



Parental Practices in the Career Development of Children with Mild Intellectual Disabilities. A Case of Three Selected Skills Training Centres in Zambia

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Abstract: *The descriptive survey sought to establish the role parental practices play in the career development of children with mild intellectual disabilities (MIDs) in three selected Skills Training Centres, in Zambia. The sample comprised 100 respondents: 60 parents, 30 children with mild intellectual disabilities, 6 lecturers, 3 principals and 1 Director. Purposive sampling was used to select children with MIDs (with both parents), Principals and the Director. Simple random sampling was used to select the actual sample of children from the purposively selected sample. Semi-structured interviews were administered to parents, questionnaires were administered to lecturers, Principals and the Director while Focus Group Discussions were conducted with children with MIDs. Qualitative data was thematically analysed while quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). By carefully analysing the role parental practices play in the career development of children with MIDs in aspects such as engaging children in family chores, interactions, attachment, showing interest in children's activities, child support, encouraging children into careers, among others, it became apparent that low expectations of parents emanating from lack of knowledge on mild intellectual disabilities and its vocational implications negatively affect their practices and consequently career development of their children with mild intellectual disabilities. This scenario exacerbates the already low levels of employment rates among such children. The study recommends that skill training centres should provide awareness to parents on MIDs and its career implications. Working with MoE and skill training centres, the Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare should sensitise parents on MIDs to foster attitude change.*

Keywords: Parental Practices, Career Development, Children, Mild Intellectual Disabilities

1. INTRODUCTION

Children with IDs have generalised neurological disorders, characterised by significantly impaired intellectual and adaptive functioning (WHO, 2015) which inhibits them from progressing into higher grades and compete favourably with others.

Intellectual disability is categorized in categories which are; mild, moderate, severe and profound. Children with MIDs have an intelligent quotient (IQ) of between 50 and 69. These children are capable of learning reading and acquiring mathematical skills to approximately the level of a typical child aged nine to twelve years. They can learn self-care and practical skills such as cookery, tailoring, animal husbandry, among others. As these children reach adulthood, they can learn to live independently, maintain gainful employment and become fairly self-sufficient with minimal community or social support.

Before the 18th century, infants with IDs were left to die, however, in mid-1800s, rehabilitating, training and reintegrating people with IDs into "normal" life began through reformers, such as Dorothea Dix (Beirne-Smith, Patton & Kim, 2006). However, these children can and do go on to succeed in education and employment (Asbury, 2010) as such when they attain the age of 16 or above (16+), they are trained in special vocation to equip them for employment and meaningful adult life. To this effect, the then Ministry of Science, Technology and Vocational Training formulated a policy, the Technical, Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET), to prepare all children, inclusive of those with IDs, for the labour market and mutual integration into society. In spite of this effort by government, Central Statistics Office (CSO, 2012) reports that individuals with IDs are mostly in family businesses with little or no pay at all (*ibid.*).

As early as 1966, parents were recognised as partners in the education or training of their children (MoE, 1996). Consistently, studies with have shown that parents play a role in the career development

of their children (Liu, MacMahon & Watson, 2015). Studies however, have mostly focused on children without MIDs. The researcher wonders how parental practices (parenting style, parental expectations, parental support, parental involvement) play a role in the career development of children with MIDs.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

While factors such as education, occupation or socioeconomic status play a pivotal role in career development of children (Barnes *et al.*, 2020; Oluwadala, 2016), some studies (Mwaa, 2016) show that parental practices (parenting style, parental expectation, parental support and parental involvement) play a role in the career development of children without disabilities. What remains unknown is how parental practices play a role in the career development of children with MIDs.

1.2. Purpose

The purpose was to explore how parental practices play a role in the career development of children with MIDs.

1.3. Research Objectives

The study sought to:

- To explore how parenting style plays a role in the career development of children with MIDs.
- To determine how expectations of parents play a role in the career development of children with MIDs.
- To establish how support by parents plays a role in the career development of children with MIDs.
- To determine how involvement of parents plays a role in the career development of children with MIDs.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the Ecological Systems Theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1999) which believes that development is best understood by examining one's context. It states that individuals' ability to reach their potential is dependent on real life situations and opportunities in the environment. In addition, individuals better adjust and are more satisfied in environments that match their attitudes, values, goals and experiences, that is, they are more satisfied when there is a fit between themselves and their environment (Schutheiss, Kress, Manzi & Glasscock, 2001). Being congruent with parents on career matters reflects a fit between individuals and their environment which likely facilitate and fosters career development (Roundy, 2015). Incongruity or lack of fit on the other hand is a potential external barrier to career development (Schutheiss *et al.* 2001). The theory states that parents influence career development through interactions or relationships they have with their children. The more encouraging and nurturing these relationships, interactions and environments are, the better children will develop careers. Hence, the ecological theory helped understand how parental practices play in the career development of children with MIDs.

