

Assessing the Needs of People with Disabilities in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, UAE

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Abstract: While there are many opportunities for people with disabilities (PWD) in Abu Dhabi (AD), UAE, there hardly been a study of what is required to get such people to meet their full potentials. This study commenced December 2012 and lasted for 4 months. The needs assessment based study tried to answer questions like what is needed to achieve the enhancement of the quality of life of PWD in AD region during and after school/centre times. It also looked at what type of needs (financial, assistive, emotional, and other) those people might have, and what are the needs of the parents of PWD that support the development of their children to reach their full potentials. Adding to that what could be recommended to bridge the gap in such needs. The purpose was mainly to develop a good understanding of the landscape. Benchmarking was undertaken from all private centers and scanning the needs of all parents of PWD in government centers across AD as well. It is hoped that researching the findings would help to develop the services on offer for PWD in the Emirate of AD. In order to achieve the aims of this study, 8 centres were selected out of the total of 17 which is the number of private centres in AD. The selection was based on size, location and type of disability as a purposeful sample to insure fair representation of the centres. The researcher conducted 8 filed visits of centers in Abu Dhabi and Al Ain to assess their current services, operating model etc. Individual briefs were prepared for every center with comparisons across specific factors. Scanning all the needs of all the parents of people with disability in the government centres across Abu Dhabi was looked at differently. To insure validity of the data and because the Emirati people with disability clustered mainly in government centres, all nine government centres under Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care were visited and sample interviews (qualitative and quantitative) from all centres were undertaken. Selected participants were used to interview and investigate up close (purposeful sampling). Findings showed that there is a desperate need for support after school hours despite the care offered during school hours for those who are in school age. Parents need support on several levels especially with how to spend quality time with their children with disabilities.

Keywords: *Disabilities, Abu Dhabi, Education system,*

1. Introduction

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE) society, the expectation of a student at any school as well as one of the national goals of the UAE education system is to master the curriculum objectives, academic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic) and pass the Mid and End of year Examinations. Consequently, that student will be then upgraded into the higher class for the following year. This is in line with Gaad (2006) who pointed out that 'to achieve the curriculum planning produced and accredited by the Ministry of Education is amongst the vision goals of the UAE'. Parents face many challenges in a society that opened the door for inclusive education by issuing relevant legislations and laws to support the inclusion of people with disability, but yet to raise awareness about eradication of social stigma that related to them and their families. As for the parents of children with disabilities, the principal explained that a major change of attitude had taken place over the last three years (Alborno, 2012). The purpose of this study was mainly to develop a good understanding of the landscape. Benchmarking was undertaken from all private centers and scanning the needs of all parents of PWD in government centers across the Emirate of Abu Dhabi as the large Emirate that contain largest portion of Emirati community in the UAE . It is hoped that researching the findings would help to develop the services on offer for PWD in the Emirate of AD.

Research Questions: What is needed to achieve the enhancement of the quality of life of PWD in AD region during and after school/centre times in terms of financial, assistive, emotional, and other needs?

- What are the needs of the parents of PWD that support the development of their children to reach their full potentials?
- What could be recommended to bridge the gap in such needs and support the achievement of better life for PWD in AD?

2. Methodology

A mixture of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods was applied to raise validity. Benchmarking all Private Centers took place over the period of the field study with 17 private Centers in AD scanning for all needs of all parents of PWD in government centers across the Emirate. In addition, 8 government centers under Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care. Because the data that needs to be collected involved interviewing parents as well as looking at the numbers when it comes to services, so choice of methodology for this research was based on mixture of qualitative methods which are by nature more descriptive of finer details in the reality of everyday occurrences than Quantitative data would be (Robson, 2002), and quantitative to serve the counting part of the investigation (Cohen et al., 2000; Creswell, 2009).

