

# The perception of people with special needs



It is an importance choice as too many people with special needs have been sidelined or treated differently because of their disability or having been classified as ‘ a person with special needs’. As a result of this these people are often placed in special needs’ centers, or kept out of normal schools, worst, not allowed to integrate and take part in normal community life. These people, if they are not mentally affected can be easily absorbed and integrated. Even for those who cannot we will show that they are not too different.

### **How will the research be conducted?**

We will conduct interviews about peoples’ perceptions. Surveys will also be conducted to get an idea of the number of people affected and where and how they are cared for. Research, in the form of case studies in other countries will be done. Original research in the UAE will be conducted to see the correlation between previous studies and our own situation.

Observations at care centers as well as in family homes will be done.

### **Strategies:**

We will set out to make deductions from our research to develop a marketing plan and strategies of how to promote these affected people so that they will be accepted as part of the community.

### **Outcomes:**

To change peoples’ perception of special needs people and also to raise the self-perception of these people and so improve their self-esteem.

Questions to be answered in terms of this study:

Where and how do people develop their attitudes?

How can the community develop and encompass the needs of special needs people?

How can people in leadership positions (family, parents, schools, businesses ) be role-models in their actions and communication toward special needs people?

How do special needs people perceive themselves?

How do special needs centers , institutes and schools care for these persons?

## **What is discrimination against people with special needs?**

As a person or community, one needs to be aware of the impact of discrimination based on special needs on the lives of those who are affected or classified as such. This discrimination takes many forms.

People generally have the wrong attitude usually based on stereotype ideas about these people with some form of disability. Some people tend to feel uncomfortable when they know or are being told that a child or an adult has a disability. Yet, others tend to have less contact with the family of a child who has been diagnosed as one with a disability.

Society and communities also form negative stereotypes due to ignorance and tend to see special needs people as those who do not ' fit' in. Many a time these people are excluded from forming part of so-called ' normal' society. In schools we often find that subtle instructions are given on the handling of these ' special' students.

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When there are special needs centers, people tend to forget about these children or adults as they think that there are people taking care of those 'less fortunate' in terms of abilities. Thus we find that these centers are often too few and do not enjoy full public support.

## **2. Signs of discriminatory behavior?**

This will quickly become evident when we see people staring or whispering when a 'special needs' child or adult enters a public place such as a shop, mall or park. Some people might even walk up to the parent or companion and ask insensitively what is wrong with the affected person. Sometimes it is difficult to find ramps, platforms or elevators if the affected person is in a wheelchair. People and children tend to avoid or keep a 'distance' from the affected person. Others see only the handicap or the disability and not the person as a 'real person'. Support programs and care-givers are not easy to find. Insensitive terms and names are often being used to refer to these 'special needs' persons: 'retard, weirdo, dumbo, geeks, dummies' and others (Martinez-Perres 2006).

## **3. Some negative effects of discrimination on parent of children with special needs.**

Parents of children with handicaps, special needs and disabilities, will usually feel discriminated against- as if they did something wrong. This is all due to society's views.

Because of this some parents have a tendency to become upset or aggressive. Others develop a 'guilty' feeling and shy away from exposing or taking the child to high visibility areas such as the beach or shopping malls.

In many instances, over protection occur or children are being ' hidden' from the eyes of others. A sense of helplessness could be felt as people or relatives are not easily forthcoming to alleviate the burden of having to cope with the child for extended periods; a nice soothing word of support is also not forthcoming from others. A feeling of stress and distress could be felt every time when they need to enter public places. A sense of resentment towards parents of children with no disabilities could develop when they hear these ' lucky' parents complaining about their difficulties with their children (Promote Awareness 2010).

#### **4. The negative effects of discrimination on people with special needs.**

Due to the presence of discrimination in society, children and adults with special needs will be sensitive to this. One sign is the difficulty to understand peoples' reactions toward them- they way they are looked at, spoken to or dealt with. For some children, life might become lonely and isolated as they have no playmates. A sense of ' differentness' might settle in as they have to always attend a ' special needs' centre, rather than go to regular school or classes. A sense of self-consciousness often develops to being treated differently- like speaking slowly to them. It is also not easy to get into high school, college or even to get a job. The choices of their recreational or religious activities are limited to where they are taken or where they can go without being stared at (Thomas 2001).

## **5. How can the promoters for people with special needs work against discrimination?**

In the quest to prove that people with special needs should be included in society and the community, one will meet many others who are also fighting for the rights of those who are discriminated against. Doing this kind of action is not easy and there is a lot of work combined to it. One of the first tasks is to get the backing of the government at all levels to assist with funding campaigns. Next, is getting the needed social, medical and rehabilitative services for the people with special needs. Included in the campaign will be clubs, recreational clubs, organizations as well as mosques to accept and serve these people by accommodating them. On another level, the medical and nursing communities must join hands to help. Furthermore, the print and electronic media , such as the internet, social networking (Twitter, Facebook, Youtube) to do away with the untruths and stereotypes which surround the people with special needs. Another act is to educate physicians, relatives and friends about the nature, cause and treatment as well as the needs of the special needs people. Additionally, there must be a continuous sponsoring as well as fundraising and awareness campaigns for these people (Equal rights 2009).

In terms of education, the curriculum developers and text-book writers must ensure that negatives and stereotypes of special needs people are not shown in these books as being ' abnormal', but should rather show them as people who fit into society. The general public and parents need to be educated that having a child with special needs is not the end of the world or the worst thing to happen in life. Also, other children in pre-schools , day

care centers, schools must be educated that there is nothing to fear from association and mixing with special needs children (UN Development plan 2010).

