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**The Effect of Marital Problems on the Education of
Children with Special Needs in Buea Municipality.**

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Abstract

Purpose: The study investigates the effect of marital problems on Children's education in the Buea Municipality. Specific objectives of the study included; to examine the effects of lack of communication on children education, to investigate the effect of lack of finance on Children education, to examine the impact of marital violence on children education.

Methodology: The study was guided by socio-cultural theory by Lev Vygotsky, Ecological theory and Piaget's cognitive development theory. The study adopted the survey research design. Precisely the cross-sectional survey design was used to gather data from various segments of the population using a questionnaire.

Findings: The findings revealed problem facing children from unstable homes which affects them academically. It further reports that children from marital problem homes perform poorly in school as compared to those with stable marital homes.

Recommendations: The study recommend that the government should establish workshop and seminars to inculcate knowledge on the importance of parents living in harmony to enhance children well-being and education in Cameroon. Teachers should also have the zeal of empathy to students that is they should go close to students to find out their difficulties.

Keywords: *Marital problems, children with special needs, education, lack of finance, marital violence, lack of communication.*

Introduction

Special needs education is very important in the school system and it is a critical trend in inclusive education. It demands that specialized instructions, special educational teachers, instructional teaching materials, special teaching methods, special services, special environment or structures, inclusive friendly environment are put in place that can lead to academic success of children with special needs. Education involves the web of experiences a person has acquire through interaction in the environment. Marital problems exist when there are major differences of opinions between people which persist and remain unsolved (Kiura, 1999). Shantz and Hartup (1992) suggested that family problems range in frequency. Some could be rare while others occur very frequently. The problem and functions of testing and changing the structure of family relationships. All marital problems have elements of power struggle and intimacy struggle. It is a consequence of transition in an individual's development. Problems in marriage include adultery, customs and traditions in intermarriages of forgiveness, alcoholism, HIV/AIDS, gossip, lack of communication, finance, divorce, mistrust, wife beating and rape. Children with special needs faces a lot of problems like disabilities problems and sometimes a combination of different disabilities that affect their education.

According to Nguru (2006), the growing number of marriages in trouble is alarming. This means that more families are experiencing problems and more children have problems. The main problem is that marriage is no longer about family honor. People are getting married for some reason their parents did. When you think of all the problems that children face, such as drug abuse, violence in its worst forms, truancy and running away from home which can be traced back to their parents relationship with each other. A healthy marriage, according to Berlin (2004) is characterized by high positive interaction, satisfaction and stability and few problems. Unhealthy marriages are characterized by substantial parental problems which pose a clear risk for children's wellbeing both because of the direct negative effects on parenting skills. Marital hostility is associated with increased aggression and destructive behaviors on the part of children which in turn seem to lead to peer rejection, academic failure and other antisocial behaviors.

Background of the Study

Marital problems can be identified as the lack of peace in an environment. Some theorist believe that problems is a normal occurrence for couples (white & Klein, 2002). Marriage is legally and socially sanctioned union, usefully between a man and a woman that is regulated by laws, rules, customs, beliefs, and attitudes that prescribe the rights and duties of the partners and accords status to their offspring (sarker, 2007). The universality of marriage within different societies and cultures is attributed to the many basic social and personal functions for which it provides structure such as sexual gratification and regulation, division of labor between the sexes, economic problems and consumption, and satisfaction or personal needs for affection, status and companionship (Ntahaika, 2000). Marital problems is a phenomenon that destabilizes the couple, disrupt their joy and mostly felt by women yet it is least recognized human rights abuse in the world. Worldwide, information on the amount of problems in families show that it is not a rare phenomenon. Many children claim that they cannot study properly because their father used to insult always when he comes back home drunk at night (Kiura, 1999). The effects of such problems and separation are lack of parental protection and care, love and denial of their right to education and lack of communication in their homes which will affect their education.

Today, education is unachieved basic right for millions of children around the world. More than 72 million children of primary education age are not in school and 759 million adults are illiterate. These adults also do not have the awareness necessary to improve both their living conditions and those of their children's education gets affected which their parents turn to neglect them and make the homeless peaceful for everyone. When a child lives in a home where the parents are always fighting among each other, it traumatizes the child both educationally and otherwise because the child goes to school and lacks concentration. The absence of love and communication in the home will make the parents not to take proper care of their children which will affect the educational performance of the child.

