

Research on the Social Support for Families with Disable Children in China

Shulan Zeng^{1,*}, Shiyuan Tang¹, Yunhui Xiu², Jie Hu²

¹ Faculty of Education, Palacky University, Olomouc 77900, Czech Republic

² Normal college, Guizhou University of Engineering Science, Bi Jie 551700, China

*Corresponding author: Zeng Shulan (Email: 499781205@qq.com)

Abstract: This study used the "Social Support Scale" to investigate 683 special families in 6 provinces and cities of Guangdong, Zhejiang, Sichuan, Liaoning, Chongqing, and Hunan to understand the current situation of social support in families of special groups. The research shows: (1) The level of social support obtained by families with special children is relatively low; (2) There are significant differences in social support in the region where the family is located, parents' educational level, family monthly income, family shape, children's age and degree of disability; (3) There were no significant differences in social support among family residence (urban and rural), parental age, child gender, and disability type.

Keywords: Family, Social Support, Disable Children.

1. Introduction

In a narrow sense, children with special needs refer to children with disabilities [1]. They have a certain organization, function loss or disorder of the mental, physical, human structure with the disability to engage in certain activities in whole or in part, including intellectual disability, mental disability, visual disability, hearing disability, etc. Children with special needs need a long time or a certain period of time of continuous and uninterrupted care, education and rehabilitation in all aspects of physical and mental development, learning and life, which has caused some strong needs of families, such as vocational skills improvement, personal psychological counseling services[2], social resources [3], and so on. With the emergence of needs, people actively seek assistance from people, organization and things in the external environment, accept and use these material assistance or psychological support to solve problems [4], and we call these assistance as social support(SS). When social support cannot meet the needs, parents of special children will have psychological problems [5-7], increasing the pressure faced by the family. There are some studies to confirm that the pressure faced by families with special children is significantly higher than that of families with normal

children[8], but the higher the level of social support the family receives, the more positive the way of coping with pressure[9], and the less pressure it feels, the better the happiness. Therefore, social support is crucial for families with special children[10]. But, how about the social support's situation of the family with special children? How to improve it to get a better living of happiness? For this, it will investigate the current situation of various types of family social support for children with special needs in 6 provinces and cities of Chongqing, Zhejiang, Liaoning, Hunan, Sichuan, and Guangdong, and explore its influencing factors.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Objects

The subjects of this study were 683 parents of children with special needs from 6 provinces and cities of Chongqing, Guangdong, Sichuan, Zhejiang, Liaoning, and Hunan. The research population is special, so the method of target sampling is used. The sample basically covers children's families with different types of disabilities, different levels of disabilities, and different economic levels, so it has a good representative. The basic information of parents and children's information are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Basic information of the subjects (N=683)

Items		Number (people)	Percentage (%)	Items		Number (people)	Percentage (%)
Parent's age	Under 35	213	31.19	Type of Disability	Intellectual disability	245	35.87
	36-44 years old	326	47.73		Autism	384	56.22
	Over 45	144	21.08		Others	54	7.91
Education level	High school and below	433	63.40	Child's age	0-7 years old	171	25.04
	College and above	250	36.60		8-18 years old	512	74.96
Employment status	Working	428	62.66	Child gender	Male	483	70.72
	No job	255	37.34		Female	200	29.28
family form	Core	346	50.66	Monthly household income	< RMB 6000	507	74.23
	Non-core	337	49.34		≥ RMB 6000	176	25.77
Province and city	Chongqing	103	15.08	Residence	Urban	421	61.64
	Guangdong	276	40.41		Rural	262	38.36
	Sichuan	106	15.52	Level of disability	Mild	90	13.18
	Zhejiang	81	11.86		Moderate	294	43.04
	Liaoning	53	7.76		Severe and above	299	43.78
	Hunan	64	9.37				

2.2. Research Instrument

The measurement of this study used Zhang Meiyun's revised social support scale[11]. The scale has two sub-scales: type of social support and source of social support. Among them, there are 14 items in the type of social support, including three dimensions of emotion support, instrument support and information support, and the internal consistency is 0.86-0.93; there are 19 items in the source of social support, including informal and formal social support, and its internal consistency is 0.79-0.85[12]. Type of support score is 1 (none), 2 (occasional), 3 (a lot), 4 (very much) based on level of support, and source of support is 1 (no help at all), 2 (somewhat helpful), 3 (general), 4 (helpful), 5(very helpful). Emotion support means to be happy and confided from other people, including positive emotions such as security and trust. Instrumental support represents assistance of materials, finance and household affair, etc. Informative support means information such as guidance, advice, or feedback received that is helpful in solving problems. Informal social support refers to support from non-governmental persons inside and outside the family, such as friends, family, etc. Formal social

support refers to support from government, such as school teachers, rehabilitation personnel, doctors, disabled people's federations and other government officials.

