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Fang Yee Lim, Syar Meeze Mohd Rashid

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## Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) on The Mental Health of Parents of Children With Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)

Fang Yee Lim, Syar Meeze Mohd Rashid

Faculty of Education, University Kebangsaan Malaysia Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

Email: p111190@siswa.ukm.edu.my, cikgumeeze@ukm.edu.my

### Abstract

The knowledge, attitude, and practices are very significant to maintain the good mental health of the parents of children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). The purpose of the study is to explore knowledge, attitudes, and practices in influencing the mental health of the parents of children with SEND. The objectives of the study are (i) to identify the level of mental health of parents of children with SEND and (ii) to identify the knowledge, attitudes, and practices in influencing the mental health of parents of children with SEND. The research design of this study is a descriptive survey using a quantitative approach, whereby the questionnaire was used to collect the data from 159 parents of children with SEND in Penang state through purposive sampling. This study has used The Health Belief Model. The questionnaire was then validated by three professional experts. The descriptive analysis was used for data analysis by using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Thus, this study found that (i) the mental health of parents is at a moderate level ( $M= 2.51$ ,  $SD= 0.84$ ) (ii) knowledge, attitudes, and practices in influencing the mental health of parents of children with SEND are at low level ( $M= 1.50$ ,  $SD= 0.66$ ). Therefore, the result showed that knowledge, attitude, and practice had predicted the mental health of parents of children with SEND. This study gives implications to the concerned parties such as the counseling department or psychologists to focus on the mental health of parents of children with SEND so they can get professional support to manage mental health issues. Therefore, concerned parties such as the Ministry of Education should provide a more comprehensive knowledge of children with SEND and activities for managing mental health issues.

**Keywords:** Mental Health, Parents of Children with SEND, knowledge, Attitude, Practices

### Introduction

In the 21st century, the challenge faced by parents of children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) is becoming hard as they strive to produce children for a society that keeps on transforming and developing from time to time. In order to achieve the requirement and expectations of society, most parents of children with SEND have high expectations for their children so that they can succeed and become normal children based on the child's level of development (Enea, 2015). In Malaysia, there is a total of 77205 children with SEND

categorized in the category of Learning Disability (Data Pendidikan Khas, 2020) and this has caused parents of children with SEND to face stress and difficulties in their life (Ainul et al., 2018). This is because parents are the ones who are very close to their children and they are responsible for the development and personal changes of their child from birth to adulthood (Mazni et al., 2018). However, educating and having a child with SEND is a challenging matter and it will bring various difficulties, worries, and stress to the parents (Lineker et al., 2017). Therefore, the prolonged increase in psychological stress experienced by parents of children with SEND has caused mental health problems (Jahan et al., 2020).

In Chen et al (2020) findings, parents of children with SEND showed various types of mental health issues, but anxiety and depression were the most common ones. In other words, parents of children with SEND are at risk of suffering from stress problems and ultimately resulting in low levels of mental health (Lineker et al., 2017). Narges et al (2019) also explained that the long-term effects of children's disabilities on family life have increased the probability of negative thoughts and actions of parents of children with SEND such as suicidal ideation. Moreover, if parents of children with SEND experience mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, stress, suicidal thoughts, and prolonged thoughts of self-harm, the development of children with SEND will also be affected indirectly. Therefore, the influence of the level of knowledge toward children with SEND is important to maintain the mental health of parents because it can give parental awareness and social awareness to foster a positive attitude toward children with SEND and cultivate good practices among parents of children with SEND (Matheis et al., 2017). Thus, to avoid the increasing mental health problems among parents, the level of knowledge, attitude, and practice needs to be understood. This being the case that good management of mental health among the parents can secure the mental health of children with SEND as well.

From the aspect of the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice model (KAP), knowledge, attitudes and practices are interrelated in influencing the mental health of parents of children with SEND. The level of knowledge is the most effective element in avoiding mental health problems of parents of children with SEND. There are three factors that will affect the mental health of the parents of children with SEND, namely the parents' knowledge towards the therapy required by children with SEND, extensive knowledge of their child's disability as well as the advantages of knowledge that can help children with SEND to develop optimally (Chen et al., 2018; Hatfield et al., 2018; Dayang & Zamri, 2019). The findings of Farahana and Manisah (2020) reported that most parents of children with SEND experience high stress because they do not understand the type of disability their child has and have difficulty finding the best information and therapy place for their child. With this, the knowledge and awareness possessed by the parents of children with SEND can prepare them in educating their children with SEND as well as reducing the stress and anxiety experienced by the parents (Dayang & Zamri, 2019).

