



Research Article

**A KNOWLEDGE ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE (KAP) STUDY ON PARENTAL CARE AND COUNSELLING AWARENESS AMONG SPECIAL CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS OF DISABILITY IN PALAYAMKOTTAI**

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**ABSTRACT**

Children with disabilities require specialized parental care and counseling to support their developmental, emotional, and social well-being. Parental awareness, attitudes, and caregiving practices play a crucial role in determining the quality of life and adaptation of these children; however, gaps in knowledge, social stigma, and limited access to counseling services often hinder optimal outcomes. This study aimed to assess the knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) regarding parental care and counseling awareness among parents of special children in schools for disabilities in Palayamkottai. A cross-sectional study design was adopted, and data were collected using a structured and pre-validated questionnaire encompassing domains of knowledge, attitude, and practice related to parental care and counseling. The collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical methods to determine levels of awareness and associated factors. The findings revealed that a majority of parents possessed moderate knowledge regarding the needs of special children; however, awareness of counseling services and their benefits was comparatively limited. Attitudes toward parental involvement and counselling were generally positive, though influenced by social stigma and lack of professional guidance. Practices related to caregiving and counseling were found to be inconsistent, with only a proportion of parents regularly implementing recommended strategies. The study highlights the need for structured parental education programs, improved accessibility to counselling services, and community-based interventions to bridge existing gaps, thereby enhancing care giving practices and improving developmental outcomes and overall well-being of special children.

**INTRODUCTION**

Parenting plays a crucial role in shaping the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development of a child from infancy through adulthood<sup>[1]</sup>. In the context of children with disabilities, parenting becomes more complex and demanding, requiring specialized care, increased emotional support, and informed decision-making<sup>[2]</sup>.

Children with special needs, including those with autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, dyslexia, and developmental delays, often face multiple challenges that affect their overall growth, learning abilities, and social adaptation<sup>[3]</sup>. These children require consistent guidance and a supportive environment to achieve their full potential.

Parental care is a key determinant in the management and rehabilitation of children with disabilities. Effective parenting not only improves the child's functional abilities but also enhances emotional stability and social integration<sup>[4]</sup>. However, many parents experience psychological stress, lack of awareness, social stigma, and limited access to appropriate healthcare and counselling services<sup>[5]</sup>.

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These challenges can negatively influence their caregiving practices and the overall well-being of the child.

Counselling serves as an essential intervention for both parents and children with special needs. It provides emotional support, improves coping strategies, enhances understanding of the child's condition, and promotes positive parenting practices<sup>[6]</sup>. Counselling also helps parents overcome feelings of anxiety, guilt, and social isolation, thereby enabling them to provide better care and support<sup>[7]</sup>. Despite its importance, awareness and utilization of counselling services among parents remain inadequate, especially in resource-limited settings<sup>[8]</sup>.

Assessing the knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) of parents regarding parental care and counselling awareness is vital to identify existing gaps and barriers. Such assessment helps in designing targeted interventions, educational programs, and support systems to improve parental competence and child outcomes<sup>[9]</sup>. In this context, the present study aims to evaluate the knowledge, attitude, and practices related to parental care and counselling awareness among parents of special children in schools for disabilities in Palayamkottai.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Study Design**

A cross-sectional study

### **Inclusion Criteria**

- Children aged 1–12 years
- Both male and female children.
- Parents of special children willing to participate in the study.
- Children diagnosed with developmental delay, autism, ADHD, cerebral palsy, dyslexia, Down syndrome, or muscular dysfunction.

### **Exclusion Criteria**

- Children below 1 year of age.
- Children with other major general health problems.
- Children with spinal deformities and post-correction conditions.
- Children with other syndromes not included in the study.
- Parents who were not willing to participate.

### **Method of Approach**

Direct approach to the parents.

### **Sampling Procedure**

Non-random sampling

### **Sample Size**

50 children with their parents

### **Data collection**

#### **Information collected**

Information collected from the parents by asking questionnaires.

#### **Data Collection Procedure**

The data is collected from the parents by direct questionnaires and face to face interview.

The study included both subjective and objective parameters. Subjective parameters such as parental attitudes, perceptions, and counselling awareness were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, while objective parameters such as knowledge scores, care giving practices, and utilization of counselling services were measured through structured questionnaire responses. All responses were scored and categorized using predefined gradations. The grading for individual items was classified as low (0.00–2.33), average (2.34–3.66), and high (3.67–5.00). The overall KAP scores were further grouped into poor, average, and good categories based on score ranges.

### **Organisation and Presentation of Data**

Collected data was edited, tabulated, analysed, interpreted, and findings obtained were presented in the form of tables and graph which were represented under the following sections.

#### **Section 1**

Description of demographic variables of the study subject [Parental age, gender, education, occupation, no. of children, marital status, types of disability of children].

#### **Section 2**

Description of parental care and counselling awareness response in parents of special children.

#### **Section 3**

Association of parental care and counselling awareness correlation in parents of special children with selected demographic variables.