1.5. Significance of the Study

Findings may contribute to the knowledge gap on the role parental practices play in the career development of children with MIDs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the United Kingdom, Barnes, Bimrose, Brown, Gough Wright (2020) conducted a study that was aimed at understanding how parents can be supported by schools and colleges to feel more informed and confident about the support and advice they give to their children about their careers. A methodology comprising a desk research and interviews was used. The study showed that the influence of parents is exerted through behaviors and family conditions that foster career development of values, attributes and self-concepts in children. However, the 2020 study was a desk study while the current study is a descriptive survey. In addition, it is not clear whether parents and their children with MIDs were part of the study.

Abuya, Mumah, Austrian, Mutisya, and Kabiru, (2018) conducted a study using baseline data collected in Kibera informal settlement in 2015 as part of the adolescent girls' initiative in Kenya. The study tested the mother-child education achievement hypothesis while taking into account the girls self-efficacy. Findings show a significant association between parents and numeracy and cognitive scores at the bivariate level. In addition, interaction effect of mothers and father's education showed that girls whose mothers had at least some secondary education performed better in numeracy while performance even increased more with fathers' level of education. The policy implication is that investment in mothers' secondary education in support of their daughters' education need to strengthen individual attributes of girls' self-efficacy. The 2018 study focused on mothers and their girl children without disabilities while the current one centres on parents (both fathers and mothers) of children (both females and males) with MIDs.

Moneva, Rozada, and Sollano, (2019) sought to determine if there is any association between parenting style, occupation and student self-esteem in Mandana city, Cebu, Philippines. The descriptive study was premised on the Stanely Coopersmith Self-esteem Theory proposed by Stanely Coopersmith. The study used 245 respondents from different strands. The tool used for getting information was the checklist rating score, questionnaire. All data was analysed using Anova. The findings reveal that the $p=0.518$ is greater than the significant level of 0.05 ($P=0.518 > 0.05$). The study also reveals that parent occupation is not significantly associated with the self-esteem of students and that self-esteem is not dependent on the work of parents. The 2018 study differs with current one on methodology, focus and type of respondents.

In Zambia, Wonani and Muzata (2019) conducted a study to establish the lived experiences and roles of Lusaka parents in the education of their children with Autism. The study employed qualitative paradigm and the research design was phenomenology. A purposively selected sample of 20 participants (10 parents and 10 children with Autism) was used. Parents were the main participants while teachers complimented the informers to enrich the data. Findings show that parents suffered frustration, stigmatisation, embarrassment and psychological stress in bringing up their children. The study notes that with the help of community support, stress in the education of their children would be relieved. Findings show that parents did not actively participate in the education of their children, limiting their roles in helping their children with homework, taking their children to school and buying children books. A few parents who were engaged in the education of their children gained confidence and satisfaction. The study recommends that the school should link parents to support groups to acquire knowledge and skills for managing unusual behaviours of their children. In addition, community sensitization about negative attitudes towards parents and children with Autism need to be carried out. Furthermore, laws against stigmatism should be made clear to the community members and the Ministry of General Education through schools with learners with Autism should embark on sensitization of parents about their roles in the education of their children with Autism. The 2019 study focused on the role parents in the education of their children with Autism in education as opposed to the role parents play in career development of their children with MIDs.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The study used a descriptive survey design which according to Sinkombo (2016) can be used to collect information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits, educational or social issues. The design was considered suitable as it utilises elements of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies (McCombes, 2020).

3.2. Research Sites

The study was conducted at Makanaka, Tinashe and Tariro (pseudonyms) skills training centres in Ndola, Chisamba and Kabwe districts respectively, where children with MIDs from across the country, are offered skills training.

3.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population consisted of all parents of children with MIDs, all children with MIDs, all lecturers of children with MIDs, all Principals of Skill Training Centres and the Director in charge of skills

training from TEVETA. A sample of 100 respondents: 60 parents of children with MIDs, 30 children with MIDs, 6 lecturers, 3 Principals and 1 Director was used. Consistent with Hamed (2020), the study adopted purposive sampling to select the centres, children with MIDs (with both parents), Principals of the three selected Skills Training Centres and the Director. Simple random sampling was used to later select children (actual sample) and lecturers. Semi-structured interviews were administered to parents, questionnaires to lecturers, Principals and the Director while FGDs were conducted with children with MIDs in line with Mc Combes, (2020). Other sources such as documents of meetings were consulted.

