

# **Contribution of Grandparents in Meeting Educational Challenges of Exceptional Child-Highlighting Ordeals and Confrontations in Local Context to Understanding Global Circumstances**

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## ***Abstract***

*The present study evaluates the social, moral, emotional and economic contributions of grandparents towards the educational achievement of their grand children with exceptional needs. The study adopts mix research method, where survey method and qualitative method is used to collect data. 250 grandparents are selected through multi-purpose sampling, where purposive sampling is used to identify family with exceptional child/children with the support of Parents Teacher Association (PTA) of different schools, located within the city, while snowball sampling is used to select the respondents from Karachi, Pakistan. Questionnaire was designed with five main areas of disabilities, which was checked for internal reliability.*

*The result reveals that grandparents are highly involved in supporting the education of special need children, particularly they are supportive in the area of homework, preparation of educational material, learning innovative things, self- help skills, support in implementing individualize education plan and in meeting educational expenses. Most of the economic and social needs are fulfilled by grandparents, particularly paternal grandparents, with additionally contribute in the education attainment of exceptional children. They morally support their own children to fill the gaps of detachment. However, they are emotionally under high pressure and go towards extreme acts to release their own children from their miseries.*

**Key Words:** Grandparents, Educational Challenges, Exceptional Child.

## **Background**

Grandparents have a very important position in the family system in Pakistan. Although the modern trend suggest for the nuclear family, but still, value of grandparents remain the same. Their wisdom, knowledge and broader perspective are highly inspirational. All the decisions, particularly social and economic guidance, are influenced by grandparents. During transitional phase, living with their own children and experiencing productive interaction with grandchildren give strength and support to grandparents (Grassman & Whitaker, 2013). Their unconditional love, security, stability and positive values and beliefs are highly impactful for children.

As the social interactions are boosting, societies are also experiencing alterations. Lack of mutual understanding, divorce, work pressure, all these led grandparents to play an integral role with more responsibilities in attending the needs of grand children. But when the child is born in a family with disability, many social problems arises, which are unbearable and intolerable to escape. At such stage, grandparents work as a sole provider of moral support. Majority of the family caregivers are above the age of sixty (Fujiura, 1998). They can also provide financial support to the family (Dunst & Trivette, 1986). In addition, many

challenges such as financial strain, equipment availability, and transport facility are few of the deviant areas, which add stress to family. A longitudinal study was conducted to find impact of disable children on parents. The results indicate high levels of stress among parents of children with disability (Australian Society for the Study of Intellectual Disability, 2002); it eventually leads to assume that in such circumstances, grandparents can serve as a stress reliever. Research proves that spending time with grandchildren with disability lessen stress and depression (Murphy & Della Corte, 1990).

Birth of a disable child cause severe affect on marital relationship of parents and also increase stress (Gray 2002). They usually blame each other and their fate. Other family members also instigate to create more hurdles in maintaining marital lives. At such critical situations, if grandparents are open minded and they understand their role, many internal issues can be resolved intellectually. Katz & Kessel (2002) shared that the role of grandparents is crucial in stabilizing function of family having children with disability. Other reasons include death of parents and abandonment (Pruchno, 1999).

The role of grandparent as a supporter in special children life is highlighted by various authors (Mccallion & Janicki, 2000; Bachay & Buzzi, 2012; Kornhaber & Woodward, 2011; Hornby& Ashworth, 1994). Since majority of the children with disability spend more time at home, and grandparents in Pakistan are mostly isolated at their home, it justifies that both can provide support to each other in some way or the other way. Grandparents are more concerned for the needs of special children than their own parent due to societal issues and other social matters.

Peterson (1999) shared that grandparents play an integral role in the physical and intellectual development of children with special needs. They play multidimensional roles which make it significant to study, how their support bind a family with a child with special need. Quality time, education, economic stability, social status, all these led to build strong relations with grandchildren. This research will look into these variables, and will find, how it is closely interlinked with family support and needs of children with special needs, particularly educational needs.