Statement of the Problem

Objective of the Study.

Main Objective

- To investigate marital problems and its effect on the education of children with special needs.

Specific Objectives

- To examine the effects of lack of communication on the education of children with special needs in Buea Municipality
- To investigate the effect of lack of finance on the education of children with special needs in Buea Municipality
- To examine the effect of marital violence on the education of children with special needs in Buea Municipality.

Literature Review

The Concept of Marriage

A commonly accepted and encompassing definition of marriage is the following: a formal union and social and legal contract between two individuals that unites their lives legally, economically, and emotionally. The contractual marriage agreement usually implies that the couple has legal obligations to each other throughout their lives or until they decide to divorce. Being married also gives legitimacy to sexual relations within the marriage. Traditionally, marriage is often viewed as having a key role in the preservation of morals and civilization. Marriage is the first step towards starting a family. Kiura (1999) indicated that if two people share a good marriage, then starting a family and taking good care of it won't be a problem. He adds that the vice-versa is true if the marriage is not built on a strong foundation. According to Durazi (2005) these are people who no longer view marriage as a means of personal fulfilment. Majority of women today prefer taking care of their children singlehandedly. They argue out that being a mother is a better legacy than being a wife.

Types of Marital Problems

Even though problems are common in a marriage, some types are destructive and can contribute to the breakdown of the relationship. Forms of problems range from minor, solvable problems to issues that perpetually cause disagreements and never seem to go away completely. In an extreme form, problems can even lead to violence. Understanding the difference between constructive and

destructive problems can help people acknowledge and avoid disagreements that could have negative consequences for marriage.

Financial Problems

Money can be a touchy subject for most people. This topic may feel a little awkward to broach, especially if people are in the process of merging finances or haven't told partner about any debts they owe. Whether they are sharing a bank account or keeping finances separate, it is still important to talk about monthly expenses. Couples who do not talk about money matters may overspend, feel held back by not being the breadwinner, and end up in deeper debts than when they were single. It is important for couples to discuss budgeting and to be open about their debts and expenses. Issues over financial problems and employment are common in some marriages. When a couple suffers from inadequate income or joblessness, discussions regarding the distribution of available funds may result in problems. This can also be the case when one partner has extreme spending habits or trouble managing money. Other job-related issues that lead to problems include inadequate time spent with the spouse due to work responsibilities and one partner making less money than the other and feeling insignificant in the marriage. This financial problem may affect the education of the child as the parents may not have money to pay the child's school fees, buy his or her books and provide for the child all this accept will reduce the educational performance of the child and reduce the self-esteem of the child.

Lack of Communication

A healthy marriage is one in which both partners' emotional and physical needs are being met, according to psychologist Willard F. Harley Jr. in the Marriage Builders article "Can't We Just Forgive and Forget"? In order for both partners to understand one another's needs, there must be good communication. Following infidelity, spouses should communicate feelings about the affair and the expectations each has moving forward. In order to meet a spouse's needs, the other spouse must first know and understand what needs exist. Lack of communication also influence the absence of trust in a relationship creates insecurity in a partner. Negative assumptions and actions are prevalent among insecure people. A woman who is insecure due to doubting her partner begins to act in a controlling manner toward her partner. Perhaps she will call or text incessantly throughout the day in an effort to keep tabs on the other partner. Insecure behavior such as this will drive the other partner away. Meanwhile if there is good communication among the couples they can talk things out and settle their problem while building trust in their relationship which will help the child. Lack of communication in marriage is a fast track to divorce. A marriage consists of two people who come from different backgrounds and have different methods of communication, wants, and needs. So it's understandable how these varying factors can make it difficult for couples to talk.

