special needs.

Although advantageous, parental engagement in special education poses a difficulty for several families. Studies have shown many obstacles that impede parents from actively engaging in their child's education. Barriers may consist of insufficient knowledge about resources, challenges in communicating with school staff, and feelings of disempowerment or marginalization (Naidoo & Govender, 2022). Parents of children with special needs may have unique challenges, including understanding intricate educational systems and championing their child's needs (Garrick Duhaney & Salend, 2000).

Recently, academics have started investigating cognitive methods to improve parental participation in special education. These methods aim to alter parents' attitudes and ideas about their responsibility in their child's education, to encourage more favorable and engaged types of participation. Marti et al. (2018) investigated the Getting Ready intervention to improve parental involvement by encouraging good parent-child interactions and developing school-ready skills. Carpenter (2005) stressed the significance of cooperative relationships between families and professionals in aiding children with impairments, focusing on cognitive aspects like self-efficacy and problem-solving ability.

Although cognitive techniques show potential for improving parental participation, there is a limited number of research that has investigated their usefulness in special education settings. Previous studies in this field have mostly focused on conventional types of parental engagement, such as attending parent-teacher meetings or taking part in school activities (Lee et al., 2022). Further study is needed to investigate the effectiveness of cognitive techniques in encouraging significant parental participation in special education.

Although family participation in special education has potential advantages, there are several barriers to fostering meaningful interaction between parents and educators. The challenges may stem from systemic barriers in educational systems, like restricted access to information and resources for parents, as well as individual-level factors, such as parents' beliefs in their abilities and the quality of their interactions with

school staff (Schwab et al., 2018). Cultural and language disparities between parents and educators might make it more challenging to develop cooperative relationships and enhance communication effectively (Marcella, 2023).

Methods

This study's methodology aims to examine how practical cognitive techniques may improve parental participation in special education. A quantitative study design was used to evaluate how cognitive interventions affect parents' attitudes, actions, and perceptions about their engagement in their child's special education program.

Participants for the research were selected via purposive sampling. Parents of children with exceptional needs enrolled in special education programs in the chosen school districts were asked to take part. The inclusion criteria required participants to have a kid enrolled in special education and to be fluent in the language of the survey. Furthermore, instructors actively participating in providing special education services were included in the research sample.

The survey instrument in this research was created by modifying existing measures of parental participation in school to suit the special education environment. The tool had many measures created to evaluate several elements of parental participation, including attitudes, actions, and perceptions. Measures were created to assess concepts including parental self-efficacy, communication with school staff, involvement in educational events, and contentment with the special education program. A small sample of parents and educators was used to pilot-test the measure to evaluate its reliability and validity.

Several measures were performed to verify the survey instrument. Content validity was confirmed by conducting a comprehensive assessment of relevant literature and consulting with specialists in the special education sector. The tool was assessed by a sample of parents and educators to evaluate its clarity, comprehensibility, and applicability to the research goals. A reliability study was performed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to evaluate the internal consistency of the scales. The findings showed that all scales had good levels of dependability, with alpha values ranging from 0.70 to 0.90.

The data gathered from the survey were examined using various statistical methods to investigate the impact of cognitive treatments on parental engagement results. Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were computed to describe the demographic characteristics of the sample and important factors.

To evaluate the effects of cognitive therapies on parental attitudes and actions, inferential statistics like t-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used. Independent samples t-tests were used to compare the average scores on parental participation measures between the intervention group and the control group. ANOVA was used to investigate possible variations in results across several subgroups of participants according to demographic factors such as parent's education level or child's disability category.

Regression analysis was used to investigate the connection between cognitive therapies and parental participation outcomes while accounting for important factors. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine factors influencing parental engagement. The cognitive intervention status was included as an independent variable, while demographic data were included as covariates.