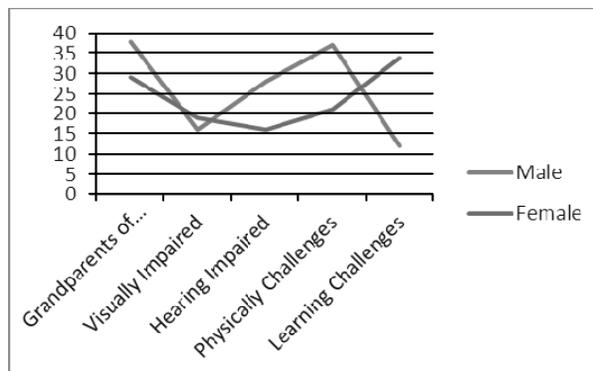
### Research Methodology

The study adopts mix research method, where survey method and qualitative method is used to collect data. 250 grandparents are selected through multi-purpose sampling, which can be stratified into two parts: purposive sampling to identify family with exceptional child/ children with the support of Parents Teacher Association (PTA); snowball sampling: to select the respondents from Karachi, Pakistan. Questionnaire was designed with five main areas of disabilities, which was checked for internal reliability, which was calculated as .92.

### Analysis

**Table 1: Category-wise Sampling of Grandparents**

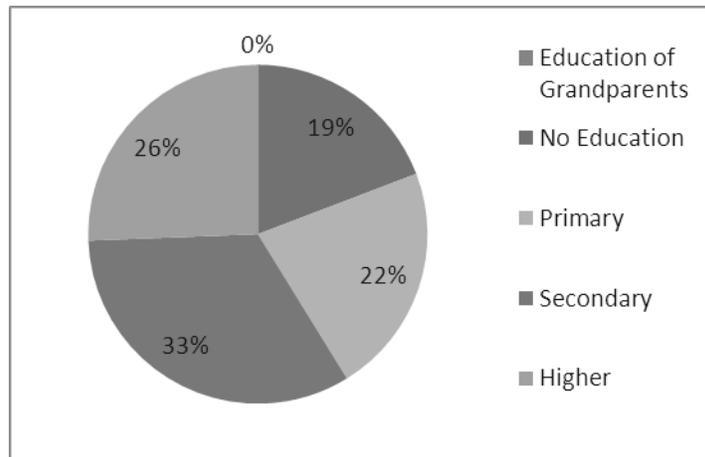
	Male	Female
Grandparents of Mentally Challenged	38	29
Visually Impaired	16	19
Hearing Impaired	28	16
Physically Challenges	37	21
Learning Challenges	12	34
Total	131	119



From the table, it can be seen that majority of the grandparents have mentally challenged grandchildren. It cannot be generalized as the nature of sample was snowball.

**Table 2: Level of Education of Grandparents**

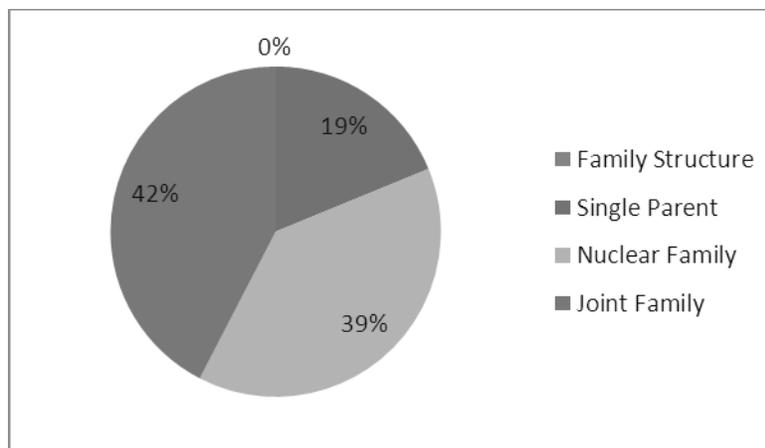
No Education	Primary	Secondary	Higher	Total
48	55	83	64	250



Majority of the respondents are secondary level qualified, followed by higher education; whereas a good number of respondents also lie under the category of either primary or less than that education. It gives a baseline that disability lies with social status and education of the parents.