Relationship needs strong emotional and physical bonds to succeed. Work, home, and sex life will all suffer when a partners do not share thoughts and feelings. This makes it all the more important to learn communicate with your spouse, even when the subject matter is awkward or uncomfortable. A couple need to take and have a common understanding about children and money among others. When communication is poor or misunderstood, there are problems. Causes of poor or wrong communication include different cultures and where one has been brought up (rural or urban setting) some communication skills include explosion (being angry and complaining) and silence refusing to point out when one wrong you. According to Assess (1997)

problems or destructive problems constructive problems occurs when people attack each other to solve a problem and they come to a better understanding of each other. After the problem, they feel better about each other. Constructive problems occur when people attack other instead of trying to solve the problem this leads to weakening of relationships. For example a wife may complain that the husband doesn't eat her food and the husband could become rough and important and yet all these are just making the main issue which is lack of fulfillment as far as sexual needs are concerned. Lack of sexual harmony can cause frustration in the family. Brenfenbrenner (1979) ecological model often has been used to integrate research on multiple risk for family violence.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is any kind of behavior that a person uses, or threatens to use, to control an intimate partner. The two key elements are threat and control. Domestic violence can take various forms:

Physical – Violent actions such as hitting, beating, pushing, and kicking. In many cases physical abuse becomes more frequent and severe over time.

Sexual – Includes any sexual acts that are forced on one partner by the other.

Psychological – Includes a wide range of behaviors such as intimidation, isolating the victim from friends and family, controlling where the victim goes, making the victim feel guilty or crazy, and making unreasonable demands.

Emotional – Undermining an individual's self-esteem, constant criticism, insults, put-downs, and name-calling.

Economic – Examples include limiting the victim's access to family income, preventing the victim from working or forcing the victim to work, destroying the victim's property, and making all the financial decisions.

Both women and men can be victims of domestic abuse. According to the National Domestic Violence Hotline statistics, approximately 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men over the age of 18 have been the victim of physical domestic violence. Almost 50% of both sexes have experienced some form of domestic psychological aggression. All this can affect the child in the sense that the constant fighting and quarrelling at home may hinder the child to study and to get enough sleep. Also, when the home becomes uncomfortable for the child the safety need of that child is violated because the child may not have the desire to go home after school due to fear of violence and the rest. When the parents are not living in peace, the child finds it difficult to tell the parents about the various happenings in school and when their presence is needed all this affects the education of the child.

Children with Special Needs

Special can be seen as what children can't do. More children and adolescents today are enrolled in pre-primary, primary and secondary education than ever before. A lack of trained teachers, inadequate learning materials, makeshift classes and poor sanitation facilities make learning difficult for many children. Others come to school too hungry, sick or exhausted from work or household tasks to benefit from their lessons. The consequences are grave: An estimated 617 million children and adolescents around the world are unable to reach minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics, even though two thirds of them are in school. Children and

adolescents are excluded from education for many reasons. Poverty remains one of the most obstinate barriers, with children from the poorest households almost five times more likely to be out of primary school than those from the richest. Children with disabilities and from ethnic minorities are also more likely to be left behind.

Theoretical Review

The Socio- cultural Theory by Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934).

He was a psychologist who believed children learn about their world through physical copy interaction. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory asserts that learning is an essentially social process in which support of parents, caregivers, peers and the wider society and culture plays a crucial role in the development of higher psychological functions. Vygotsky was a pioneer psychologist with diverse interest, he was interested in how cultural elements which a particular society deems important for example, customs, beliefs, skills and values are passed on to new generations. His sociocultural theory declares that social interaction within the family and with knowledgeable members of the community is the primary means by which children acquire behaviors and cognitive process relevant to their own society. Adult or peer intervention in this context is thus an essential part of the development process. Scaffolding, peer tutoring and helping children at the zone of proximal development becomes very important.

The Ecological System Theory by Bronfenbrenner.

This theory looks at a child's development within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory defines complex "layers" of environment, each having an effect on a child's development. His theory focuses on the quality and context of the child's environment. He states that as a child develops, the interaction within these environments becomes more complex. This complexity can arise as the child's physical and cognitive structures grow and mature. Bronfenbrenner's theory is also used in this work in the sense that it explains why children may turn to behave differently in the presence of their family (parents) and their behaviors in school with their peers. The ecological system hold that we encounter different environments throughout our lifespan that may influence our behavior in varying degrees. These systems include the micro system, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macro system and the chronosystem.

The theory is related to this work in the sense that it shows how the relationship that children have at home with their parents can influence their educational performance. It helps the child in the development process both cognitively, emotionally and physically. All this helps to influence the educational performance of the child because when a child leaves in a peaceful home, the child will grow up having self-confidence and will always feel love.