3.4. Data Analysis

Consistent with Montanye (2017), data analysis commenced in the field by categorizing qualitative data into emerging themes while quantitative data was analysed using SPSS to generate tables, frequencies, percentages and charts.

3.5. Ethical Issues

As suggested by Reinsk (2018), ethical considerations such as; seeking permission from Rockview University Ethical Committee, respondents' confidentiality and other research conventions, were considered. All centres and respondents' identity were kept anonymous.

As a way of validating and ensuring reliability of results, the report was peer reviewed

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. How Parental Practices Play a Role in the Career Development of Children with MIDs

How Parenting Style Plays a Role in the Career Development of Children with MIDs

Findings show that parenting style plays a role in the career development of children with MIDs through different ways. Details are reflected in table 1.

Table1. *How Parenting Style Plays a Role in Career Development of Children with MIDs*

| SN | Ways Parenting Style Plays a Role | Frequency |
|----|------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Interactions | 65 |
| 2 | Supporting Children in Careers | 69 |
| 3 | Engaging Children in Family Chores | 65 |
| 4 | Attachment | 30 |
| 5 | Monitoring Children's Activities | 24 |
| 6 | Offering Career Guidance | 8 |
| 7 | Overprotection of Children | 5 |
| 8 | Maltreatment of Children | 3 |
| 9 | Lack of Support | 21 |
| 10 | Lack of interactions | 18 |
| 11 | Lack of Knowledge | 32 |
| 12 | Lack of Attachment | 30 |

Source: *Field Work, 2021.*

- *Engaging Children in Family Chores*

Findings revealed that most parents engage their children with MIDs in family chores as a way of preparing them for the future. For example, respondent F04 said:

..... I engage her in family chores to prepare her for the future especially that she is a girl.... for example, cooking, washing. With the training she is undergoing right now (food production), I have seen a lot of improvement in the way she does most of these (home) activities.

The exposure and engagement of children in different activities helps in nurturing careers and gives them an opportunity to acquire work values (Halim *et al.*, 2017). This study suggests the need for skill training centres should sensitise parents to start this engagement in chores early for children to be competent. Consistent with the ecological theory, provision of practical opportunities helps children

reach their potential (Duffy & Dik, 2009). Through this role, parents identify their children's interests, strengths and weaknesses so as to engage these children in interest-tailored activities. Some parents indicated giving feedback (positive or negative) to their children on their (children's) performance, an act that enhances career development. Since the home environment represents the first work place (McClain & Melvin, 2012), parents should enrich this engagement in of children in chores with challenging and stimulating interactions that trigger curiosity and exploration urge. This engagement indicates that parents are not overprotective contradicting Chandramuki *et al.* (2012) who found that parents were overly protective of their children with IDs. This finding demonstrates parents' innate responsibility of preparing their children for the future. Findings also show that parents, regardless of their education level, engaged their children in chores. Contrary to Duristic and Bunijevac, (2017), parents of low education levels tend to be less capable of engaging children in family chores. The ecological theory used in this study posits that children's ability to reach their potential is dependent on the opportunities available in the environment (Roundy, 2015).

- *Parental Interactions with Children with MIDs*

Findings indicate that some parents interacted with their children on careers creating in them the desire to work later. Findings show that the driving force for interactions was the desire for parents to see their children with MIDs in better later lives. Similarly, Jungen (2014) found that parents created environments which allowed children to explore their career interests through interactions. As put by Banks *et al.* (2016), parents who have aspirations for children provide more interactive opportunities to prepare their children for the future. To this effect, respondent F16 narrated:

... I talk to him on the training, if I don't, he may think the training is not important. I was told he can work after that training so I tell him to be serious.....This helps in preparing him for his future.

According to Sawitri *et al.* (2014) parents' direct talks, attitudes, behaviours, examples set, opportunities offered and learning experiences, shape children's career beliefs and values. On the contrary, some children claimed their parents were either fearful, absent or too busy which hindered transmission of parental career information. This finding indicates a need to research in this area. Findings also show that parents of children with MIDs of low educational levels and or of low socioeconomic status did not interact with their children. Consistent with Kim, Pear and Fisher (2010), this made parents less affectionate, less responsive and fearful. This according to the ecological theory creates incongruence or a poor fit inhibiting children's career development.