**Table 3: Showing the Family Structure**

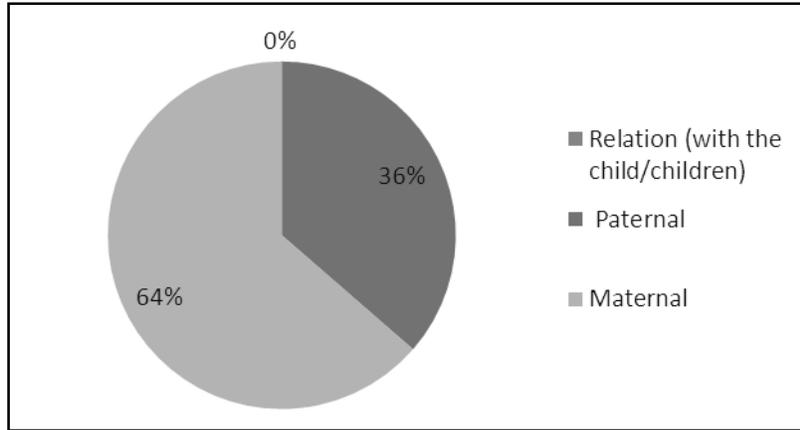
Single Parent	Nuclear Family	Joint Family	Total
47	97	106	250



The table indicates that families with challenging children prefer to live in joint families rather than in a single family, which could be due to the support they receive in a joint family structure subject to the availability of disable children in a family.

**Table 4: Showing the Relation with the child/children**

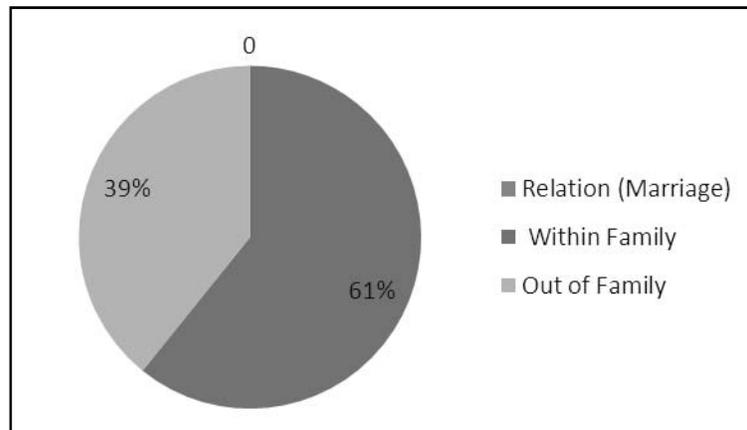
Paternal	Maternal
91	159



Majority cater special grand children having maternal relationship with child. It shows inclination of cultural values in, maternal parents take more responsibility than paternal parents.

**Table 5: Showing the Nature of Marriage**

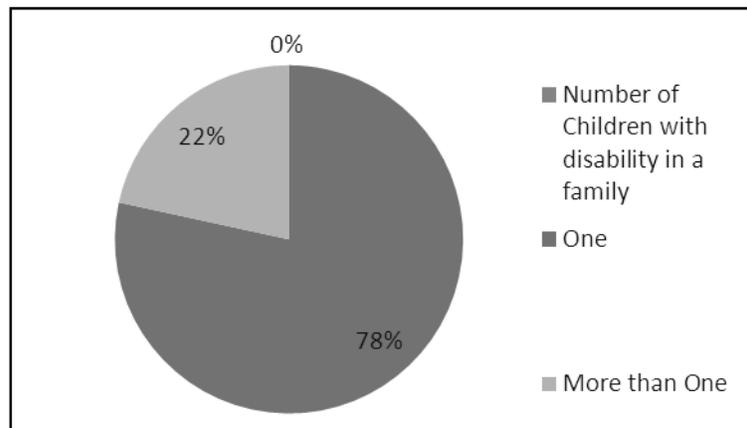
Within Family	Out of Family
152	98



Majority of the respondents indicate that marriage of their children was within their family which could be one of the reasons which support the fact that disability occur when marriage take place within family system; however, the cause of disability could be age, pre or post natal problems