Research Methodology

The research used the cross-sectional survey design to gather data from the various segments of the population and the result generalized on the entire population. This is due to the fact that the researcher intended to have the view or opinion of the respondents in relation to the problem. Since the opinion of the respondents were collected and analyzed, a cross section of the population would study.

Area of the Study

The study was carried out in Buea Municipality, South West Region of Cameroon. Geographically, the municipality is located at the foot of Mount Cameroon, and the proximity of the town to the Atlantic coast of Cameroon gives it a humid climate. Upper elevations of the main town tend to be cold and cloudy, while lower elevations tend to be much warmer and less humid. As in most of Cameroon, Buea experiences dry and wet seasons.

Population of the Study

In search terminology the population can be explain as a comprehensive group of individuals, institutions, objects and so forth with have a common characteristic that are the interest of a researcher. The common characteristics of this groups distinguished them from other individuals, institutions, objects and so forth. Thus, the population of the study includes all the students in form 1, 2, 3 in lycee molyko, Salvation and NABECKS in 2020 to 2021 academic year.

Target Population

The target population consist of Students in secondary schools of Buea municipality (Government, Denominational and Private). Due to the large size of the population, and the difficulties associated with it such as complex and bulky data, the actual sample population will be streamline.

Table 1: Distribution of population

Schools	Target Population
Bilingual Grammar School Buea	495
NABESK Comprehensive College	162
Salvation Comprehensive High School	51
Total	657

Sample Population

The sample is termed as a subject. Sampling means selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as representative of that population. Any statement made about the sample should also be true of the population. The sample size of the study will consist of 50 students in junior secondary school (Forms 1 to Form 3) within the municipality of Buea.

Table 2: Distribution of sample

Schools	Accessible Population
Bilingual Grammar School Buea	20
NABESK Comprehensive College	20
Salvation Comprehensive High School	10
Total	50

Source: Field Research, 2021

Sampling and Sampling Techniques

The simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the schools for the study, the sample was made up of government, and lay private in order to avoid the issues of bias. Random sampling is a procedure in quantitative research approach for selecting participants. It means that, each

individual has an equal probability of being selected from the target population and it ensures that, the sample will be representative enough.

Table 3: Distribution of students with respect to school

Schools	Accessible Population	Percentage
Bilingual Grammar School Buea	20	40
NABESK Comprehensive College	20	40
Salvation Comprehensive High School	10	20
Total	50	100

Class

The sampled students were from different classes of form 1, form 2, and form 3 in the three schools above.

Gender

Table 4: Distribution of students with respect to gender

Gender	N	%
Male	31	62
Female	19	38
Total	50	100

Based on the multiple response analysis, from results above female respondents had a higher proportion of 62 % (31) and males 38% (19) from the sampled schools.

Instrument for Data Collection

Research instruments are the various tools used by the research to collect information from the respondents. The research instrument used for data collection was a closed ended questionnaire for students in junior secondary schools. In order to assemble data for the study, questionnaire was constructed in conformity with the research objectives

Findings

Research question one: How does lack of communication affect the education of children with special needs in Buea Municipality?

Table 5: Students’ perception on impact of lack of communication on children education in the Buea Municipality.

S/n	Item	SA	A	D	SD	SA & A	D & SD
1	My Parents always talk calmly with each other and this encourages me to study well	6.0% (6)	8.0% (8)	16.0% (16)	20.0% (20)	14.0% (14)	36.0% (36)
2	My Parents don’t always talk amongst themselves.	11.0% (11)	17.0% (17)	12.0% (12)	10.0% (10)	28.0% (28)	22.0% (22)

3	In my house my father always talks to the neighbours and not my mother and this make me not to learn well	23.0% (23)	11.0% (11)	8.0% (8)	8.0% (8)	34.0% (34)	16.0% (16)
4	My mother is never talking with my father and this has made me not study well	19.0% (19)	16.0% (16)	7.0% (7)	8.0% (8)	35.0% (35)	15.0% (15)
5	My parents are always sharing their problems to themselves and this has encouraged me to be discipline in school	9.0% (9)	13.0% (13)	18.0% (18)	10.0% (10)	22.0% (22)	28.0% (28)
MRS/ Total		13.6% (68)	13.0% (65)	12.2% (61)	11.2% (56)	26.6% (133)	23.4% (117)

Based on the multiple response analysis, we can denote that a tremendous number of students agreed that lack of communication affects children education in the Buea Municipality with 26.6% while a relatively number of students disagreed that lack of communication do not affect children education in the Buea Municipality with 23.4%. Majority of students disagreed that parents do not always talk calmly to each other which deters children to learn well 36.0% while minority of the students agreed parents talk calmly to each other which encourages children to learn well in the Buea Municipality 14.0%.