Regarding the findings of Marhamah et al (2019) proved that parents of children with SEND who lack knowledge and skills in educating children with SEND have influenced their attitude towards children with SEND. Furthermore, the status of "Children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities" might become stigmatized and cause negative attitudes among parents as well as become an obstacle for them to get involved in the children with SEND's life (Azzahrah, 2013; Marhamah et al., 2019). Although, children with SEND have disabilities but they are able to feel that they have been treated as a second special group. Thus, children with SEND will feel isolated, sad, and have low self-confidence because they do not get any support or acceptance from their parents (Adillah & Suziyani, 2020). So,

children with SEND will feel inferior and unenthusiastic at an early age because their presence has been neglected by their own parents. This is because the attitude and acceptance of parents is a powerful impact on children with SEND's development such as socio-emotional, behaviour, and cognitive (Siti & Shahirah, 2018).

In addition, practices that can be applied by parents of children with SEND are participation and involvement in school activities or home activities. Parental involvement in the education of children with SEND begins at home by providing a safe and healthy environment, appropriate learning experiences, support, and a positive attitude about school. Thus, the practice of participation and involvement by parents of children with SEND in activities play an important role to help children with SEND with better development (Resthie, 2020). As a result of, support and ideas from parents of children with SEND can help teachers or therapists to strengthen the skills that have been learned at school or at home respectively. For example, the participation of parents of children with SEND that provided regularly, actively and integration aims to help children with SEND achieve a positive development effect. In general, extensive knowledge influences good attitudes and practices among of parents of children with SEND. With this, the level of knowledge, attitude and practice is very significant to identify whether parents of children with SEND experience mental health problems while educating children with SEND. For this reason, this article aims to explore knowledge, attitudes and practices in influencing the mental health of parents of children with SEND. Among the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the level of mental health of the parents of children with SEND.
2. To identify the knowledge, attitude, and practices in influencing the mental health of the parents of children with SEND.

### **Literature Review**

Studies across the country and internationally are being reviewed to identify the mental health of the parents of children with SEND, the influence of social support and the practices of the parents of children with SEND. Based on previous research studies, the mental health of the parents of children with SEND will be affected if they have a weak support system and limited practices about their children with SEND.

#### **a. Mental health of the parents of children with SEND**

According to the study of Nurul et al (2020), mental health is a cure for mental suffering or mental health issues and it is unlike any other disease that can be treated with any kind of medicine. The parents of children with SEND face higher stress than parents of children with typical (Breiner et al., 2016). When a child is born with a disability, parents often experience various emotions such as shock, sadness and anger to receive the diagnosis of their child's disability (Breiner et al., 2016). For example, mental health disorders that occur will result in individuals acting out of control and make them to think things irrationally (Nurul et al., 2020). Therefore, parents who raise children with disabilities have shown that they are at risk of experiencing high stress which ultimately leads to low mental health outcomes (Ubeh et al., 2014; Lineker et al., 2018).

In addition, an individual will experience mental health issues if they are unable to overcome the stress they face (Nurul et al., 2020). Precisely, a person who faces mental health issues will be exposed to negative actions as well as suicidal acts because they consider it as a response strategy in facing extremely stressful situations (Danish et al., 2018). This finding is consistent with the study of Ashidah and Fariza (2020) which reported that depression

symptoms have impacted a person's quality of life including the issue of self-harm and suicidal ideation. Most studies also found that parents with special needs, especially parents of autistic children, are at risk of mental health problems including parenting stress, depression, suicide, anxiety, and serious emotional disorders (Al-Farsi et al., 2016; Montes & Cianca, 2014; Patra & Patro, 2019; Jahan et al., 2020). The study of Lee et al (2012), also reported that when a person's mental burden reaches its peak, he will do unexpected things such as self-harm or perform actions beyond the limits such as suicide. With this, according to the study by Jahan et al. (2020), parents with special needs are at high risk of committing homicides among children with developmental disabilities followed by suicide

**b. The knowledge on the mental health of the parents of children with SEND**

Parents' knowledge of the disabilities and needs of children with SEND can support them to find more information about treatment and better quality therapy, and make better decisions for children with SEND (Bonanno & Veselak, 2019). The results of the Taderera and Hall (2017) study are consistent with the findings of the Farahana and Manisah (2020) study reporting that the limited level of knowledge of parents of children with SEND has resulted in them facing challenges in obtaining information about the best programs and services for children with SEND. Moreover, the finding by Bonanno and Veselak (2019) also explained that a high level of knowledge and confidence in parents of children with SEND obtain good mental health. However, if parents of children with SEND have limited knowledge of children with SEND, it brings mental health issues and delays the development of the children because they have missed the golden time in educating them.