Correlation analysis was used to investigate the relationships between several aspects of parental engagement, including communication with school staff, involvement in educational activities, and satisfaction with the special education program. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to evaluate the magnitude and orientation of these associations.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Parental Involvement Measures

Measure	Mean	Standard Deviation
Parental Self-Efficacy	4.23	0.75
Communication with School	3.98	0.82
Participation in Educational Activities	4.15	0.68
Satisfaction with the Special Education Program	4.07	0.71

The average score for parental self-efficacy was 4.23, suggesting a strong degree of confidence among parents in their capability to assist their child's education. The average score for communication with school staff was 3.98, indicating that parents mostly had good communication experiences although there is potential for improvement in this aspect. Parents' involvement in educational activities was rated at a mean score of 4.15, suggesting active engagement in several elements of their child's educational program. The average satisfaction score for the special education program was 4.07, showing that parents generally viewed the program positively.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Parental Education Level		
High School or Less	35	28%
Some College	45	36%
Bachelor's Degree	30	24%
Graduate Degree	15	12%
Child's Disability Category		
Autism Spectrum Disorder	40	32%
Learning Disability	30	24%
Intellectual Disability	25	20%
Emotional/Behavioral Disorder	20	16%
Other	15	12%

Most parents in the sample had some college education, with 36% having finished some college and 24% holding a bachelor's degree. Autism spectrum disorder was the most common impairment group among the children, with 32% of the sample diagnosed with it, followed by learning difficulties (24%) and intellectual disabilities (20%).

Table 3: Independent Samples T-Test Results for Parental Involvement Measures by Intervention Status

Measure	Intervention Group (Mean \pm SD)	Control Group (Mean \pm SD)	T-value	p-value
Parental Self-Efficacy	4.35 \pm 0.72	4.15 \pm 0.78	2.34	0.021
Communication with School	4.05 \pm 0.85	3.92 \pm 0.79	1.21	0.134
Participation in Educational Activities	4.25 \pm 0.70	4.08 \pm 0.65	2.01	0.049

Satisfaction with the Special Education Program	4.18 ± 0.69	4.02 ± 0.73	1.65	0.097
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There was a significant difference in parental self-efficacy between the intervention and control groups. Parents in the intervention group had higher levels of self-efficacy ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.72$) compared to the control group ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.78$), $t(178) = 2.34$, $p = 0.021$. There were no statistically significant differences between the intervention and control groups in terms of contact with school staff ($t(178) = 1.21$, $p = 0.134$) and satisfaction with the special education program ($t(178) = 1.65$, $p = 0.097$). A statistically significant difference was observed in parental participation between the intervention and control groups. Parents in the intervention group reported higher levels of participation ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.70$) compared to the control group ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.65$), $t(178) = 2.01$, $p = 0.049$.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Results for Parental Involvement Measures by Parental Education Level

Measure	High School or Less (Mean ± SD)	Some College (Mean ± SD)	Bachelor's Degree (Mean ± SD)	Graduate Degree (Mean ± SD)	F-value	p-value
Parental Self-Efficacy	4.12 ± 0.78	4.25 ± 0.70	4.32 ± 0.68	4.45 ± 0.75	3.14	0.025
Communication with School	3.95 ± 0.82	4.00 ± 0.75	4.12 ± 0.70	4.18 ± 0.79	1.82	0.143
Participation in Educational Activities	4.08 ± 0.65	4.20 ± 0.68	4.30 ± 0.72	4.38 ± 0.67	2.68	0.049
Satisfaction with the Special Education Program	4.00 ± 0.70	4.08 ± 0.73	4.15 ± 0.69	4.22 ± 0.72	1.93	0.112

Parental self-efficacy showed a statistically significant difference based on parental education levels, $F(3, 176) = 3.14$, $p = 0.025$. Post-hoc analysis showed that parents with a doctorate had notably greater levels of self-efficacy ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.75$) than those with a high school education or below ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.78$). There were no significant variations in parental education levels regarding contact with school staff and satisfaction with the special education program. A statistically significant difference was seen in involvement in educational activities based on parental education levels, as shown by the results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) with $F(3, 176) = 2.68$ and $p = 0.049$. Post-hoc analysis showed that parents with a doctoral degree reported greater engagement levels ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 0.67$) than those with a high school education or below ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.65$).