2.3. Research Procedure

Questionnaires are distributed to special education school and rehabilitation organization of six provinces and cities in Guangdong, Sichuan, Hunan, Zhejiang, Liaoning, and Chongqing, then eliminated 703 pieces based on the criteria of regular answers, missing or wrong answers, and a total of 683 valid questionnaires were obtained. After entering the relevant data, SPSS21.0 was used to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, descriptive analysis of the social support status, independent sample T- test and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze the influencing factors of family social support for special children.

3. Results

3.1. Reliability Test

The a-coefficient created by L.J.Cronbach is used to test reliability. See Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability of the family social support scale for children with special needs

Reliability indicator	Emotional support	Instrument support	Information support	Type of SS	Informal SS	Formal SS	Source of SS
a-coefficient	0.79	0.91	0.89	0.92	0.91	0.86	0.92

According to the table 2, the overall coefficient of social support sources is 0.92, and the coefficients of the two dimensions are 0.86 and 0.91 respectively; the overall coefficient of social support types is 0.92, and the coefficients of the three dimensions are between 0.79-0.91. All reliability coefficients meet the measurement requirements, so the social support scale has high reliability.

3.2. Validity Test

Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to test the relationship between social support type and dimensions and between dimensions, social sources and dimensions and between dimensions. See the Table 3,Table 4.

Table 3. The correlation coefficient of each dimension and the overall type of family social support for special children

Items	1	2	3	4
1.Emotion support	1			
2.Instrument support	0.63**	1.00		
3.Information support	0.48**	0.61**	1.00	
4.Overall	0.80**	0.94**	0.77**	1.00

Note:* $p < 0.05$,** < 0.01 ,*** < 0.001

As shown in Table 3, the relationship between each dimension of social support type and the total score of the type is higher than the relationship between each dimension. Therefore, the validity of the social support type scale is good.

Table 4. The correlation coefficient of each dimension and the overall source of family social support for special children

Items	1	2	3
1.Informal support	1.00		
2.Formal support	0.57**	1.00	
3.Overall	0.95**	0.81**	1

Note:* $p < 0.05$,** < 0.01 ,*** < 0.001

As shown in Table 4, the relationship between each

dimension of social support source and the overall of the source is higher than the relationship between each dimension. Therefore, the source of social support has good validity.

3.3. The Overall Situation and Influencing Factors of Family Social Support for Special Children

In order to realize the current situation of social support in families of special children, the social support scale is adopted to investigate 683 parents of special children. Parents of special children answered according to the description of the items. The higher the score, the higher the level of social support they received. The specific results are as follows:

3.3.1. Overall Status of Social Support for Families with Special Children

Types of social support

Table 5. Types of social support in families of special children (N=683)

Dimension	M	SD	Maximum value	Minimum value
Emotion support	2.29	0.62	4.00	1.00
Instrument support	1.93	0.66	4.00	1.00
Information support	1.92	0.71	4.00	1.00
Overall	2.03	0.57	4.00	1.00

Note: M is the mean, SD is the standard deviation.

It can be seen from Table 5 that among the types of social support obtained by families with special children, only emotion support is above 2 (occasionally), and both

instrument support and information support are below 2; social support is generally at the level of “occasional”.

Sources of social support

Table 6. Sources of social support in families of special children (N=683)

Dimension	M	SD	Maximum value	Minimum value
Formal support	2.65	0.99	5.00	1.00
Informal support	2.60	0.81	5.00	1.00
Overall	2.61	0.78	5.00	1.00

Note: M is the mean, SD is the standard deviation.

It can be seen from Table 6 that the formal social support and informal social support obtained by families with special children are above 2 (some help) and tend to be 3 (general); the source of social support is generally at the level of “some help”.