3. Results

Scanning all the needs of all the parents of people with disability in the government centers across Abu Dhabi was looked at differently. To insure validity of the data and because the Emirati people with disability clustered mainly in government centers, all nine government centers under Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care were visited and sample interviews (qualitative and quantitative) from all centers were undertaken. Selected participants were used to interview and investigate up close (purposeful sampling).

Service Provider Comparison: The followings are the comparison of 8 sampled private centers across AD. Names were removed and were substituted with numbers for anonymity

Category	Centre 1	Centre 2	Centre 3	Centre 4
Legal Status	Private Registered The Ministry of Social Affairs	Private Registered The Ministry of Social Affairs	Private Registered The Ministry of Social Affairs	Private Registered The Ministry of Social Affairs
Capacity & Age Group	Total : 177 Enrollment: 77 Emirati: 12 3.5 - 20 years	Total : 80 Enrollment: 65 Emirati: 5 3.0 - 20 (or -22) years	Total 9 as day care Emirati 5 + session based services after school	Up to 60 More than 50% Emiratis 3 years to 20 years
Employees	Support staff: 10 (Nurse, helpers & driver) Professional: 15 (Head teacher, deputy. 1 SLT, 1 PT, 1 OT , 1 Household SPED: 8	Support staff: 10 (Nurse, helpers & driver) Professional: 15 (Head teacher, deputy. 1 SLT, 1 PT, 1 OT , 1 Household SPED: 8	3 preeminent + pay as you go therapists for sessions	Employees total 30 it is mainly one- to- one (teacher- student). Administrators & special care. No more information found about employees salary

Category	Centre 1	Centre 2	Centre 3	Centre 4
Physical Structure	Rented villa Sport hall Female household and needle workshop Male carpentry Computer facilities' 3 classes (12+) 2 classes (12 -) 1 PMLD class	Computer Facilities all some classes have one computer Wide place for a computer lap A very nice sensory room donated by Donated by Daman Standard classroom Sport facilities are available They used outside facility for swimming, horseback riding, and trips. Playground is in use for sport	Rented villa Small and very tight place Only 3 classes	Rented Villa (500.000) per year. Big villa divided to 2 sections (Centre + Teachers residential). The Centre itself is limited and small. Sport hall. Household and needle workshop(girls) Carpentry for boys available.
Disability Type	PMLD Down Syndrome Intellectual disability Speech and language impairments	no PMLD Down Syndrome - almost half with DS Intellectual Disability mild to moderate Speech and Language Impairments Autism – some server and some mild No physical problems (Cerepal Palsy)	Intellectual disability (Mild/moderate) Speech and language impairments Autism	Autism only
Service Offering	Rehabilitation Educational Physiotherapy Speech & language Therapy Occupational therapy	Rehabilitation only pre vocational training, one student works now in life line hospital Educational (inclusion is on offer but no shadow teacher) Physiotherapy to all enrolled Speech and Language Therapy to all children young and older Occupational Therapy + Art Therapy	Rehabilitation Educational (special educator / speech therapy) Psychotherapy Community services	Early Intervention Inclusion Speech therapy Adaptive physical education Outdoor activities Full day services Art& vocational rehabilitation Neuro feedback therapy Family counseling& support Computer services

Category	Centre 1	Centre 2	Centre 3	Centre 4
Fee	24,00 Aed per anum Red Crescent pays 50% for 40% of enrolled children 10 out of 12 Emirati children are the beneficiaries	Fees for all children all ages any type of disability 8300 per year so centre is popular but operation cost is not covered we have not raised fees for 6 years	200 Dirham for each session. Supposed to be a private center but it is "kind of charity as well". Red crescent pays for one family. Rent increase every month, which cause a negative impact on the financial budget of the center.	Annual fees for Centre 44.000 100 dirham for each session No information found about employees salary Red Crescent pays 10.000 for each student. Maintenance cost pays by Centre not the villa owner