Furthermore, a mother or a father of children with SEND must have experience, awareness, or the latest skills and knowledge to educate them (Lineker et al., 2018). The findings of Farahana and Manisah (2020) also said that parents of children with SEND should always ensure that the skills they use are the latest and professional knowledge so that children with SEND can develop optimally on this advanced technology. In other words, parents of children with SEND face high levels of pressure and stress when they have limited knowledge and skills that do not bring benefit to their children (Norkayairee et al., 2019). For example, parents of children with SEND need a high level of specialized knowledge to interact with children with SEND (Norakyairee et al., 2019). Thus, a high level of knowledge is important to help children with SEND to improve and develop well in health functioning, and daily functioning, facilitating social and community engagement (Suhaimi & Natasha, 2018). That being the case, the level of knowledge of children with SEND determines the stress level and mental health problems of parents of children with SEND (Farahana & Manisah, 2020).

**c. The attitude on the mental health of the parents of children with SEND**

Parents' attitudes and family acceptance are a big challenge for parents of children with SEND in caring for and teaching their children with SEND (Siti & Shahirah, 2018). This finding is consistent with Odongo's (2018) study that parents who accept the presence of children with special needs with an open arms attitude can benefit the development of children with SEND and also in the family. In other words, parental acceptance is the most important factor in the successful development of children with SEND. Referring to the study of Siti and Shahirah (2018), the parent's attitude and acceptance are positive contributors to children with SEND developing optimally and training to them live independently. If the presence of children with SEND cannot be accepted by their parents or family members, children with SEND will face problems throughout their lives. One of the mothers of children with SEND also mentioned

that she experienced high pressure because her own family did not understand and provide support in educating children with SEND (Marhamah et al., 2019). For example, this attitude of denial and negativity has delayed children with SEND to receive better services and stunted their development. In other words, the family that accepts the child's disability means they are in a successful direction to work on the weaknesses of children with SEND (Natalina & Hendra, 2021).

Apart from that, the negative attitude and discrimination among the community towards children with SEND contribute to the parent's mental health and self-confidence for children with SEND (Farahana & Manisah, 2020). Based on the study by Ubeh et al (2017), emotional support from the community such as friends can also function as one of the important coping strategies. This is because support from the community can develop children with SEND's social skills to foster best practices in the learning process (Fitri, 2021). Nevertheless, the lack of knowledge and community acceptance of children with SEND has indirectly caused physical and mental abuse towards children with SEND and also parents (Ramaiah & Zuri, 2018; Nurul et al., 2021). So, parents of children with SEND feel inferior and less enthusiastic to take care of children with SEND because their child's presence has been considered a joke. In other words, according to Farahana and Manisah (2020), a lack of knowledge and negative attitudes from the community have put a lot of pressure on parents of children with SEND, especially among the mothers of children with SEND. In conclusion, a positive attitude and acceptance from parents, immediate family, friends, and society are very necessary because children with SEND will feel loved and secure from their development from an early age (Siti & Shahirah, 2018).

#### **d. The practices on the mental health of the parents of children with SEND**

The level of knowledge impacted the practice of parents of children with SEND while educating children with SEND (Munirah, 2021). As a result, the extensive knowledge of the parents of children with SEND can foster high parental practices in being role models, giving encouragement, giving instructions, giving reinforcement, and providing education in matters that benefit children with SEND (Xu et al., 2020). For example, practices in terms of intervention, service delivery, parental support, and family involvement are to maximize the potential of children with SEND, increase parental awareness toward children with SEND and also reduce the burden on society. In other words, the lack of practice and negative attitudes towards children with SEND are the results of poor awareness and knowledge about the characteristics and disabilities of children with SEND. Directly, the lack of practice has caused parents of children with SEND to experience greater stress and burden. Hence, increasing awareness and knowledge among parents about various aspects of children with SEND disabilities should practice through teaching and education at home.

Furthermore, the practice of involvement and support from parents of children with SEND at home, early intervention centers, or at school are significant to help parents better understand the approach, strategies, and activities that have been done against children with SEND (Wong, 2017). For example, children with SEND spend longer time at home compared to the time at school, so parents of children with SEND should use as much as possible to educate children with SEND and also reflect on the effectiveness of the teaching strategies that have been chosen and implemented (Hazlin & Khairul, 2021). This is because improvements and modifications will often occur from time to time so that each teaching session that is carried out is under the children with SEND level at all times. So, the practice

of involvement and support of parents of children with SEND is an activity that cannot be skipped in the teaching and learning process.