3.3.2. The Main Influencing Factors of Family Social Support for Special Children

Parents' educational level

Table 7. Influence of parental education level on family social support for special children (N=683)

Items	High school and below (N=433)		College and above (N=250)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Emotion Support	2.26	0.63	2.35	0.60	-2.00*	0.046
Instrument support	1.87	0.63	2.03	0.69	-3.06**	0.002
Type of social support	1.99	0.56	2.11	0.58	-2.81**	0.005
Formal social support	2.56	0.99	2.82	0.97	-3.29**	0.001

Note: *p<0.05, **<0.01, ***<0.001.

As shown in Table 7, the emotion support, instrument support, social support type and formal social support obtained by parents with education level of college or above

were significantly higher than those of parents with high school and below.

Monthly household income

Table 8. Influence of monthly family income on family social support for special children (N=683)

Items	<RMB 6000 (N=507)		≥RMB 6000 (N=176)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Emotion Support	2.26	0.63	2.39	0.58	-2.52*	0.012
Instrument support	1.88	0.65	2.06	0.67	-3.07**	0.002
Type of social support	1.99	0.57	2.14	0.56	-2.93**	0.003

Note: *p<0.05, **<0.01, ***<0.001.

As shown in Table 8, the types of emotion support, instrument support, and social support obtained by parents with a monthly family income of more than 6,000 yuan are

significantly higher than parents with less than 6,000 yuan of monthly family income.

Family form

Table 9. Influence of family form on family social support for special children (N=683)

Items	core (N=346)		Non-core (N=337)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Instrument support	1.83	0.64	2.04	0.66	-4.19**	0.000
Type of social support	1.98	0.57	2.09	0.57	-2.64**	0.009

Note: *p<0.05, **<0.01, ***<0.001.

As shown in Table 9, the instrumental support and type of social support received by non-core families were

significantly higher than those obtained by core families.

Age of children

Table 10. Influence of age of children on family social support for special children (N=683)

Items	Preschool-aged children (N=171)		School-aged children (N=512)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Formal social support	2.801	0.936	2.605	0.999	2.261**	0.024

Note: *p<0.05, **<0.01, ***<0.001.

As shown in Table 10, families of preschool-aged children received significantly higher formal support than families of

school-aged children.
Degree of disability

Table 11. Influence of age of children on family social support for special children (N=683)

Table 11: Influence of age of children on family social support for special children (N=305)								
Items	M	SD	F	p	Multiple comparisons (LSD)			
					(I)	(J)	Mean difference(I-J)	P
Source of social support	2.61	0.78	8.61	0.000	Severe and very severe	Mild	-0.28**	0.003
						Moderate	-0.23***	0.000
Informal social support	2.60	0.81	6.70	0.001		Mild	-0.26**	0.007
						Moderate	-0.22**	0.001
Formal social support	2.65	0.99	7.24	0.001		Mild	-0.32**	0.006
						Moderate	-0.27**	0.001

* p < 0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

As shown in Table 11, there are significant differences in the degree of disability in the source of social support, formal social support and informal social support for special children's families. Multiple post-hoc comparisons found that

the social support scores of families with severe and very severe children were significantly lower than those of mild-to-moderate families on the above dimensions.

Area

Table 12. Influence of area of residence on family social support for special children (N=683)

Items	M	SD	F	p	Multiple comparisons (LSD)			
					(I)	(J)	mean difference(I-J)	p
Source of social support	2.61	0.78	2.74	0.019	Chongqing	Guangdong	-0.19*	0.032
						Sichuan	-0.28**	0.008
						Zhejiang	-0.24*	0.036
						Liaoning	-0.40**	0.002
					Liaoning	Hunan	0.33*	0.020
Informal social support	2.60	0.81	2.51	0.029	Liaoning	Chongqing	0.46**	0.001
						Guangdong	0.31*	0.011
						Sichuan	0.28*	0.041
						Hunan	0.38*	0.012
Formal social support	2.65	0.99	3.47	0.004	Sichuan	Hunan	0.46**	0.003
						Guangdong	0.22*	0.048
						Chongqing	0.51***	0.000
					Chongqing	Guangdong	-0.29*	0.011

* p < 0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

As shown in Table 12, there are significant differences in sources of social support across regions. Multiple post-hoc comparisons found that in terms of social support sources, Chongqing was significantly lower than Guangdong, Sichuan, Zhejiang, and Liaoning, and Liaoning was significantly higher than Hunan; in terms of formal social support, Sichuan was significantly higher than Hunan, Guangdong, Chongqing, and Guangdong was significantly higher. In Chongqing; in terms of informal social support, Liaoning is significantly higher than Chongqing, Guangdong, Sichuan and Hunan.