Challenges & needs requirements	Financing the current cohort Solving the new building and quote issue (8 millions needs to be found from somewhere) Staff salaries (average salary 1200 can reach 2000 per month depending on experience) Staff retention (turn over is high and that affects current services and provision) Capacity is 150 and 77 enrolled	Financing the current staff and operational cost Money is needed now to run the center as salaries are now taken from 1 M donated by one member of the board to build the new building Need 2 M to reach support the center for next year to develop It is very difficult to collect money Staff salaries (average salary 2000+500 can reach 6000 per month depending on experience) Staff retention is a problem some staff leave as they get head hunted by more paying centers Capacity is 80 and 65 enrolled Certain disabilities are not enrolled as per laws (Visual and Hearing Impairments) No shadow teacher for inclusion access Surviving...anytime the whole center could go on stand still due to lack of fund. 'I am hunted by the idea of closing down the center when I am under pressure to raise salaries'.	Cohort financing Gap of 8 million for construction funding Staff salaries average 1,200 – 2,000 Staff retention is high Under enrollment (15 per class capacity but due to staff shortage) No inclusion access only these from ZHO as ADEC has an MOU with ZHO Certain disabilities are not enrolled as per laws (visual and hearing)	Need for new big building. Need to build medical Centre. Need for occupational therapy.
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Category	Centre 1	Centre 2	Centre 3	Centre 4
Family needs from centre perspective	Financial support for families who cannot afford the services Support after school time to occupy PWD time fruitfully Training on how to support their children and carry on what is the centre doing in terms of development	Financial support for families who cannot afford the services Support after school time to occupy PWD time fruitfully Training on how to support their children and carry on what is the centre doing in terms of development	Learn more to cooperate with the centre to develop the child Counseling for parents Training on how to support their children and carry on what is the centre doing in terms of development	Expensive devises and assistive technologies for their children Training on how to support their children and carry learn how to deal with Autism Awareness sessions on 'denial' as many families are way too late to enroll their children in early intervention and children lose out

Category	Centre 5	Centre 6	Centre 7	Centre 8
Legal Status	Private Registered The Ministry of Social Affairs	Private Registered The Ministry of Social Affairs	Private Registered The Ministry of Social Affairs	Government Registered The Ministry of Social Affairs

Capacity & Age Group	Up to 100 as MOSA Currently 71 enrolled. Currently 31 Emiratis out of the 71 Waiting 15 on waiting list but all were assessed for enrollment 3 years to 18 years	Up to 200 Currently 180 enrolled. Currently 80% Emiratis, 35% non GCC, and 5% GCC (Saudi Arabia, Oman and kwait) Waiting 60 on waiting list but 20 of the 60 are Emiratis Accepting age is from 4 Y to 30 Y	Up to 66 as MOSA determined that 11 max per class and centre has 6 classes. Currently 64 enrolled. Currently no Emiratis but 2 to 3 years back they had 2 but now in Australian school and doing very well. Waiting 158 on waiting list with 3 to 4 Emiratis because of the low fees and the services Age 3-18 but can go up to 20	Up to 800 as MOSA Currently 750 enrolled. Currently 98 % Emiratis Waiting 105 on waiting list but all were assessed for enrollment. 3 Y to 18 Y but can go up to 20
Employees	total 35 Of which: 10 Special teachers 9 SLT + 3 PT + 3 OT = 15	Employees total 107 62 therapists and teachers Administrator staff 45 support teachers and admin staff	Total 25 staff (10 admin + 15 professional	Total 201 109 professional members of staff including special teachers and therapists