Findings show that some parents interacted with the trainers or children's former teachers. This broadened their career information base creating a nurturing environment for their children's career development. Consistently, Grabal and Madson (2010) parents approached teachers because they believed they would be of help in their children's career development. This study suggests that parents frequently interact with current instructors for career information matching their children's current training (Lee & Kim, 2013). Similarly, the mesosystem of the ecological theory asserts that connections between instructors and parents signify congruence, a recipe for children's career development (Fulcher, 2011). The low expectations exhibited by some parents explains the erratic parent-child interactions and signifies negative attitudes towards disabilities. Nord (2012) argues that although there has been some remarkable change of attitudes over disability, patches of negative attitudes still exist. As such parents need to form or link with social networks to foster attitude change towards MIDs.

- *Through Parental Attachment*

The study revealed that parental attachment helps children with MIDS develop careers. Parents of high educational levels who were attached to their children had career interactions with their children. Respondent ML05 explained:

When parents are close to their children with mild intellectual disabilities, children feel loved and free to relate with their parents. They can easily communicate with their parents on their concerns, needs, desires, plans or even thoughts. when parents are close to their children, they engage their children in career talks and activities.

Respondent FC02-21 shared her views:

I am very free to talk to my sister in-law. My brother likes shouting too much. I tell her what I want. she is the one who brought me here.....

Through attachment parents transmit values and attitudes to their children. Consistent with Whiston and Keller, (2004), attached parents respond positively and share their career expectations with their children in a lovely, responsive and nurturing manner. The microsystem of the ecological theory consists of children rearing practices like attachment or closeness which foster career development. This demonstrates the need for parents to develop or strengthen parent-child relationships to adequately prepare their children for the future. The lack of attachment noted in some parents indicates prevalent negative attitudes on disability (Nord, 2012). This puts children at risk of developing careers. In fact, findings show that some parents were mostly absent from their homes suggesting the need for them to be sensitised on the matter.

- *By Monitoring Children's Activities*

The study found that parenting style plays a role in the career development of children with MIDs through monitoring. Respondent F03 explained:

.... if I don't he may not be serious and end up like me....I also engage him in family chores like I do with his siblings as a way of preparing him for his future life.... Basically, I follow the instructions I was given by his former teachers I also monitor him in whatever he does here to try and treat him like others,.... This helps in preparing him for his future.

This finding contrasts that of Chisembe (2017) which revealed that parents were not fully involved in the IEPs. Yet, parent behaviours such as involvement are vital in the development of children with disabilities (Barnes, Bimrose, Brown, Cough & Wright, 2020). Parents that check on their children's activities become aware of their children's progression (Morin, 2016).

- *By Offering Career Guidance*

The study found that parenting style plays a role in the career development of children with MIDs through parents offering guidance. Respondent M05 explained:

From childhood, he showed a liking for working in the garden so as a way of boosting is interest, I would provide opportunities when am there and I tell people at home to help him that way....in short, I offer some guidance where I can, life is all about being guided.... The problem is that I am rarely home.

By offering career guidance, parents create nurturing and responsive career packed home environments. Consistent with Bates (2015), positive family environment such as guidance, is correlated with positive outcomes in career development. However, some parents were too busy or un available depriving their children of the career guidance needed for career development. Yet, children continuously depend on their parents in the area of career development (Barnes *et.al.*, 2020).

- *Through Supporting Children in Careers*

Findings show that parenting style plays a role in the career development of children with disabilities through support rendered parents render to their children. F04 noted;

... I know that how I bring up my daughter affects her future....., I support her in her current training. This has made her develop the desire to work....I also provide basic needs to her....

This support shows that parents approve of what the children are engaged in. In turn, it elicits pride and satisfaction thereby enhancing career development. In addition, the support makes children feel loved and their desire to prepare for the future grows. In fact, in this study, some children proudly indicated that they were sponsored by their parents while others said they were visited at the centres. Research shows that parents see parental support as influential in their career development (Barnes *et al.*, 2020) as it shapes career attitude and beliefs related to children's futures. This means parental support in a motivating factor in children's career development (Mwaa, 2016). However, some responses show that parents did not offer support or adequate support to their children with MIDs, an act that negatively affected children's career development.

4.2. How Expectations of Parents Play a Role in the Career Development of Children with MIDs

Parental expectations were found to play a role in career development of children with mild disabilities in different ways. Details are reflected in figure 2.

