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Perceptions of Individualized Education Plan Involvement from Hispanic Parents and Special Education Teachers

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Abstract

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by

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Abstract

Some parents of children with disabilities do not often participate in individualized educational program (IEP) meetings, which results in inadequate planning and reduced student achievement. The aim of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of parent involvement in IEP meetings from Hispanic parents of English-language learners (ELLs) with disabilities and special educators. The research question pertained to the following elements central to parents' involvement decisions: (a) parents' beliefs, (b) self-efficacy, and (c) invitation for involvement. These elements were central in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's parental involvement process model, which was the conceptual framework for the study. Using purposeful sampling, 12 Hispanic parents of ELL students with disabilities and 6 special education teachers in 4 schools across elementary, middle, and high schools in a suburban public school district were selected for open-ended interviews. Data analysis involved coding and thematic analysis of the interviewees' responses. The findings indicated that Hispanic parents' cultural background, lack of knowledge of the special education system, and school invitations for involvement limited their involvement in IEP meetings. Additional themes included English-language barriers, inflexible work schedules, disrespect, stigma attached to disability, and immigration status. This study contributes to positive social change as it may help school professionals create and implement plans that encourage Hispanic parents to participate in their children's IEP meetings, which could result in improved Hispanic student achievement.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The increased population of immigrant workers in the United States has led to an increase in the number of English-language learners (ELLs) with disabilities within the population of school-age children (Ferlis & Xu, 2016; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). ELLs comprise about 9% of the total population of public school students (Kena et al., 2014). In an Atlanta regional school district, the percentage of ELLs classified as Hispanic immigrant students who received special education program services in 2015 was 7.8% of the total population of students with disabilities. The total number of students in Georgia who received special education services in 2015 was 41,660, with 4,628 being Hispanics (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Helping these learners achieve their potential entails collaborative decision making by a diverse individualized educational program (IEP) team (Losinski, Katsiyannis, White, & Wiseman, 2016). Quality parent–school collaboration promotes and motivates students (Flores de Apodaca, Gentling, Steinhaus, & Rosenberg, 2015).

Despite legal stipulations and empirical studies demonstrating the importance of parental involvement for education, the attendance of Hispanic immigrant parents in IEP meetings has been minimal (Araque, Wietstock, Cova, & Zepeda, 2017; Goldman & Burke, 2017). In the 2004 Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), lawmakers required the inclusion of parents in the IEP decision-making process, which includes planning and developing educational services. The primary aim of an IEP is to set appropriate objectives and goals and to outline the services received by a student to maximize educational performance and social skills (Ilik & San, 2017). Therefore,

parents' participation in IEP meetings is necessary, especially when setting goals, planning academic placement, and engaging the services needed to achieve IEP goals for their children. Parents provide the background information needed to formulate IEPs that meet the learning needs of their children.

This study was intended to contribute to social change by documenting how Hispanic immigrant parents' perceptions of their engagement influences parental involvement. For readability and brevity, the remainder of the study will refer to the sample under examination (Hispanic immigrant parents of ELLs with disabilities) as study parents (SPs). Also, the terms Latino and Hispanic will be used in the remainder of the study; based on the definitions, the meanings of both terms seem to be the same. Moreover, in the district under study, Hispanic is the preferred term use to identify the parents of the ELLs with disabilities. The remaining major sections in Chapter 1 include the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the conceptual framework, the nature of the study, the definitions, the assumptions, and the significance of the study.

Background

Parental involvement in the education of their children is written into law (IDEA, 2004; No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). According to the IDEA of 2004, educators should involve parents in their children's IEP. It has been 15 years since the passage of IDEA; however, some Hispanic parents are less involved in the IEP meetings of their children with disabilities and may lack knowledge about opportunities for legal or professional assistance (Larios & Zetlin, 2018). Although Hispanic parents constitute a large proportion of immigrant parents of urban public school districts in the United States

(Boske, 2018), only a small percentage of these parents have been actively involved in their children's education (Zamora, 2015). But parent participation in IEP meetings promotes students' academic achievements and social skills (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Thus, I conducted this study to address the need for parental involvement in IEP meetings.