## 6. Steps to be taken to address discrimination against people with special needs

Before individuals, parents, or anyone else can put up a campaign to promote and run a campaign to help and promote people with special needs, there are many questions to be answered. The questions need to be answered and then a strategy devised. The next step is to determine if the child or person with the special need is a target of discrimination. The negative or debilitating effects will be recorded. After having identified the negative effects of the discrimination, a counteraction can be worked out. Lastly, a plan of action will be worked out to tackle the discrimination.

### AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS PLANNED

Fun-Walks

Carnival Day at parks

Advertisements and Information Kiosks in Malls

Media Advertisements

Competitions: prizes at Supermarkets: Donation Tickets Sold

## **METHODOLOGY:**

In the UAE, there are several programs that assist children with special needs (Ameinfo 2009; Dubai Center). However, the organizations doing so, are few, and only found in some major cities. While these organizations give assistance and medical care, it is felt to be inadequate. Also, not enough attention is given to children and others with special needs, which could result in many cases being overlooked or nothing is done to accept special needs people into daily life. Therefore there is a high need of awareness campaigns to be run on a professional and business-like manner.

To be able to successfully launch a campaign, research is necessary to identify the persons classified as special needs to get the numbers. Next, the campaign of public awareness can be planned and started.

The means of obtaining the numbers will be through a survey research which was initiated through a questionnaire as a pilot survey. The tool used in this study to identify special needs people and attitudes is based on a screener used in the US and adapted to our needs.

The objectives of our study were to estimate the prevalence of special needs among children and others who receive their care through the support systems and to estimate resource use. These responses will be used in matching with other medical records and surveys done before. Our study is based mainly on identification and quantification of special needs cases. Our hypothesis is that there is ignorance among people about special needs people, their numbers and their abilities. We collected data from parents with special needs children as well as the general public.



The questionnaire questions were used to categorize survey respondents. Survey data were scored and tabulated to give us insight into the planning of our extensive survey and information campaign.

### Study Sample

Our survey is representative of a random sample about special needs persons and those who received care. No specific area or people were targeted. The responses gave a good indication of the numbers of those already identified.

### **Identifying Special Needs persons**

Special needs children were identified using the questionnaire as shown in the Appendix. In the questionnaire are 5 groups of questions identifying children in need of some kind of treatment, whether in the form of medication or assistance or therapy. Each group of questions addresses a special need or factor with a follow-up question and connected to the duration of the debilitating condition. To really identify the special needs child, all answers needed to be YES in a group to be classified as special needs.

### Study Results

Our survey just touched on a superficial response feedback to gauge the peoples' awareness with the intention of doing a later extensive survey over a wider area and field. We just wanted to get an overall idea about the need of an extensive awareness campaign.

49

49

39

27

%

18

24.5

24.5

19.5

13.5

## **200 Respondents**

Does your child currently need or use medicine

prescribed by a doctor (other than vitamins)?

Does your child need or use more medical, mental health,

or educational services than is usual for most children the same age?

Is your child limited or prevented in any way in his or her

ability to do the things that most children of the same age can do?

Does your child need special therapy, such as physical,

occupational, or speech therapy?

5. Does your child have any kind of emotional, developmental,

or behavioral problem for which he or she needs or gets

treatment or counseling?

#### CONCLUSION:

Our survey showed that there is a high number of children who can be classed as special needs. From this we can gather that there is a high need of awareness-making amongst the general population. The survey results show that it would be feasible to do a more extensive survey with a more comprehensive questionnaire to get a wider selection of input. Based on the pilot survey, it can be assumed that the survey conducted on a wider scale with a more comprehensive questionnaire will return more responses, so we can start now already to brainstorm our plans and ideas on how to go about in raising awareness through special campaigns, run on business principles. Our company, “ Help one- Reach one”, can now be confidently launched and we can start with our first fund-raising campaign in the form of a Fun- Walk along the Corniche in Abu Dhabi, with T-shirts, caps and banners, to raise awareness of special needs children and people.

#### APPENDIX:

## **SURVEY: SPECIAL NEEDS SCREENER / QUESTIONNAIRE**

A special needs could be physical, mental, or behavioral. Special conditions can affect a child's development, daily function, or need for services. Keep this in mind as you answer the following questions.

1. Does your child currently need or use medicine prescribed by a doctor (other than vitamins)?

Yes No

If yes

Is this because of a medical, behavioral, or other health condition?

Yes No

If yes

Is this because of a health condition that has lasted or is expected to last for at least 12 months?

Yes No

2. Does your child need or use more medical, mental health, or educational services than is usual for most children the same age?

Yes No

If yes

Is this because of a medical, behavioral, or other health condition?

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Yes No

If yes

Is this because of a health condition that has lasted or is expected to last for at least 12 months?

Yes No

3. Is your child limited or prevented in any way in his or her ability to do the things that most children of the same age can do?

Yes No

If yes

Is this because of a medical, behavioral, or other health condition?

Yes No

If yes

Is this because of a health condition that has lasted or is expected to last for at least 12 months?

Yes No

4. Does your child need special therapy, such as physical, occupational, or speech therapy?

Yes No

If yes

Is this because of a medical, behavioral, or other health condition?

Yes No

If yes

Is this because of a health condition that has lasted or is expected to last for at least 12 months?

Yes No

5. Does your child have any kind of emotional, developmental, or behavioral problem for which he or she needs or gets treatment or counseling?

Yes No

If yes

Is this because of a health condition that has lasted or is expected to last for at least 12 months?

Yes No

(adapted from <http://www.cshcndata.org/Content/Default.aspx>)