In conclusion, the knowledge, attitude, and skills of the parents of children with SEND are importance to improve the quality of life and the development of children with SEND. So, this article can provide information and an overview of the practice and mental health of parents of children with SEND.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design and Sampling Techniques**

The research design applied is a descriptive survey using a quantitative approach where the questionnaire was used to collect the data from the respondents. The descriptive design is used because this research design was suitable to describe the current status of an identified variable and to provide systematic information about a phenomenon. The quantitative research is suitable to examine and achieve the objective of the study which is to explore knowledge, attitude and practices in influencing the mental health of parents of children with SEND. This is because quantitative research is a type of empirical research that studies the variables by using theory and explain if the outcome is predicted by theory through statistical methods (Creswell, 2014; Mimansha & Nitin, 2019).

This study was conducted with non-probability sampling whereby the sampling approach in which the opportunity of each selected participant is not equal. Hence, the purposive sampling method was used in this study as this sampling method is a process of data collection that is attainable and adjacent to the target population (Rahi, 2017). Thus, we used purposive sampling because we only recruited parents of children with SEND in Penang state as our target participants. This is because parents of children with SEND in Penang state especially parents of children with autism showed sleep disturbance that leads to a higher risk of depression and a tendency towards anxiety (Lay et al., 2022). Therefore, 159 of the parents of children with SEND in Penang state, Malaysia were selected to participate in this study.

### **Instrumentation**

The questionnaire was reviewed by three experts, namely a quantitative expert, a Malay language expert, and a special education expert for face validity and content validity. The three experts have expertise and experience of more than five years in their respective fields.

A self-administered questionnaire which contains three sections, section A to section C that consists 36-items scale was used to collect the required information. This questionnaire combined three reliable and validated tests which were the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) (Graetz, 1996), and The Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices Survey Model (Andrade et al., 2020) that focus on the mental health of parents of children with SEND. Among the sections are Section A which is demographic information of the respondents collected by asking a few questions, which were the age, gender, ethnicity, highest academic qualification, occupational class, and income range of the respondents. While section B is the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) adapted to measure the mental health of parents of children with SEND. Finally, for section C, there are questions related to the knowledge, attitude and practices of parents of children with SEND that was adapted by using The Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices Survey Model.

### Research Procedure and Data Analysis Plan

In collecting the data from the respondents, the online questionnaire being implemented as the data collection method. The questionnaire was created in the online survey software which is Qualtrics for the respondents to fill in their responses. The link that connects to the questionnaire was shared with the respondents through social media platforms such as Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, and E-mail. Due to the low response rates from the online questionnaires, the printed questionnaires were also distributed to the participants within the Penang area.

Before the respondents started to answer the questionnaire, the first page of the questionnaire was the introduction that served the purpose to brief the respondent regarding the research topic, informed consent, and agreement to proceed with the questionnaire. The respondents were informed with the right to withdraw from the research at any time they wanted based on their will. Besides, the estimated time taken to complete the questionnaire was approximately 20 minutes. The informed consent informed the respondents about the personal details and data provided for this research were kept private and confidential which only researchers and supervisor can access the data collected.

After that, the obtained data have analysed by Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0 software for general descriptive statistics. For descriptive statistics, the results of the respondents' demographic information, mental health, social support, practices, items, and total scores have present in mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage. The findings of the study have also been discussed with a descriptive analysis that reports the frequency, mean, standard deviation, and percentage to identify (i) demographic information (ii) the mental health of parents of children with SEND (iii) the knowledge, attitude and practices of parents of children with SEND. Each construct was measured by summing the mean score. The classification of mental health, the influence of social support and the knowledge, attitude and practices were then determined by the mean range (0 to 5) from low, medium, and high levels as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Mean Score Interpretation*

Mean Score	Interpretation
0.00 - 2.33	Low
2.34 - 3.66	Average
3.67 – 5.00	High

Source: Zainun et. al (2019)

### Results

The results of the finding found that parents of children with SEND have experienced moderate mental health issues and there are three priority factors that have affected the mental health of parents in the process of educating their children with SEND. Among the three factors are parents' level of knowledge, attitude towards children with SEND, and way of practices as shown in Figure 1.