**Table 6: Showing the Number of Children with Disability in a Family**

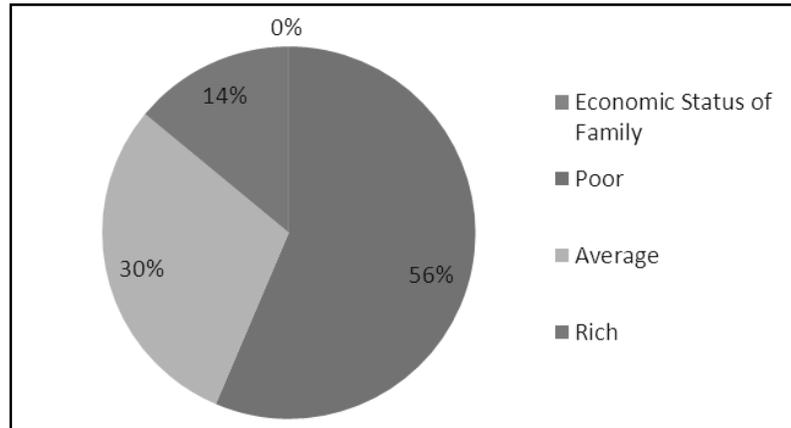
One	More than one
196	54



Higher number of cases indicates one special child in a family, but almost one third of the data also shows the existence of more than one special children within the family.

**Table 7: Showing the Economic Status of a Family**

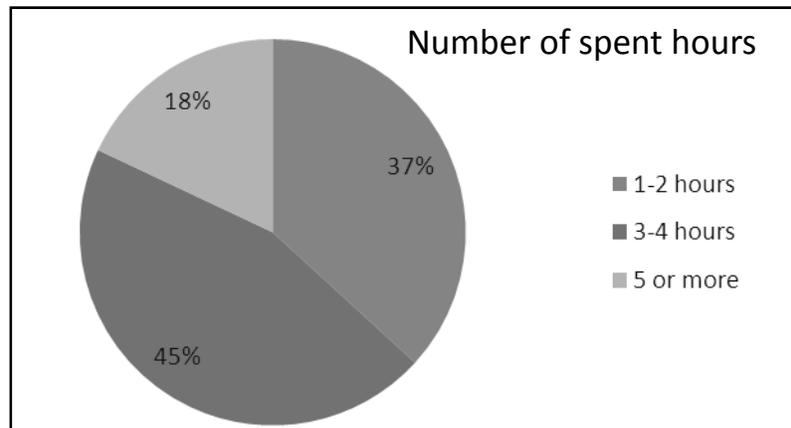
Poor	Average	Rich
141	74	35



Majority of the respondents belong to poor economic status.

**Table 8: Showing the Number of Hours Grandparents Spend with Grand children**

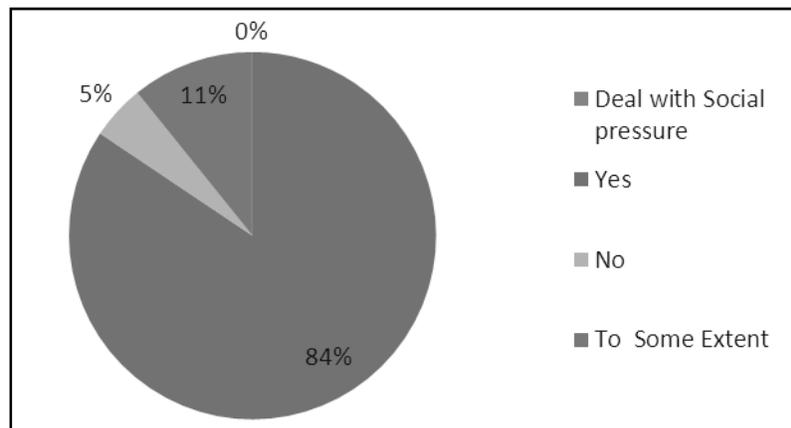
Number of spent hours		
1-2	3-4	5 or more
92	113	45