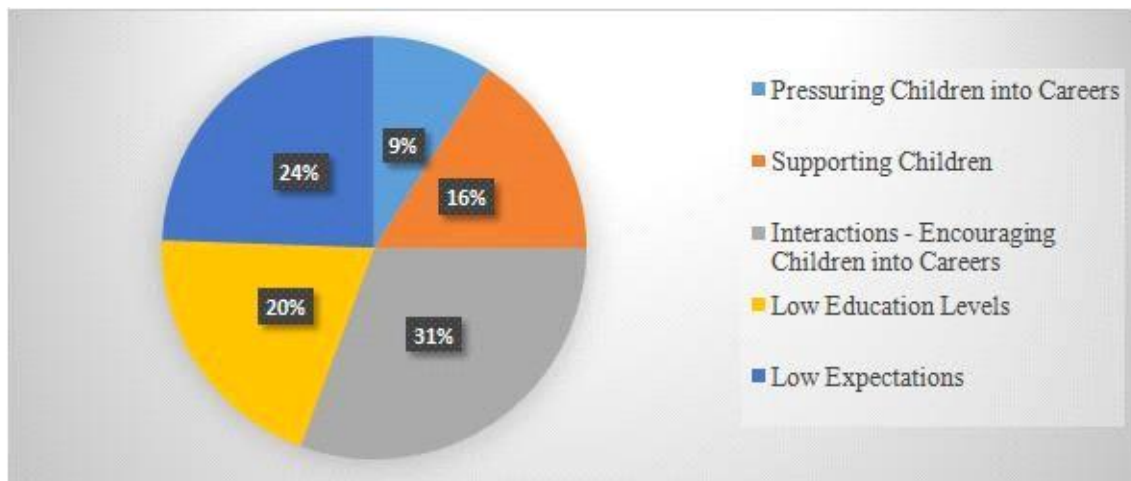


Figure 2. How Parental Expectations Play a Role in Career Development of Children with MIDs

Source: Field Work, 2021.

- *Interactions- Encouraging Children to take up Certain Careers*

The study found that most parents encouraged their children with MIDs to take up certain careers. Respondent M01 explained:

As a parent, I have expectations on my son, regardless of his condition. It is these expectations

.....which made me encourage him to take up the career he is pursuing and it is the same expectations which makes me encourage him to work hard. Because of this, he also works towards attaining the expected goals to please me thereby, developing the desire to work later....

As parents encourage their children with MIDs into careers, working roles are embedded into the eco systems fostering career development. The desire to have their children lead better future lives makes parents offer encouragements. In turn, children internalise parental career desires, beliefs and values thereby developing careers. Contrary to Sani (2018), parents of children with IDs had low expectations. Likewise, Ma *et al.*, (2018) notes that parents with high expectations are more likely to encourage and engage their children in career related activities than those with low expectations. On the contrary, Olaosebikan and Olasakin (2014) found that parents pressured children to take up certain careers. This indicates that parents who encourage children into careers that speak to their (children's) aspirations, foster career development. Consistent with the ecological theory, mutual interactions signify congruence between children and environments (Roundy, 2015). This highlights the centrality of availing parents with different career options for them to guide their children.

- *Through Supporting Children in Careers*

The study revealed that parental expectations play a role in career development of children with IDs through support. A prototype response came from respondent F02:

I provide my child with all the necessary basic needs...I take her to school and pick her ...The support I give my her makes her know that I am interested in what she is doing and she feels motivated. This makes her try hard in her career activities especially in her current training. She even indicates the desire to work one day...

This finding mirrors that of Mwaa (2016) who found that parental expectations can be communicated through parental support. The parental support signifies parental approval and elicits expressions of pride and satisfaction among children thereby fostering career development. The support by parents is

expressed differently, for example, through sharing work place stories, expressing concerns for the future and modelling work behaviours. By this, parents interpret the realities of work and future careers. In addition, the support makes children feel loved and their desire to meet their parents' expectations grow thereby developing careers. In fact, some children were pursuing courses chosen and/or supported by their parents. Without parental approval, children are reluctant to pursue or explore certain careers (Jungen, 2014). This means that parental support acts as a motivating factor in children's career development (Mwaa, 2016).

Findings show that some parents of children with IDs were not only unsupportive but also uninvolved in their children's career development. For example, respondent MP02 shared:

...because of the inadequate intellectual functioning of these children, some parents have low or no expectations at all. When the parents are not expecting anything from a child, they are normally neither helpful nor supportive. Lack of support reduces the morale needed to develop careers.

This scenario inhibits children's ability to explore alternative career options and narrows children's career development process. Likewise, Mwaa (2016) argues that over involvement of parents in their children's career issues may negatively affect children's career development process.

- *Pressuring Children into Certain Careers*

The study revealed that some parents of high educational levels (tertiary) had high expectations on their children which made them push their children into certain careers. For example, respondent ML03 shared:

...the educated parents normally have high expectations and they end up pushing their children with IDs into wrong careers. When their children fail to perform, they get frustrated again.

Respondent M03-23 said;

It was my father who brought me here to come and train in General Agriculture. I wanted to be a Police Officer...