Category	Centre 5	Centre 6	Centre 7	Centre 8
Physical Structure	Rented Villa Small and limited space No Sport hall No Household and needle workshop (girls) it is within classes No Carpentry for boys Classification by mental ability and age	Rented Villa Small and limited space small sport hall No Household and needle workshop (girls) Carpentry for boys available Classification by mental ability and age	Rented Villa (275 k + 5 % increase) now 315 K from this year Small and limited space No Sport hall No Household and needle workshop (girls) it is within classes No Carpentry for boys Classification by mental ability and age	Owned Villa – land and building donated by the late Sh. Zayed Huge space several fields and sport halls Well equipped household and needle workshop (girls) it is within classes Well equipped carpentry for boys Classification by mental ability and age
Disability Type	Few PMLD Down Syndrome – a large number is with DS Intellectual Disability mild to moderate Speech and Language Impairments Few physical problems	Few PMLD 15 Down Syndrome – 34 Intellectual Disability mild 42 Intellectual Disability moderate 25 CP 23 Autism 42	no PMLD Down Syndrome - almost half with DS Intellectual Disability mild to moderate Speech and Language Impairments Autism – some server and some mild No physical problems (Cerepal Palsy)	All kinds of disabilities but Autism go to Autism Centre
Service Offering	shadow teacher training for included children Rehabilitation only pre vocational training, Psychological services	Rehabilitation only pre vocational training, Managed to include 3 children Psychological services Educational	Rehabilitation only pre vocational training, one student works now in life line hospital Educational (inclusion is on offer but no shadow teacher) Physiotherapy to all	Financing the current staff and operational cost is not a problem at all Money is not an issue Need 3 more SL Therapists (Arabic Speaking) There is some training on offer for staff and some

Educational (inclusion is on offer but no shadow teacher) Physiotherapy to all enrolled Audio services Speech and Language Therapy to all children young and older Occupational Therapy	(inclusion is on offer but no shadow teacher) Physiotherapy to all enrolled Speech and Language Therapy to all children young and older Occupational Therapy	enrolled Speech and Language Therapy to all children young and older Occupational Therapy + Art Therapy	staff travel abroad to obtain professional training Large number of PWD clustered Always on the look for best practices and international accreditation
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Category	Centre 5	Centre 6	Centre 7	Centre 8
Family needs from centre perspective	Financial Support Advice on what to do and activities after school time to occupy PWD time fruitfully Advice and training on how to be more involved with their children	Encourage families to visit their sleeping – in children Support after school time to occupy PWD time fruitfully Financial support Some families need IT and assistive technologies Example some physical assistive devices	Financial Support – in desperate needs Advice on a whole load of parental support issues like how to encourage independence as whatever the centre is doing it is not matched at home. Advice and training on how to be more involved with their children Drive their own children to school!! Attend parent events and evenings and know about the development of their children	Support after school time to occupy PWD time fruitfully Training on how to support their children and carry on what is the centre doing in terms of development Some families need to adhere to training already offered by the centre in order to support their child Some families need very sophisticated one or more assistive technology equipment to support the child such as: Electronic chair life Better ventilation systems

Summary of Quantitative Data Findings: Here is the list of questions that were circulated for validation and 4 participants suggested some changes as one of the questions was rather misleading and the questionnaire was amended accordingly.

Q1: People with special needs are all with disabilities

Q2: A person with disability is able to make decisions related to his life

Q3: people with intellectual disabilities are with mental disorders

Q4: people with intellectual disabilities have low IQ

Q5: it is better to exclude people with intellectual disabilities from society

Q6: all people with intellectual disabilities need care all the time

Q7: I know best terminology related to referring to people with intellectual disabilities

Q8: all mental disorders are disabilities

Q9: all people with intellectual disabilities have communication disorders

Q10: I have enough knowledge about my child's disability to enable me to deal with him and his peers with similar disability

Q11: I feel confident to deal with any person with intellectual disability

Q12: I can differentiate between intellectual disability and mental disorders such as paranoia