Many students agreed that parents always talk among themselves which helps to solve problems and makes children to learn well in school 28.0% while 22.0% of students disagreed that parents don't always talk between themselves which hinders communication in the house and instead led to accumulation of grudges between the parents and traumatizes children thus, preventing children to learn well in school in the Buea municipality. Majority of the students agreed that fathers talk to neighbors and not his wife which aggravates the issue and hinders children to learn freely 34.0% while 16.0% of the rest population of students disagreed that father don't talk to neighbors but instead talk to his wife which helps to calm down situations in the house and gives students some chance to study both at home and in schools in the Buea Municipality.

Majority of the students agreed that mothers don't talk to fathers which makes students to disturbed and won't concentrate both at home and in school to study (35.0%) while 15.0% of students agreed that mothers talk to fathers which makes children feel relieved and helps children to study well both at home and in schools in the Buea Municipality. Many students disagreed that parents don't share problems between themselves which makes it difficult to solve the problems in the house and cause children not to study with ease in school (28.0%) while 22.0% agreed that parents share problems and helps to calm down the tension thereby creating a conducive atmosphere for children to learn in the house and in school in the Buea Municipality. A great number of students agreed that lack of communication between parents affects children education in secondary schools in the Buea Municipality.

Research question two: What is the effect of lack of finance affect the education of children with special needs in Buea Municipality

Table 6: Students’ perception on impact of lack of finance on children education in the Buea Municipality.

S/n	Item	SA	A	D	SD	SA & A	D & SD
1	My parents never give me money for break and this has made me not to study well.	17.0% (17)	14.0% (14)	7.0% (7)	12.0% (12)	31.0% (31)	19.0% (19)
2	My parents don’t always give me money for transport and this has made me to come late to school.	19.0% (19)	20.0% (20)	6.0% (6)	5.0% (5)	39.0% (39)	11.0% (11)
3	My parents don’t pay my school fees on time and this has made me to miss classes	25.0% (25)	13.0% (13)	7.0% (7)	5.0% (5)	38.0% (38)	12.0% (12)
4	My parents make sure that they buy all my school needs and this has encouraged me to study hard.	11.0% (11)	9.0% (9)	20.0% (20)	10.0% (10)	20.0% (20)	30.0% (30)
5	My parents don’t always give me money when I pass well and this has made me not to study hard.	14.0% (14)	17.0% (17)	6.0% (6)	13.0% (13)	31.0% (31)	19.0% (19)
MRS		17.2% (86)	14.6% (73)	9.2% (46)	9.0% (45)	31.8% (159)	18.2% (91)

With regards to the multiple response analysis, it show that a tremendous number of students agreed that lack of finance affects children education in the Buea Municipality with 31.8% while minority of students disagreed that lack of finance do not affects children education in the Buea Municipality with 18.2%. Majority of students agreed that parents don’t give children money for break which makes children go hungry all day and can’t study well in schools in the Buea Municipality (31.0%) while 19.0% of students disagreed that parents don’t give children money to eat at break time which makes them to eat well and have the strength to study in schools in the Buea Municipality.

Many students agreed that parents don’t always give children transport money to go to school which makes children to go to school late and sometime missed some part of a lesson or the entire lesson thus, rendering the child blank on what was taught in school (39.0%) while 11.0% of students disagreed that parents don’t give children money for transport to go to schools in the Buea Municipality. Majority of the students agreed that parents don’t pay children school fees on time and cause the child not to attend classes regularly which plays to a detriment on children education in school in the Buea Municipality (38.0%) while 12.0% of students agreed that parents pay children’s school fees on time and makes them to regularly attend classes and focused which encourage children to learn in schools in the Buea Municipality.