Contrary to Halim *et al.* (2017), parents encouraged children into careers pursuits. Although these high expectations some parents in this study had could have made their children work hard, they had negative consequences particularly when they pressured children into careers that did not speak to their aspirations. Such a push causes a poor fit or incongruity between children (individuals) and their parents (environments), negatively affecting their career development.

On the other hand, some parents prescribed high order courses for their children contrary to the abilities of the said children. This act causes children to feel a strong sense of frustration, worse still, when they fail to meet their parents' expectations. The failure does not only affect children but it also affects parental functioning and consequently career development of children (Muchalick, 2015). The ecological theory posits that the push of children into careers creates a poor fit or incongruence which hinders children's career development (Roundy, 2015). The theory believes that children better adjust and are more satisfied in environments that match their career attitudes, values, goals and experiences (2015). If parents are not made aware of this belief, they may continue pushing their children into careers that do not speak to their (children's) aspirations, they may continue thwarting career development of their children.

Furthermore, findings show that low parental expectations have a negative effect on the career development. For example, respondent MP02 observed:

... some parents have low or no expectations at all. When the parents are not expecting anything from a child, they are normally neither helpful nor supportive. Lack of support reduces the morale needed to develop careers.

Low expectations make parents less involved in preparing their children for the future. Such a finding indicates a poor fit between children and their environment creating a barrier to their career development. Mwaa (2016) argues that expectations of parents guide their behaviour towards their children and act as a driving force for children to work hard.

4.3. How Parental Support Plays a Role in the Career Development of Children with MIDs

As to how the support parents give children with MIDs plays a role in the career development of such children, findings indicate that it does so through different ways as shown in figure 3.

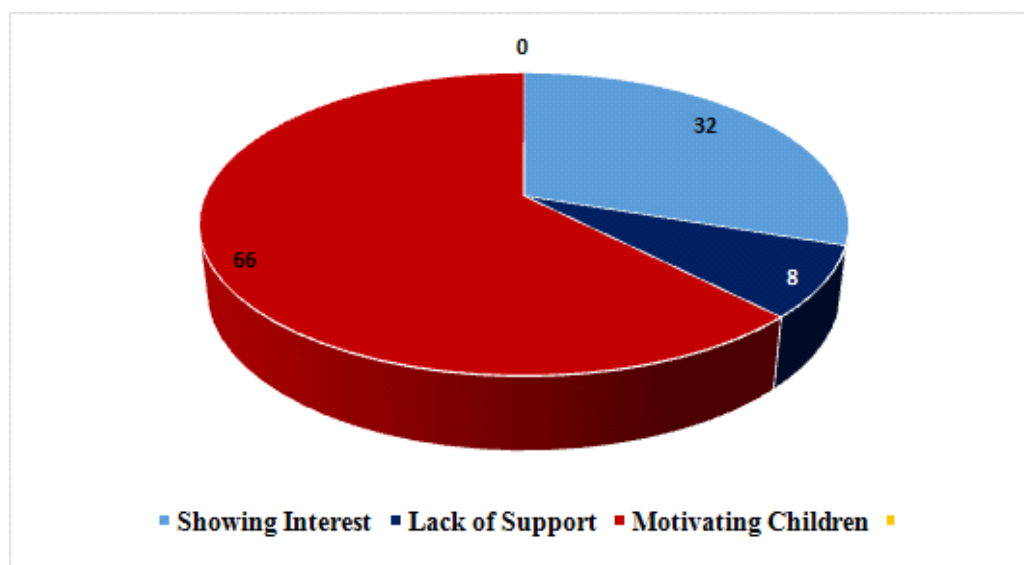


Figure 3. How Parental Support Plays a Role in the Career Development of Children with MIDs

Source: Field Work, 2021.

- *Through Showing Interest in Children's Career Activities*

The study revealed that the support parents offer to their children with MIDs indicates to their children that they (parents) have interest in their children's career activities. To this effect, respondent F02 explained:

The support I give my child makes her know that I am interested in what she is doing and she feels motivated. This makes her try hard in her career activities... She even indicates the desire to work one day...

This support elicits expressions of pride and satisfaction among children. Consistent with experiences of some parents, supporting children in careers motivates children to work hard thereby developing careers. Umeana (2017) found that parental support was additionally motivating when parents showed interest in children's activities. As such, parents should be aware that by adding their biases and attitudes into their children's career activities, they directly or indirectly foster their children's career development.

