

- 🌀 **Name of the study:** "It takes a whole village to raise a child" Focusing on the team: the special education team's perception of the partnership with parents.
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Abstract

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The literature has provided evidence that the school-parents partnership is important and crucial for the well-being of all students, and especially in the special education (SE) system. There are many challenges in constructing this partnership, including the fact that the SE system is located between the health system and the educational system. Different studies have examined this subject, but none of them focused on the perspective of the SE professionals, who have a major role in recruiting the parents and shaping and leading this collaboration.

Accordingly, the current research focuses on the missing perspective of the SE staff in the partnership paradigm and examines the protective and risk factors that may affect this partnership. More specifically, this study aimed to examine: (1) How do school professionals perceive the partnership with parents? (2) What is the relationship between stress and partnership perception? (3) What are the personal factors which may moderate the effect of stress on partnership perception? and (4) How are school climate and school characteristics associated with stress and partnership perception?

Participants were SE professionals from three SE schools in central Israel (approximately 120 professionals), from multiple professional disciplines (teachers, physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, therapists, social workers, school counselors, and health care assistants). All the SE schools that were chosen are part of a cluster of SE schools that serve complex special needs, including physiological impairments, cognitive impairments, or both. Participants completed several questionnaires in order to assess their perception of the

partnership with the parents, as well as the level of work-related stress, the characteristics of the school's climate, and the specific characteristics of the staff. To test the study hypotheses, data was analyzed in several steps and statistical procedures: ANOVA, bivariate-correlation coefficients, and hierarchical regressions. The research findings reveal that school climate relates to work-related stress and professional self-concept. Additionally, school characteristics and school climate were found to be related to partnership perception. Furthermore, personal characteristics, and especially compassion fatigue (CF) and compassion satisfaction (CS), had direct relationships with work-related stress and partnership perception, and moderated the association between work-related stress and partnership perception.

These results have implications for the clinical field by offering a better understanding the of role of school professionals, the context in which they work, and the factors that affect them. They may facilitate providing the support that school professionals require and prevent them from leaving the field, a tendency that has been rising in the past few years. In addition, our research explains the factors that might influence the domain of 'providing general information' in the MPOC questionnaire, which has been consistently rated the lowest over the years and has been found to be a crucial part of the partnership between caregivers and parents. The understanding of these factors can help us in the clinical field to adjust and improve it in order to form better communication between families and caregivers. The findings of the current study support the need for the development of targeted interventions to reduce CF and increase adaptive social emotions and motivation and to teach coping mechanisms and awareness of self-care. All of this is particularly beneficial for the SE staff and people working in helping professions or in high-risk stress occupations in general. Enhancing their resilience and their coping mechanisms and self-care will help them provide positive communication when partnering with parents, while practicing self-care and remaining in their position.

Keywords

Special education; professional staff; Partnership; Parents; school climate; impairment; Stress; personality factors; burnout; compassion fatigue; compassion satisfaction; Cerebral palsy; Quality of life; resilience

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