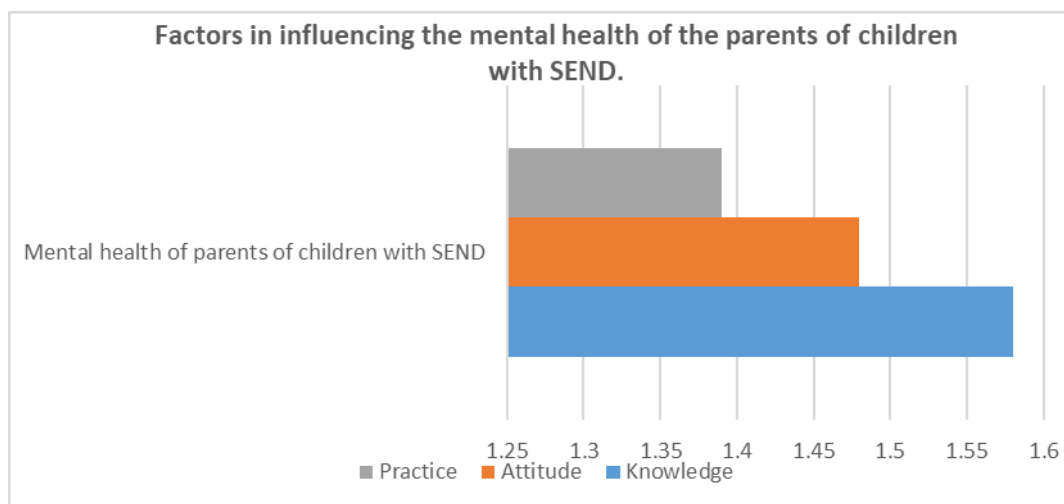


Figure 1 Factors in influencing the mental health of the parents of children with SEND.

### Demographics Information of Participants

Table 2 shows the findings on family background in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, highest academic qualification, occupational class, and income range. This family background has also been analyzed in terms of both parents which are the demographics of the mother and father. This study involved 159 parents of children with SEND who are located in Penang state. In terms of age for mothers of children with SEND, there are a total of 31 people (19.50%) in the age range of 20 to 30 years. Meanwhile, there are also 80 mothers (50.30%) aged between 31 and 40 years. In addition, there are 34 mothers (21.40%) aged between 41 and 50 years old. Table 2 has also shown that only 14 mothers in the study (8.80%) are in the age range of 50 years and above.

While in the view of age for fathers of children with SEND, the findings show that a total of 20 fathers (12.60%) are in the age range of 20 to 30 years. Furthermore, there are also 70 fathers (44.00%) who are between 31 and 40 years old. Meanwhile, there are 46 fathers (28.90%) aged between 41 and 50 years old. Table 2 also reported that there are 23 fathers (14.50%) who are in the age range of 50 years and above.

In terms of ethnicity, a total of 113 mothers (71.10%) and 113 fathers (71.10%) are Chinese. In addition, there are 19 mothers (11.90%) and 21 fathers (13.20%) who are Malay while there are also 19 mothers (11.90%) and 18 fathers (11.30%) who are Indian. There are also 8 mothers (5.00%) and 7 fathers (4.40%) who are from other nationalities. Apart from that, the analysis in terms of the highest academic qualification, occupational class, and income range for parents of children with SEND can refer to Table 2.

Table 2

*Analyses on Demographics of Participants (N = 159)*

Demographics	Mother		Father	
	n	%	n	%
<b>Age</b>				
20-30 years old	31	19.5	20	12.6
31-40 years old	80	50.3	70	44.0
41-50 years old	34	21.4	46	28.9
50 years and above	14	8.8	23	14.5
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Chinese	113	71.1	113	71.1
Malay	19	11.9	21	13.2
India	19	11.9	18	11.3
Others	8	5.0	7	4.4
<b>Highest academic qualification</b>				
Does not go to school	5	3.1	2	1.3
SRP/PMR	7	4.4	13	8.2
Diploma Certificate	54	34.0	59	37.1
Bachelor's Degree	81	50.9	73	45.9
Master's Degree	10	6.3	10	6.3
Doctoral Degree (PHD)	2	1.3	2	1.3
<b>Occupational Class</b>				
Professional	31	19.5	55	34.6
Not professional	68	42.8	94	59.1
Not working	58	36.5	9	5.7
Others	2	1.3	1	0.6
<b>Income range</b>				
Below RM1000	6	3.8	3	1.9
RM1001-RM2000	12	7.5	7	4.4
RM2001-RM3000	25	15.7	10	6.3
RM3001-RM4000	35	22.0	40	25.2
RM4000 and above	27	17.0	92	57.9
No income	54	34.0	7	4.4

**Mental Health of the Parents of Children with SEND**

Table 3 has shown the mental health of parents of children with SEND in terms of happiness level, symptoms of depression, anxiety, perceived stress, and sleep disturbance during the last 4 weeks. Findings have reported that the overall mean score of mental health of parents of children with SEND is at a moderate level which is  $M= 2.51$ ,  $SD= 0.84$ . This has been stated that parents of children with SEND in Penang have moderate mental health which is associated with poorer general health outcomes (Salvalaggio et al., 2017). In other words, the parents of children with SEND who have moderate feelings of stress and anxiety experience mental health problems (Savalaggio et al., 2017).