Findings revealed that some parents visited their children to check on their children at the institutions. This made children to work hard towards actualisation of their career goals. Likewise, Latashia (2012) points out that parents' presence in their children's activities indicates interest and is vital for career development. Failure of parents to show interest in their children's activities, may create environments unfit for children's career development. The ecological theory assumes that the more nurturing and encouraging the environment is, the more children are likely to develop careers (Roundy, 2015).

- *Motivating Children*

Findings show that the support some parents give their children is motivational and enhances career development. Consistently, Whiston and Keller (2004) state that when children are supported, they are motivated to do better. As rightly put, children who are supported have more skills in thinking about careers and the world of work and they develop confidence. Respondent FC02-21 shared:

I am on bursary. The government pays for me. ... but when coming here they buy me groceries... everything I need.... like soap, lotion, bread and drink...My sister in-law bought me a phone, I can call her when I want... and she also calls.....

A look at the parents that substantially supported their children shows they were of high educational levels. These parents indicated that they hoped to see their children do something in future, proving that their support was linked to their expectations. Similarly, Durisic and Bunijevac (2017) believe that parents who hold high expectations for their children's futures are likely to motivate their children to ensure aspirations are realized. Consistently, the ecological theory states that proximal processes that involve patterns of interactions between children's immediate environment and their parents, for example, parental support, are vital for children's career development.

4.4. How the Involvement of Parents Plays a Role in the Career Development of Children with MIDs

The themes that emerged on how involvement of parents in their children's activities plays a role in the career development of their children with MIDs included monitoring their children's activities and through offering parental guidance. Figure 4 shows the findings.

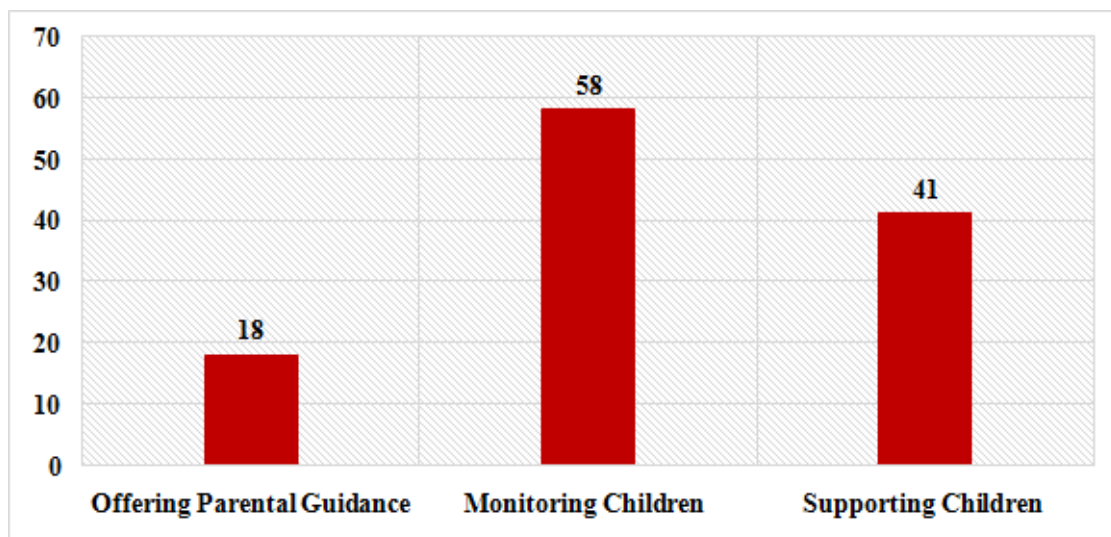


Figure4. *How Parental Involvement Plays a Role in the Career Development of Children with MIDs*

Source: *Field Work, 2021.*

- *Through Monitoring Children*

The study found that some parents especially those of high educational levels monitored their children's activities at home and at the training centre as an effort to prepare them (children) for the future. This monitoring provided parents with information on how their children were faring. This monitoring also indicates that such parents had expectations on their children. This finding contrasts that of Chisembe (2017) whose study on parental awareness in IEPs and the extent of parental involvement in the IEP for children with IDs in selected special schools in Lusaka district found that parents were minimally involved.

Similarly, Latashia (2012) found that children who are monitored have higher career aspirations and enhanced career development (Bytes, 2015; Cherry, 2015; Sarwar, 2016; Similarly, children who were monitored indicated the desire to work later. Consistently, Durisic & Bunijevac, (2017), parents who frequently check on their children at education centres provide encouragement and motivation. In fact, Cheung & Pomerrantz, (2012) argue that parental monitoring does not only motivate children but makes them aware of their parents' interests and expectations.