Q13: I can differentiate between communication disorders and mental disorders

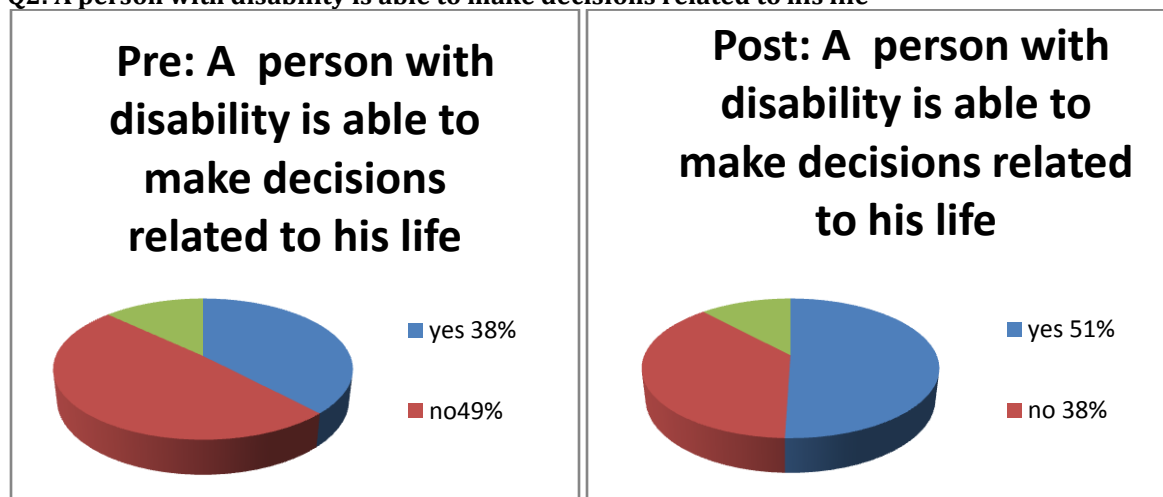
Q14: all people with Cerebral Palsy have intellectual disability

Q15: Autism is an intellectual disability

QN	Yes%		No%		I Don't know%	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Q1	66%	65%	21%	32%	13%	3%
Q2	38%	51%	49%	38%	13%	12%
Q3	35%	41%	47%	51%	18%	8%
Q4	82%	90%	11%	8%	8%	2%
Q5	7%	5%	86%	95%	8%	0%
Q6	2%	4%	86%	93%	13%	3%
Q7	63%	66%	13%	24%	24%	10%
Q8	13%	12%	66%	78%	20%	11%
Q9	14%	23%	75%	72%	11%	5%
Q10	65%	69%	11%	14%	25%	17%
Q11	65%	69%	10%	14%	25%	17%
Q12	66%	78%	12%	14%	22%	8%
Q13	56%	41%	33%	51%	12%	8%
Q14	20%	12%	69%	85%	11%	4%
Q15	13%	6%	66%	89%	20%	5%

Example of analysis of one of the qualitative questions:

Q2: A person with disability is able to make decisions related to his life



4. Conclusion and Discussion

Analysis of data showed that there is a desperate need for support after school hours despite the care offered during school hours for those who are in school age. Parents need support on several levels especially with how to spend quality time with their children with disabilities, something that can be helpful in building the self efficacy to such category of children (Alkire, 2005). In terms of research question 1 which sought whether there was a need for a change or creating new services or provisions, the answer is clearly yes desperate need for support after school hours. In terms of what kind of support parents of children with disability need, there were several levels of support required as per data collected. Training teachers and those who are working with included children with disabilities would was an issue that was raised by parents as an immediate need. This is in line with other studies (Gaad, 2001; Gaad, 2004). While on the long bases, parents wished for Technical support in terms of assistive technologies especially for those with profound multiple disabilities. They have expressed concerns about financial demands on the average family when looking after a child or an adult with disability. Social awareness to support the educational (inclusive) needs of their children were also raised as well as support the therapeutic needs of their children after school hours as some require additional therapy at home that can be more than 20 hours per week. The issues of awareness is reflected in the UAE Constitution of UAE rights for all those who live on the Emirati soil, and was also in the country's vision UAE 2021. And finally despite current law enforcement and legislation to support people with disabilities parents yet felt more Legislative enforcement of their rights are needed across the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

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