4. Conclusion

On the whole, the level of social support for families with special children in my country is not high and cannot meet the current family needs, but the level of formal social support from the government and other departments has increased, indicating that the relevant national policies are playing a positive role, which is conducive to improving the quality of life of families with special children. At the same time, the degree of social support has significant differences in parental

education level, family income, region, family shape, children's age and degree of handicap; while there is no significant difference in social support in parental age, child's gender, handicap type, and place of residence. Therefore, when building a social support system in a family of special children, it is necessary to focus on the family environment and the age and degree of disability of the child.

There are two main deficiencies in this study. One is that only one member of the family has been investigated, which may make the information incomplete; the other is that there is no data to confirm the final direction of social support. Does increasing social support improve quality of life? Or boost other dependent variables? Therefore, future research will be improved from the following aspects: First, the comprehensiveness of social support system evaluation. As a subjective variable, family members have different feelings, so it is necessary to supplement other family members' views on social support. Only by fully understanding the existing social support of the family can we provide more reasonable and applicable social support. Secondly, it is necessary to explore the correlation between social support and other variables to enrich and gradually improve the theory of social support.

Acknowledgment

We thank Guizhou Province Theoretical Innovation(Joint Project) and Bijie Social Science Theoretical Innovation Project. This work was supported in part by a grant from the projects of “Research on the Construction of Rehabilitation Service System for Special Children in Bijie City under the leadership of ‘Healthy Guizhou’ (GZLCLH-2021-89)” and “Investigation and Research on the Resilience of Special Children's Families in Bijie (BSKZ-22143)”.

References

- [1] Liu Chunling, and Jiang Qindi, Introduction to Special Education (Second Edition) [M].Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2018,pp.3.
- [2] Zhen Xiaomeng, and Li Min. A survey on the parenting education needs of families with special children Research [J]. Chinese Journal of Special Education , 2011(1),pp.4-11.
- [3] Su Xueyun, Wu Zexiao, and Fang Junming. A survey of parents' attitudes and needs for inclusive education for children with autism spectrum disorders [J]. Chinese Journal of Special Education, 2014(3),pp.36-40.
- [4] Lin Yongsheng. Investigation and Research on Social Support and Life Pressure of New Immigrant Children—Taking Keelung City National Primary School as an Example [D]. Taiwan:University of Taipei,2007.
- [5] Lecavalier L, Leone S, and Wiltz J.The impact of behaviour problems on caregiver stress in young people with autism spectrum disorders[J].Intellect Disability Res,2006(50), pp.172-183
- [6] Duarte CS, Bordin IA, Yazigi L and Mooney J.Factors associated with stress in mothers of children with autism[J].The International Journal of Research & Practice,2005(4), pp.416-427.
- [7] Hastings RP. Child behaviour problems and partner mental health as correlates of stress in mothers and fathers of children with autism [J].Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 2003 (4/5),pp.231-237
- [8] Qin Xiuqun, Su Xiaoyin and Gao Lingling. Investigation and research on parental stress of parents of children with autism [J]. Chinese Journal of Nursing, 2008(10),pp.931-933.
- [9] Tang Yuehong. Parental stress of parents of children with cerebral palsy Correlation study with coping style and social support [D].Beijing: Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, 2014.
- [10] Liu Baiqiao. Research progress on social support for families with special children in my country [J]. Journal of Suihua University,2017 (4),pp.140-143.
- [11] Zhang Meiyun, and Lin Hongchi. Social support and empowerment of families with children with developmental delays related research [J]. Journal of Special Education, 2007(26),pp.55-84.
- [12] Zeng Shulan. Research on the status quo of positive contribution of families with autistic children and their relationship with social support [D]. Chongqing: Chongqing Normal University,2017.