Furthermore, monitoring avails parents with opportunities to interact with lecturers on the performance and instructional goals of their children including what is to be celebrated, addressed or improved (2012) Although each setting independently plays a role in children's career development, interactions of the two makes the home environment intellectually conducive for children's career

development. This suggests the need for the centres to strengthen parental collaboration to help parents monitor their children. As noted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018), visitation make the centres and parents work collaboratively to enhance children's career development. A positive parent-teacher relationship consists of regular teacher-parent communication regarding children's performance and is established on respect and mutual goal of success of children (Lala, 2019). Consistently, the ecological theory states that when parents interact with instructors, they establish links between two microsystems that enable children to achieve their goals and to participate in an extended ecological field of action thereby, developing careers (Roundy, 2015).

On the other hand, the plight by most children to be visited by their parents indicates the importance of visitation in children's career development. Consistently, most parents admitted not being involved in preparing their children for the future. Respondent F03 expressed:

...The problem is that his training centres is very far and I have problems with finances. I don't even know how he performs at school... his father is also busy ...I know that he gets annoyed because I do not go to see him during visitation days, he always complains...I know this is demotivating....

Lack of involvement creates a poor fit between children and their parents hindering career development. This finding contrasts that of Cheung and Pomerratz (2012) who found that parents contacted the staff on occupational matters of their children.

Findings show that factors like distance, financial constraints and time hindered parents of low educational levels (primary or secondary) and those not in inspiring occupations from visiting their children with MIDs. Similarly, Chisembe (2017) found that uninvolvement was as a result of limited finances, irregular work schedules, lack of transportation, among others. If such parents are not helped to recognise their facilitative role, they may not adequately prepare their children for the future (Duffy & Dik, 2009).

- *Offering Parental Guidance*

Findings showed that some parents offered career guidance as a way of helping their children prepare for the future. Respondent M01 expressed the following views:

When I am involved in the career activities of my child, for example, the training he is undergoing, I am able to identify where he needs help or guidance and offer it... I sponsor him and provide what he needs too. This I know encourages him to do better in whatever activity he engages in at school or at home....

In turn, and as reflected in the findings, most children were determined to go by their parents' guidance. As rightly noted by Ulrich *et al.*, (2018), parents are one of the sources of career guidance for children. The findings show that children are prepared for future life in accordance with their parents' career values.

Findings show that parents' value for prestigious careers made them offer the guidance. In turn, children became more determined in their occupational decisions. As parents offer guidance to their children, they are availed with a platform for open communication which serves as a window for career knowledge. In addition, they understand the career desires and interests of their children while children also share their career concerns. Consistent with Taylor *et al.*, (2004), through parental guidance, children with MIDs can show career maturity, less indecision and more career reliance. This according to the ecological theory shows a fit between parents(environment) and their children which likely fosters career development.

Since parents are influential in the lives of their children (Ceka & Murati, 2016), they be offered with career information to help prepare their children for the future. Surprisingly though, none of the children indicated they received any career guidance from their parents, the need to research around this area. In addition, what is still unknown is the content of the guidance offered by parents with low educational levels and low expectations.

- *Through Supporting Children*

The study shows that the involvement of parents in preparing their children for the future through the support parents render.

.....I am involved in the career activities of my child, for example, the training he is undergoing, I am able to monitor his progress, t...I take him to school, pick him and visit him at school... I sponsor him and provide what he needs too. This I know encourages him to do better

Parental involvement begins at home with the provision of appropriate support for the well-being of children (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017) to children. Ramona and Loredana (2014) found that interactions through which parents state their interest and approve their children's activities enhance care development. Without parental approval or support, children with IDs may be low at exploring diverse career related activities. When children with MIDs are supported, by their parents, they may develop more skills in thinking about the world of work. Due to the unique needs of children with MIDs, parents of these children obviously have an increased need for support (Muchalicek, *et al.*, 2015) and interventions that would assist them in facilitating and nurturing their children's education and career development. Hence, the need for support systems for such parents to ease the burden the disability exerts on them. According to Halim *et al.*, (2017), parents can influence children indirectly and even negatively. For example, parents of low education levels may not understand the educational system and may fail to support their children in career development.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that low expectations among parents emanating from lack of knowledge on mild intellectual disabilities and its vocational implications negatively affect their practices and consequently career development of their children with mild intellectual disabilities. This scenario exacerbates the already low levels of employment rates among such individuals.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that MoE, in collaboration with skill training centres, should provide awareness to parents on MIDs and its career implications. In addition, working with MoE and skill training centres, the Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare should sensitise parents on attitude change towards MIDs.

6. FUTURE RESEARCH

There is need to focus on how parental attributes such as personality play a role in the career development of children with mild intellectual disabilities.

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