**OBSERVATION AND RESULT**

**Section 1**

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the parents and special children**

		Frequency	Percentage
Age	20-30	7	14.0
	30-40	19	38.0
	40-50	20	40.0
	>50	4	8.0
Gender	1	17	34.0
	2	33	66.0
Education	1	14	28.0
	2	23	46.0
	3	13	26.0
Occupation	1	24	48.0
	2	26	52.0
Marital status	1	14	28.0
	2	28	56.0
	3	6	12.0
	4	2	4.0
No of children	1	9	18.0
	2	25	50.0
	3	15	30.0
	4	1	2.0
Age of special child	1	16	32.0
	2	17	34.0
	3	17	34.0
Type of disability	1	14	28.0
	2	10	20.0
	3	10	20.0
	4	11	22.0
	5	4	8.0
	6	1	2.0

**Section 2**

**Response of parents to multiple section questions like knowledge, attitude, practice, challenges needs and feedback, parental care and counselling awareness.**

Grading the response of parents to knowledge question by interpretations

Interpretation
Low (0.00-2.33)
Average (2.34 -3.66)
High (3.67 -5.0)

**Table 2: Knowledge Score of Parents**

Knowledge			Interpretation
	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	
K1	4.28	.640	High
K2	1.64	.942	Low
K3	.62	.490	Low
K4	.68	.471	Low
K5	3.92	.724	High

**Table 3: Attitude Score of Parents**

Attitude				
	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation	Percentage
A1	4.02	.654	High	80%
A2	4.50	.544	High	90%
A3	4.02	.553	High	80%
A4	3.84	.681	High	76.8%

**Table 4: Practice Score of Parents**

Practices				
	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation	Percentage
P1	3.68	.768	High	73.6%
P2	4.58	1.553	High	91.6%
P3	.66	.479	Low	13.2%
P4	1.50	1.581	Low	30%
P5	.80	1.125	Low	16%
P6	1.66	.772	Low	33.2%

**Table 5: Counselling Score of Parents**

Counselling awareness				
	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation	Percentage
AW1	1.64	.942	Low	32.8%
AW2	.62	.490	Low	12.4%
AW3	4.02	.654	High	80.4%
AW4	1.50	1.581	Low	30%
AW5	3.84	.681	High	76.8%

**Table 6: Parental Score of Parents**

Parental care				
	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation	Percentage
PC1	4.02	.654	High	80.4%
PC2	4.28	.640	High	85.6%
PC3	3.68	.768	High	73.6%
PC4	1.66	.772	Low	33.2%
PC5	4.58	1.553	High	91.6%

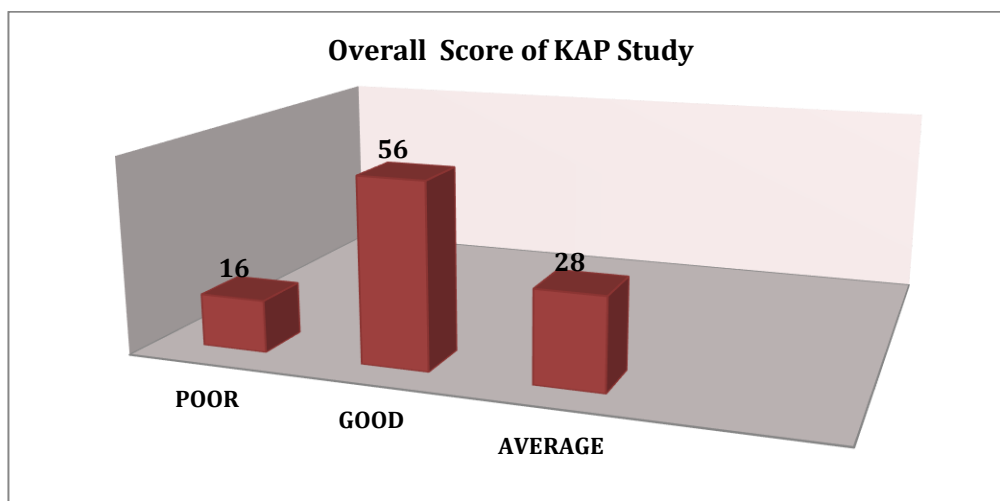
**Table 7: Challenges Score of Parents**

Challenges				
	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation	Percentage
CN1	3.12	2.047	Average	62.4%
CN2	3.34	2.076	Average	66.8%

**Section 3**

**Table 8: Overall grading of KAP score of parents of special children**

	Score	Frequency (n)	Percentage
	Poor (1.0-9.5)	8	16.0
<b>Valid</b>	Average (9.5-18.5)	14	28.0
	Good (18.5 -29)	28	56.0
	TOTAL	50	100.0



## DISCUSSION

The present study evaluated the knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) regarding parental care and counselling awareness among parents of special children. The findings indicate that most parents had moderate knowledge about their child's condition and available support systems, which is consistent with previous studies reporting limited detailed awareness despite general understanding<sup>[9]</sup>.

Parental attitudes toward counselling and care giving were largely positive, reflecting acceptance and willingness to support the child's development. Similar findings have shown that positive parental attitudes contribute to better adaptation and improved child outcomes<sup>[4]</sup>. However, despite adequate knowledge and favorable attitudes, care giving practices were inconsistent, possibly due to barriers such as limited access to services, financial constraints, and lack of structured guidance<sup>[8]</sup>.

Counselling awareness among parents was found to be variable, with a significant proportion demonstrating low awareness. This aligns with earlier reports indicating insufficient knowledge about counselling services in resource-limited settings<sup>[5]</sup>. Counselling is known to reduce parental stress and enhance coping mechanisms, thereby improving overall family well-being<sup>[6]</sup>.

Additionally, parents reported challenges such as emotional stress, social stigma, and lack of information, which are commonly observed among caregivers of children with disabilities<sup>[3,7]</sup>. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions, including parental education programs, improved access to counselling services, and community-based support systems to enhance care giving practices and promote better developmental outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

The present study highlights that parents of special children possess moderate knowledge and generally positive attitudes toward parental care and

counselling; however, gaps remain in counselling awareness and the consistent implementation of appropriate care giving practices. Factors such as limited access to services, lack of structured guidance, and social challenges may contribute to these deficiencies. The findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions, including parental education programs, improved accessibility to counselling services, and strengthened community support systems. Enhancing parental awareness and practices can significantly improve the developmental outcomes and overall quality of life of special children.

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