There are three factors which are symptoms of depression  $M= 2.67$ ,  $SD= 0.83$ , self-esteem  $M= 2.35$ ,  $SD= 0.92$ , and perceived abilities  $M= 2.46$ ,  $SD= 0.80$  were found to influence the mental health of parents of children with SEND. By referring to Table 3, among the items below, the highest mean value on item 3 which is at a moderately high level has proven that parents are always under pressure with  $M= 2.79$ ,  $SP= 0.83$ , and do not feel happy about what is happening around them with  $M= 2.63$ ,  $SP= 0.81$ . This has also caused them to be easily affected and unable to concentrate on what has been done with  $M= 2.50$ ,  $SP= 0.89$ . However, they never burn their enthusiasm  $M= 2.23$ ,  $SP=0.96$  and lose self-confidence  $M= 2.31$ ,  $SP=0.93$  in educating children with SEND and this has shown them a positive psychological mentality of parents of children with SEND.

Table 3

*Mental health of the parents of children with SEND*

Numbers	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation mean score
<b>Factor 1: Symptoms of depression</b>				
2	Lost much sleep over worry?	2.59	0.836	Average
3.	Felt constantly under strain?	2.77	0.834	Average
5	Been feeling unhappy and depressed?	2.79	0.827	Average
10	Been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities?	2.63	0.808	Average
12	Been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered.	2.59	0.828	Average
<b>Overall</b>		<b>2.67</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Factor 2: Self-esteem</b>				
4	Felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?	2.52	0.885	Average
6	Been losing confidence in yourself?	2.31	0.929	Low
7	Been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?	2.23	0.956	Low
<b>Overall</b>		<b>2.35</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Factor 3: Perceived abilities</b>				
1	Been able to concentrate on what you are doing?	2.50	0.795	Average
8	Felt you were playing a useful part in things?	2.40	0.797	Average
9	Felt capable of making decisions about things?	2.48	0.786	Average
11	Been able to face up to your problems?	2.44	0.816	Average
<b>Overall</b>		<b>2.46</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Overall GHQ-12</b>		<b>2.51</b>	<b>0.84</b>	<b>Average</b>

### **The knowledge, attitude, and practices in influencing the mental health of the parents of children with SEND**

Table 4 showed the findings regarding the knowledge, attitude, and practices of parents of children with SEND. The knowledge, attitudes, and practices had an impact on the mental health of parents during the process of educating children with SEND. With this, the findings have also reported that the overall mean score of parents' knowledge, attitude, and practices of children with SEND is at a low level which is  $M= 1.50$ ,  $SD= 0.66$ . This also stated that parents of children with SEND in Penang state have a lower level of knowledge, negative attitude and deficient practices in understanding children with SEND which may result in a lower level of mental health.

Furthermore, Table 4 also reported that all items show parents of children with SEND have a limited level of knowledge, negative attitudes, and practices challenges in educating children with SEND. As a piece of evidence, items 25 to 32 are items that involve the level of parents' knowledge of children with SEND, it has shown a low mean score which is  $M= 1.58$ ,  $SD= 0.66$ . Three factors that might affect the mental health of parents are parents' knowledge of the approach required by children with SEND with  $M= 2.01$ ,  $SD= 0.83$ , knowledge of the child's disability with  $M= 1.69$ ,  $SD= 0.81$  as well as advantages knowledge that can benefit their child with  $M= 2.08$ ,  $SD= 0.81$ .

The knowledge and attitudes are interrelated while educating children with SEND. With this, items 33 to 37 are items that discuss parents' attitudes toward children with SEND. Findings have stated that the mean score for all five items is at a low level with  $M= 1.48$ ,  $SD= 0.73$ . This statement has shown that parents who lack knowledge in educating children with SEND have influenced their attitudes such as acceptance problems towards them as stated in item 19 with  $M= 1.58$ ,  $SP= 0.58$ . In other words, parents' knowledge, attitudes, and skills are interrelated which can affect the mental health of parents of children with SEND.

Last but not least, for items, 38 to 42 are items related to knowledge and skill in supporting the development of children with SEND. Parents of children with SEND have reported a low mean score of  $M= 1.39$ ,  $SD= 0.59$  that most parents are less prepared to use existing knowledge in contributing ideas with  $M= 1.67$ ,  $SP= 0.76$ , giving feedback with  $M= 1.57$ ,  $SP= 0.82$  or understanding the disability or development of children with SEND with  $M= 1.52$ ,  $SP= 0.78$ .