Majority of the grandparents spend 3-4 hours with their grand children on daily basis

**Table 9: Showing the Number of Respondents Dealing with Social Pressure**

Yes	No	To Some Extent
211	12	27



Majority of the grandparents support their children in facing social challenges, which come across by them from society. They serve as a filter to minimize social consequences

**Table 10: Showing the Number of Respondents Providing Financial Support**

<b>Support</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>To Some Extent</b>
<b>Financial support</b>	161	36	53
School Related Expenses	154	43	53
Medical Expenses	72	139	39
Conveyance	151	82	17
Daily living expenses	151	59	40
Physical support	202	02	46
Joint Living	103	105	42
Frequent Visit	68	145	37
Day Spending	211	11	28

Data related to the economical status of the family is skewed towards poor economical status of most of grandparents. This could have been one of the most important hindrances in providing support to grandchildren, in terms of financial and other related support. This could also be justified, where it is indicated that, support is being providing except of financial.

**Table 11: Showing the Responses for Rehabilitation Support**

<b>Rehabilitation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>To Some Extent</b>
Rehabilitative support	201	34	15
Helping with the Professional	189	46	15
Providing Equipments	32	181	37

Results indicates that grandparents provide all sort of personal supports, but providing equipment, which could led to financial expenses are mostly avoided by them.

**Table 12: Showing the Responses for Rehabilitation Support**

<b>Education support</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>To Some Extent</b>
Tutoring	113	62	75
Preparing Learning Material	76	118	56
Visiting Institutes	190	36	24
Supporting Rehabilitation Staff	211	24	15
Helping in IEP	66	155	29

Majority are willingly supportive towards providing education help to their grandparents like tutoring, visiting different institutions and preparing general learning

material for them, but since majority are incapable of providing expert support, therefore, it is shared that most of the grandparents could not provide professional help to their grandchildren with special reference to education.

### **Discussion**

From the cultural perspective of Asian countries, children are mostly attached with their parents as well as grandparents, even after they get married or as they pass on elderly age. When the age demands to relax, they play multiple roles due to social exertion, In situation of crisis in the family, grandparents provide not only the emotional support, but financial and social support to the children as well as grandchildren. Although there are many factors which should be considered but are mostly neglected are the age factor, economic and social factors as well as health factor of the grandparents. Research proves that they provide maximum support for the educational development and providing rehabilitation as well as protection against social and emotional stress. They provide social Support so that parents can move on social interaction or do their jobs. In order to support their relationship, one of the grandparents said

*“I stay with my grandson so that my son and wife can spend time with each other”*

Another respondent said

*“I take my grandson to the family functions and also provide moral support to face societal pressures and inquiries in family gatherings to accept this challenge.”*

Emotional pressure due to societal issue has significant role in the lives of grandparents. They support their children and also help them. Mostly grandparents provide support in the presence of disability to lessen the marital issues such as separation or detachment from their responsibilities. The issue of divorce and separation increase grandparents attention towards special need children. Their attention is not only towards special need children but towards the protection of the whole structure of society. Another grandparent said

*“I spend time with grandson. We play and tell stories so it can provide time to my daughter to finish her household work.”*

When parents have special children, the other children in the family are mostly neglected. In such circumstances, grandparents support is extremely needed. Another grandparent said

*“I look after other children because I cannot take care of the special child so that my children can spend more time to address the needs of special child.”*

In regard of education support, one of the grandparents said

*“I have learnt several skills to cater the needs of special child such as speech therapy, exercises, and preparing helping aids to provide education assistance.”*

Another grandparent discusses about the challenge she face while dealing with special child. She said

*“I help the child in eating process only which is the most difficult part.”*

### **Conclusion**

Keeping in view the responses gained, the researchers suggest that grandparents should be encouraged to be the active part of parental organization. Their role should be influential in deciding educational achievements of exceptional children. Government should provide additional allowances to grandparents to meet the financial needs. Ministry of all the respective countries must acknowledge the services of grandparents on national platform. Although their contribution is appreciable, yet, the dire need of time is to provide them proper training to enhance their skills.

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