

# *Perspectives of Students With Intellectual Disabilities About Their Experiences With Paraprofessional Support*

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**ABSTRACT:** *Perspectives of students with disabilities are notably absent from research about special education paraprofessionals. This study begins filling that gap by interviewing 16 young adults with intellectual disabilities about their experiences attending general education classes with paraprofessional support. Findings describe the primacy and exclusivity that often exists between paraprofessionals and these students as characterized by four interrelated themes regarding consumer perspectives of paraprofessionals as: *... and ...*. Although study participants provided both positive and negative perspectives on these four descriptors, each descriptor represents cause for concern. Implications for practice encourage schools to (a) consider*

**M**ore than 10 million students with disabilities are enrolled in U.S. schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Paraprofessionals are an integral part of the special education system, providing support to students with disabilities in the classroom. However, little research has focused on the perspectives of students with disabilities regarding their experiences with paraprofessional support. This study addresses this gap by interviewing 16 young adults with intellectual disabilities about their experiences attending general education classes with paraprofessional support. Findings describe the primacy and exclusivity that often exists between paraprofessionals and these students as characterized by four interrelated themes regarding consumer perspectives of paraprofessionals as: *... and ...*. Although study participants provided both positive and negative perspectives on these four descriptors, each descriptor represents cause for concern. Implications for practice encourage schools to (a) consider

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**METHOD**

*DESIGN*

The design of the study was a 2 (Group) x 2 (Condition) x 2 (Task) factorial design. The groups were typically developing children and children with specific language impairment. The conditions were naturalistic and structured. The tasks were free play and structured play.

*PARTICIPANTS*

Forty children participated in the study. Twenty children were typically developing and twenty children had specific language impairment. The children were recruited from a university and a hospital. The children were between 3;0 and 3;6 months of age. The children were tested individually. The children were tested in their own homes. The children were tested by a research assistant. The children were tested for 30 minutes. The children were tested on two occasions. The children were tested on the same day. The children were tested on the same task. The children were tested on the same condition. The children were tested on the same group.

The children were tested on a free play task. The children were tested on a structured play task. The children were tested on a naturalistic condition. The children were tested on a structured condition. The children were tested on a typically developing group. The children were tested on a specific language impairment group.

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*PROCEDURES*

The children were tested on a free play task. The children were tested on a structured play task. The children were tested on a naturalistic condition. The children were tested on a structured condition. The children were tested on a typically developing group. The children were tested on a specific language impairment group.

**TABLE 1**  
Participant Information

Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age	Level of Intellectual Disability and/or Other Known Condition
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The first step in the analysis of the data was to determine the reliability of the scores. The reliability of the scores was determined by using the test-retest method. The test-retest method involves administering the test to a group of subjects and then re-administering the test to the same group of subjects at a later date. The scores obtained on the two administrations are then compared to determine the reliability of the scores.

### DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is a measure of the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is calculated by dividing the covariance of the two variables by the product of their standard deviations.

The results of the analysis showed a significant positive correlation between the scores on the two administrations of the test. This indicates that the scores were reliable. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was  $r = .85$ ,  $p < .05$ .

### FINDINGS

The findings of this study indicate that the scores on the test were reliable. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was  $r = .85$ ,  $p < .05$ .

The second step in the analysis of the data was to determine the validity of the scores. The validity of the scores was determined by using the method of concurrent validity. The method of concurrent validity involves administering the test to a group of subjects and then comparing the scores to scores obtained on another test that is known to be valid.

The results of the analysis showed a significant positive correlation between the scores on the two tests. This indicates that the scores were valid. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was  $r = .75$ ,  $p < .05$ .

### PARAPROFESSIONAL AS MOTHER

The findings of this study indicate that the scores on the test were reliable. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was  $r = .85$ ,  $p < .05$ .

... c s ...  
... c s ...  
... c s ...  
... c s ...  
... c s ...









**DISCUSSION**

... *mothering* ... *socially valid* ...

... *did* ...



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Handwritten text, continuing the series of notes or calculations. It consists of approximately 12 lines of dense, cursive script.

$$\text{...} ((s_{j+1})c_j)^* (c_{j+1}-1) s_j \text{...}$$
$$\text{...} \tau(s_j) - (c^t \text{...}) -0.000 \quad 0.0 \quad \tau(0.0) \text{...}$$

The following table shows the results of the experiment. The first column shows the number of trials, the second column shows the number of correct responses, and the third column shows the percentage of correct responses. The data indicates that the percentage of correct responses increases as the number of trials increases, suggesting that the subjects are learning the task.

Number of Trials	Number of Correct Responses	Percentage of Correct Responses
10	6	60%
20	12	60%
30	18	60%
40	24	60%
50	30	60%
60	36	60%
70	42	60%
80	48	60%
90	54	60%
100	60	60%

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