Table 4

*The knowledge, attitude, and practices on the mental health of the parents of children with SEND*

Number	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation mean score
<b>Knowledge</b>				
13	Are you deeply aware of your child's disability?	1.69	0.811	Low
14	Do you understand the most appropriate approach to help with your child's development?	2.01	0.834	Low
15	Can you find the best intervention center or school for your special needs child?	2.08	0.808	Low
16	Are you having trouble in making decisions to help your child?	1.34	0.625	Low
17	Does the presence of a child with special needs in a family bring a negative impact on various domains of parenting relationships?	1.58	0.599	Low
18	Is knowledge about children with special needs important to reduce parents' mental health problems?	1.19	0.521	Low
19	Do you face problems in accepting children due to lack of knowledge about child diagnosis?	1.58	0.577	Low
20	Does your lack of awareness affect your involvement in teaching and your child's learning process?	1.20	0.500	Low
<b>Overall</b>		<b>1.58</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Attitude</b>				
21	A high level of knowledge can help parents in the process of educating their children with SEND.	1.15	0.466	Low

22	I understand the types of disabilities and appropriate approaches for my children.	1.67	0.815	Low
23	I am ready to help teachers, therapists, and children when needed.	1.47	0.770	Low
24	I am ready to contribute ideas in the process of educating children with SEND.	1.57	0.815	Low
25	I am ready to discuss with the concerned party about my child's development.	1.52	0.778	Low
<b>Overall</b>		<b>1.48</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Practice</b>				
26	I need to know the programs/activities carried out for my child.	1.25	0.536	Low
27	I obtained enough information from the relevant parties such as therapists, teachers and schools regarding the implementation of therapy and the child's development.	1.73	0.840	Low
28	Will you fully support the child's development and needs?	1.17	0.439	Low
29	Do you participate in any relevant workshops to increase knowledge in helping children with SEND?	1.56	0.569	Low
30	Do you give cooperation and feedback to teachers, therapists and schools in educating children?	1.26	0.565	Low
<b>Overall</b>		<b>1.39</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Overall mean score of KAP</b>		<b>1.50</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>Low</b>

## Discussion

Parents of children with SEND have excessive and overwhelming responsibilities and roles compared to others parents. This study aims to explore the need for knowledge, attitude, and practices in influencing the mental health of parents of children with SEND. Through the findings above, the overall score for the mental health of parents of children with SEND is at the level moderate high which is  $M= 2.51$ ,  $SP= 0.84$ , and the practices knowledge, attitude, and practices are at a low level with  $M= 1.50$ ,  $SP= 0.66$ .

Based on the analysis of the findings above, parents of children with SEND have feelings of stress and anxiety at a moderate and constant level. In other words, someone who has persistent feelings of stress and anxiety tends to suffer from mental health problems (Salvalaggio et al., 2017). According to John (2010), "Little things make big things happen" which means that the things that happened in our life might impact the things or people around us. The parents of children with SEND who suffer from mental health issues should be given attention because low psychological well-being had a negative impact on the psychological well-being of children with SEND as well (Bonab et al., 2017). With this, parents of children with SEND who have mental health problems have adopted negative parenting methods and have a low quality of care for children with SEND (Lineker et al., 2018). For example, in this study, the parents of children with SEND also stated that sometimes they are not happy about all the things that happen and lack of ability to make decisions for children with SEND. As a consequence, the parents of children with SEND become less optimal in caring for and educating children with SEND, which is likely to cause behavior problems among children with SEND and also pose a risk to the cognitive development of children with SEND (McConnell & Savage, 2015; Farahana & Manisah, 2020). However, recently the support of increasingly sophisticated technologies such as robotics, music, virtual reality, and modern therapy has made things easier for parents of children with SEND and reduced their stress levels (Kurniawan et al., 2020). Thus, it cannot be denied that the mental health of parents of children with SEND improves according to the advancement of this technology.

Moreover, based on the results of this study, the parents of children with SEND have reported that psychological stress has affected the effectiveness of their daily activities and also their quality of life. The study by Usman et al. (2021) also explained that the mental health problems experienced by parents of children with SEND, especially parents of children with Down Syndrome or children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, have affected their daily lives and quality of life such as their sleep time, meal time and so on. Therefore, mental health problems are physical, emotional, and mental reactions that can cause changes in a situation that occurs in daily life (Usman et al., 2021). Apart from that, past studies have also reported several factors that affect the mental health of parents of children with SEND, namely socioeconomic status, the attitude of parents, parenting stress, behavior problems of children with SEND, social support, information about equipment, medicine, approaches and educational services (Chen et al., 2020). The findings of the current study were consistent with past research, whereby the knowledge, attitude, and practices of parents of children with SEND are one of the strongest factors affecting the mental health of parents. Thus, social support and practices are important because it works as a protective factor in overcoming challenges in the lives of parents of children with SEND (Coyle & Malecki, 2018).