Majority of the students disagreed that parents buy all children’s school needs and play a negative role in the child’s effective learning thus, discourages the child to learn thereby affecting children education in schools in the Buea Municipality (30.0%) while 20.0% of students agreed that parents buy children’s school needs and greatly encourages and improves quality learning of children in schools in the Buea Municipality. Many students agreed that parents don’t give children money when they pass well in academic examination which helps to demotivate the child academic endeavors and might cause a drop in the child’s performance next time in schools in the Buea Municipality (31.0%) while 19.0% of students disagreed that parents don’t give children money for well passed examination and will motivate the children in academic endeavors in schools in the Buea Municipality.

Research question three: how does marital violence affect the education of children with special needs in Buea Municipality

Table 7: Students’ perception on impact of marital violence on children education in the Buea Municipality.

S/n	Item	SA	A	D	SD	SA & A	D & SD
1	My parents always fight at home and this has negatively affected my studies.	22.0% (22)	13.0% (13)	8.0% (8)	7.0% (7)	35.0% (35)	15.0% (15)
2	My parents are always arguing amongst themselves at home and this has made me not to concentrate in school.	16.0% (16)	13.0% (11)	12.0% (12)	9.0% (9)	29.0% (29)	21.0% (21)
3	My mother always cries at home because of father and this has made me not to study well.	17.0% (17)	14.0% (14)	6.0% (6)	13.0% (13)	31.0% (31)	19.0% (19)
4	My mother is always with scar on her face and this has discouraged me to learn.	10.0% (10)	8.0% (8)	15.0% (15)	17.0% (17)	18.0% (18)	32.0% (32)
5	I always feel as to study hard when my parents are not fighting.	22.0% (22)	18.0% (18)	6.0% (6)	4.0% (4)	40.0% (40)	10.0% (10)
MRS		17.0% (87)	12.0% (64)	9.4% (47)	10.0% (50)	30.6% (153)	19.4% (97)

Prior to the multiple response analysis, it demonstrates that a tremendous number of students agreed that marital violence affects children education in the Buea Municipality with 30.6% while a relatively number of students disagreed that marital violence do not affect children education in the Buea Municipality with 19.4%. Most students agreed that parents always fight at home and

has negatively affected children academic endeavors in schools in the Buea municipality 35.0% while 15.0% of students disagreed that parents fighting do not negatively affects children studies in schools in the Buea Municipality.

Many students agreed that parents always argue between themselves and has made children not to concentrate to learn in schools in the Buea Municipality 29.0% while 21.0% disagreed that parents' arguments do not affects children's concentration in schools in the Buea Municipality. Majority of the students agreed that when mother cries due to father it make children not to study well in schools in the Buea Municipality 31.0% while 19.0% of students disagreed that mother cries do not prevent a child to study well in schools in the Buea Municipality. Majority of the students disagreed that scars on mother's face inflicted by father do not discourage a child to learn in schools in the Buea Municipality 32.0% while 18.0% agreed that scars on mother's face inflicted by father will discourage a child to learn with peace of mind in schools in the Buea Municipality. Many students agreed that a child feel to learn well when parents are not fighting 40.0% while 10.0% of students disagreed.

Discussions

Based on findings, it shows that lack of finance, violence and lack of communication affects children with special needs education in secondary schools in the Buea Municipality negatively. With the average of strongly agreed and agreed with percentage of 31.8% which shows that students who are faced with financial difficulties finds very difficult to perform well in school in the Buea Municipality. As the children are not given break money which makes them go hungry all day, no transport money as children will have to trek for long distances to school which at times missed some lessons. This is at the detriment of the child's education, student's school fess are not paid on time nor paid at all which makes it difficult for students to attend classes and as such perform poor in education. Again, some students' school needs are not met which will go a long way to affect the child's education and lastly some children are not motivated whenever they perform well. So, lack of finance will negatively affect children education in secondary school in the Buea Municipality.

Conclusion

Family stability plays a positive role in the education of children with special needs. Marital problems have negative implications on the education of children with specials as they are unable to concentrate, with limited resources and facilities to cope in school. It is therefore imperative that parents live in peace and harmony to support children with special needs in an inclusive manner for their academic success.

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