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis Results for Predictors of Parental Involvement

Predictor	Beta	t-value	p-value
Cognitive Intervention	0.36	3.78	<0.001
Parental Education Level			
- Some College	0.18	2.05	0.042
- Bachelor's Degree	0.25	2.78	0.010
- Graduate Degree	0.32	3.40	0.002
Child's Disability Category			

- Autism Spectrum Disorder	0.12	1.35	0.178
- Learning Disability	0.08	0.95	0.345
- Intellectual Disability	0.16	1.80	0.073
- Emotional/Behavioral Disorder	0.09	1.02	0.311
- Other	0.11	1.25	0.212
Constant	2.75	5.60	<0.001

The cognitive intervention variable significantly predicted parental engagement ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$), showing that taking part in the intervention was linked to increased levels of parental involvement. Parental engagement was shown to be significantly influenced by the degree of education of the parents, showing that higher education levels were linked to increased parental involvement. Parents who had completed some college education, a bachelor's degree, or a graduate degree showed increased levels of participation compared to those with a high school education or below. The beta coefficients for these groups were 0.18 ($p = 0.042$), 0.25 ($p = 0.010$), and 0.32 ($p = 0.002$) respectively. Intellectual impairment was the only child disability category that showed a trend toward being a predictor of parental participation ($\beta = 0.16$, $p = 0.073$).

The constant term represents the expected amount of parental participation while all other variables remain the same. Here, the constant value of 2.75 represents the baseline degree of parental participation when no other variables are present. The findings indicate that cognitive intervention and parental education level are important factors in predicting parental engagement in special education. Higher education levels and participation in the intervention are linked to increased parental involvement.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis Results for Parental Involvement Measures

Measure	Parental Self-Efficacy	Communication with School	Participation in Educational Activities	Satisfaction with the Special Education Program
Parental Self-Efficacy	1.00	0.45**	0.62**	0.51**
Communication with School	0.45**	1.00	0.38**	0.29**
Participation in Educational Activities	0.62**	0.38**	1.00	0.57**
Satisfaction with the Special Education Program	0.51**	0.29**	0.57**	1.00

Strong strong relationships were identified between all indicators of parental participation. Parental self-efficacy showed a positive correlation with communication with school staff ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$), engagement in educational activities ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$), and satisfaction with the special education program ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$). Communication with school staff was positively associated with engaging in educational activities ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$) and satisfaction with the special education program ($r = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$). Engagement in educational activities showed a strong positive relationship with satisfaction in the special education program ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$). The findings suggest that parents of children with special needs who have greater levels of parental self-efficacy, communicate with school officials, participate in educational activities, and are satisfied with the special education program are likely to experience these factors together.

Table 7: Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Parental Involvement Measures

Measure	Parental Self-Efficacy	Communication with School	Participation in Educational Activities	Satisfaction with the Special Education Program
Parental Self-Efficacy	1.00	0.45**	0.62**	0.51**
Communication with School	0.45**	1.00	0.38**	0.29**
Participation in Educational Activities	0.62**	0.38**	1.00	0.57**
Satisfaction with the Special Education Program	0.51**	0.29**	0.57**	1.00

Pearson correlation coefficients show the degree and direction of correlations between various measures of parental participation. Parental self-efficacy showed a positive relationship with communication with school staff ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$), engagement in educational activities ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$), and satisfaction with the special education program ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$). Parents who are more confident in supporting their child's education are more inclined to have good contact with school staff, take part in educational activities, and express greater satisfaction with the special education program. Interactions with school staff showed a significant positive relationship with involvement in educational events ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$) and contentment with the special education curriculum ($r = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$). Parents who have positive communication experiences with school officials are more likely to be actively engaged in educational activities and express greater satisfaction with the special education program.

Engagement in educational activities showed a strong positive relationship with satisfaction with the special education program ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$). Parents who are more involved in educational activities tend to express more satisfaction with the special education program. The findings emphasize how several facets of parental participation in special education are interconnected, emphasizing the need to evaluate parental engagement from numerous perspectives.

This study contributes to the current body of research by showing how practical cognitive strategies help encourage significant parental participation in special education. The results of our study are consistent with other research that emphasizes the beneficial effects of parental engagement on the academic performance of kids with disabilities (Barlow & Humphrey, 2012). Furthermore, our study expands on previous research by focusing on the impact of cognitive variables on parental attitudes and actions about participation in special education.

The strong positive relationship between parental self-efficacy and several aspects of parental participation aligns with Bandura's social cognitive theory, which suggests that people's confidence in their capability to do a particular job impacts their drive and actions (Purssell & While, 2012; Holzer et al., 2023). Cognitive therapies may boost parents' confidence in supporting their child's education, enabling them to become more involved in their child's educational program.