In addition, the level of knowledge of parents of children with SEND has an impact on parents' practice while caring for and teaching children with SEND (Munirah, 2021). Past researchers have also stated that an effective way to prevent mental health problems among the parents of children with SEND is to provide them with the knowledge and skills needed to

manage and teach their children with SEND (Dayang & Zamri, 2019). This being the case, knowledge about the condition and development of children with SEND is an important factor in minimizing the increase in stress and anxiety faced by the parents. However, based on this study, it has been reported that not all parents have knowledge about children with SEND. The findings of this study have reported that parents of children with SEND have limited knowledge and this has resulted in them experiencing mental health problems. For example, parents of children with SEND lack knowledge regarding the characteristics and disabilities of children with SEND has made it difficult for them to accept the presence of children with SEND. With this, the matter has become a factor in the emotional disturbance of parents of children with SEND. Apart from that, parents' extensive knowledge in understanding the disabilities and needs of children with SEND not only reduces their own stress but also provide encouragement for children with SEND because they understand well about their needs (Chen et al., 2018).

Besides, knowledge and attitude are interrelated. The findings of Marhamah et al. (2019) proved that parents of children with SEND who lack knowledge and skills in educating children with SEND have influenced their attitude towards children with SEND. The result of this finding is consistent with this study which explains that most of the parents experience acceptance problems which make them have difficulty accepting their disabilities because they have limited information and knowledge to understand children with SEND. Although children with SEND has limited ability but they are able to feel themselves have been given treatment as a second special group. Thus, children with SEND will feel isolated, lack self-confidence and be left out if they do not get support or acceptance from their parents (Pryde & Johoda, 2018). Based on Odongo (2018), parents of children with SEND who accept the presence of children with special needs with an open arms attitude are very important for the development of children with SEND and also in the family.

Furthermore, the practice of involvement and support from parents of children with SEND is a preventive measure to help children with SEND get continuous guidance or make changes to care, teaching, and learning towards a more positive development (Hazlin & Khairul, 2021). By the shortest route, the more positive development of children with SEND has minimized the feelings of stress and anxiety faced by parents. Referring to the results of this study, parents of children with SEND are less willing to involve themselves in making reflections on the development of children with SEND and the effectiveness of what is being done to them. This being the case, the feeling of shame, being looked down upon and depression can be felt by parents of children with SEND, especially if the actual level of achievement of children with SEND does not reach the expectations and success definition determined by parents of children with SEND. Nevertheless, parental involvement and immediate follow-up action from parents of children with SEND can overcome weaknesses and improve the strength of teaching and care skills. Therefore, parents should cooperate with the relevant parties such as special education teachers, therapists, and psychologists so that knowledge is given with a balanced, accurate, and up-to-date perspective. Hence, the involvement of parents of children with SEND is a good practice that is closely linked to good mental health and positive parental psychology (Dayang & Zamri, 2019).

Therefore, knowledge about the needs of children with SEND, fostering a positive attitude towards children with SEND as well as the practice applied to help children with SEND are the first step in providing quality teaching to maximize the development of children with SEND (Matheis et al., 2017). With this, good knowledge, attitudes and practices can secure



the mental health of parents as well as the development and mental health of children with SEND.

Finally, this study can serve as a basic idea for public to explore to this topic because most of the people do not have a clear idea and understanding about themselves towards mental health. According to this study showed that knowledge, attitude and practice are important for their relationship between children with SEND to maintain their mental health. For example, the counselling department will need to pay attention by organizing more activities related to knowledge of children with SEND so parents of children with SEND will have wider social support. Therefore, this study can be used as a media to increase the understanding of knowledge, attitude and practice and improve their mental health. However, there is still room for improvement for the other researchers to fill in the gap which this study could not fulfil. For instance, the researcher can present a more comprehensive knowledge about mental health and conduct further research with other intervening variables.

### Conclusion

Mental health is important for the parents of children with SEND to cope with their difficulties and challenges while educating children with SEND in their life. Parents of children with SEND face higher stress compared to parents of typical students (Breiner et al., 2016). The result of this study showed that knowledge, attitude and practice had predicted the mental health of parents of children with SEND. The mental health problems of parents of children with SEND not only affect their quality of life and are likely to affect the mental health of children with SEND as well. As the saying goes, 'You cannot clap with one hand alone'. Cooperation from all parties is very necessary to understand children with SEND so as to support parents of children with SEND and help them when needed. Therefore, this article was useful in understanding the factors that affecting the mental health of parents of children with SEND and how to maintain their quality of mental health. As the crow flies, this can also help children with SEND to develop optimally and live independently in the future.

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