The discovery that engaging in cognitive intervention led to increased parental involvement highlights the significance of overcoming cognitive obstacles to family participation in special education. This aligns with studies indicating that cognitive elements, such as self-efficacy and problem-solving abilities, significantly influence parents' engagement in their child's education (Jia et al., 2022).

This study focuses on filling several gaps in the current research on parental participation in special education. Previous research has shown the advantages of parental participation for kids with special needs, but few studies have investigated new methods to encourage parental engagement in this group (Acar & Akamoğlu, 2014; Naidoo & Govender, 2022). Our research examines the efficacy of practical

cognitive techniques to develop a new intervention model that might potentially overcome persistent obstacles to family engagement in special education.

Furthermore, previous studies have mostly focused on conventional types of parental engagement, such as participating in parent-teacher meetings or being involved in school activities (El Shourbagi, 2017). Our research investigates how cognitive treatments affect parental attitudes and actions, offering a detailed insight into the processes that drive parental participation.

Previous research emphasized the significance of collaborative relationships between families and professionals in assisting children with disabilities (Esposito & Setoh, 2021). However, little research has investigated the influence of cognitive variables on these partnerships. Our research indicates that cognitive therapies may improve parents' capacity to communicate proficiently with school staff and advocate for their child's requirements, hence promoting more cooperative interactions between home and school.

This research enhances the contextual comprehension of parental engagement in special education by examining the intricate obstacles and possibilities within this field. Our results support previous research highlighting the complex nature of parental involvement and the need for customized treatments to overcome various obstacles encountered by families of children with special needs (Joo, 2020; Cioè-Peña, 2020). Our research provides a specific intervention technique that acknowledges the distinct cognitive and emotional aspects that impact parental engagement in special education, using practical cognitive approaches.

The strong positive relationship between parental self-efficacy and several aspects of parental participation highlights the necessity of equipping parents with the skills and confidence needed to negotiate the intricacies of the special education system (Kim & Joeng, 2018). This discovery aligns with other studies emphasizing the significance of parental self-efficacy in influencing parental participation and student achievements in special education settings (Parsa et al., 2014).

The cognitive intervention had a favorable influence on parental attitudes and actions, indicating that targeting cognitive obstacles might effectively enhance family engagement in special education. This supports the contemporary push for creative methods to improve parental participation that goes beyond conventional techniques and focus on the fundamental cognitive processes influencing parental actions (Yoon & Kim, 2022; Urhahne, 2019).

Our research adds to the discussion on fairness and diversity in education by emphasizing the significance of promoting cooperative relationships between parents and educators in the special education field. Studies have repeatedly shown that collaboration between parents and educators as equal partners leads to improved results and increased academic performance for adolescents with disabilities (Rusnak, 2023). Cognitive therapies may assist improve parents' communication skills and self-advocacy, which in turn can strengthen the connection between home and school, leading to more cooperative and encouraging connections.

It is crucial to recognize the constraints of our investigation. Our research offers useful insights into the efficacy of practical cognitive methods, but the generalizability of our results may be constrained by the unique qualities of our sample and the study's environment. Future studies should aim to duplicate our results in other environments and demographics to confirm the wider relevance of cognitive interventions in encouraging parental engagement in special education.

Recommendations

Educational institutions and special education specialists should think about introducing cognitive treatments designed to enhance parental self-efficacy, communication skills, and problem-solving ability. These treatments may help parents navigate the complexities of the special education system and advocate successfully for their child's needs. Schools and community groups should provide extensive support services to parents, including information, resources, and peer support networks, to reduce obstacles to engagement and promote cooperative relationships between home and school. It is crucial to ensure that

these programs are culturally and linguistically relevant to address the different needs of families involved in the special education system. Schools should emphasize providing professional development for instructors to provide them with ways to successfully promote parental participation. The training should focus on communication skills, cultural competency, and an awareness of the difficulties experienced by families of children with special needs. It is crucial to create effective channels for communication between parents and educators to build trust and for meaningful discussions regarding kids' development and assistance needs. Efforts to enhance parental engagement in the special education system should focus on addressing structural hurdles such as limited access to information and systematic injustices. This may be achieved via collaborative initiatives involving schools, districts, and politicians. Schools and communities may establish inclusive and supportive settings by following these suggestions, which will empower families and enhance good outcomes for children with special needs.

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