Problem Statement

The problem under study was the lack of SP involvement in IEP meetings, as only 30% of Hispanic immigrant parents of ELL students with disabilities attend the meetings (Montelongo, 2015). Research has also indicated that Latino parents have been less involved compared to Caucasian parents regarding student interest in science and mathematics and educational activities at home for students with disabilities (Davis & Maximillian, 2017; Rispoli, Hawley, & Clinton, 2018). Additionally, recent immigrant Latino parents rarely attend school events such as report card nights or volunteer in activities (Rodriguez-Castro, Salas, & Benson, 2018). Researchers have also concluded that approximately two out of every three Hispanic immigrant parents are usually not involved in their children's education (Poza, Brooks, & Valdes, 2014; Williams-Diehm, Brandes, Chesnut, & Haring, 2014). Olivos, Jiménez-Castellanos, and Ochoa (2011) noted that approximately 65% of Hispanic immigrant parents do not actively participate in IEP meetings. It is not clear whether the lack of input and support from Hispanic parents is a consequence of cultural influences or school practices (Cobb, 2014; Trainor, Murray, & Kim, 2014), but the lack of involvement inhibits the development of effective IEPs and hinders student achievement (Zirkel & Hetrick, 2017).

Parent participation in IEP meetings is essential because a positive relationship exists between parent involvement and the improved academic achievement of their children with disabilities (Wilt & Morningstar, 2018). Moreover, based on IDEA (2004) documents, parents of students with disabilities must participate in the design of their child's IEP, which involves the following process:

1. Prereferral

2. Referral

3. Identification

4. Eligibility

5. Development of the IEP

6. Implementation of the IEP (Siegel, 2017).

Therefore, parents can help maximize their children's academic success in a best educational practice (Vassallo, 2014).

This study may be significant both to Hispanic parents and to educational professionals. Educators need to understand the reasons these parents participate less in order to improve the support provided to parents, and Hispanics parents need to have opportunities to become more involved in the education of their children (Galindo, 2011). Therefore, I explored Hispanic parents' perceptions of their involvement in IEP meetings and special educators' perceptions of the parents' involvement.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the SPs' involvement in their children's IEP meetings, as well as special educators' perceptions of parents'

involvement. The information from participant interviews provided answers to the research questions. The research paradigm for this study was a constructivist (antipositivist) approach, which suggests that reality stems from perceptions (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2007). In the field of human affairs, stories or accounts that are rich with a sense of human encounter or experience better estimate the truth of a phenomenon (Stake, 2000). As a qualitative researcher, I recognize that individuals can experience and interpret reality differently due to the consequence of present or past experiences, values, beliefs, and backgrounds. Thus, in this study I was interested in participants' experiences and perceptions of parental involvement.

Research Questions

This study included one central research question based on the conceptual framework and four subquestions with a focus on specific information I sought to gather from the participants.

Research question: How do Hispanic immigrant parents' beliefs, self-efficacy, and school invitations for involvement play a role in their attitudes toward participation in the IEP meetings of their children?

Subquestion 1: What are Hispanic immigrant parents' perceptions of their involvement in IEP meetings?

Subquestion 2: How do Hispanic immigrant parents describe their ability to become involved?

Subquestion 3: What are school special educators' perceptions of Hispanic immigrant parents' participation in IEP meetings?

Subquestion 4: How do school personnel invite Hispanic immigrant parents to become involved in IEP meetings, and how effective do Hispanic immigrant parents perceive the school invitation?

Conceptual Framework

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of parental involvement was the conceptual framework for this study. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler developed the model using psychological perspectives in 1995, with revisions occurring in 1997. The model serves as a framework for describing why parents become involved in the education of their children. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler designed the model to enhance educators' understanding of the factors influencing parental involvement (Hirano et al., 2018; Zolkoski, Sayman, & Lewis-Chiu, 2015).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) described five levels that connect parents' initial decision to be involved in their children's education. The first two levels relate to parents' decision-making process, and the third to fifth levels define how parents' participation affects student achievements (Anderson & Minke, 2007). In this study, I addressed the first level, which has as its basis the notion that parental involvement falls into three elements: (a) knowledge and skills that influence parents' belief or culture; (b) parents' efficacy, which includes parents' belief that they can act in a way that will yield the outcome they desire; and (c) invitation, which refers to invitations from school, teachers, and students to become involved (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). For example, Reynolds, Crea, Medina, Degman, and McRoy (2015) found that parents' beliefs, self-efficacy, and contextual motivators (invitations) influenced parents' involvement, as a

lack of school support and difficulty translating terms and cultural concepts constrained

parents' participation. Table 1 depicts the five levels of parental involvement.

Table 1

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Levels of Parental Involvement

Level	Levels of parental involvement
1	Motivators of parental and family involvement: "Why do parents decide to become involved?"
1.5	Where parents can influence their children's educational successes. Parent choice of involvement such as home-based, home–school communications, school-based, and community-based
2	Mechanisms of the influence of involvement: "How does involvement work?"
3	Students' perceptions of parent involvement and parental mechanisms that influence student learning
4	Students' proximal learning outcomes such as their beliefs and attitudes
5	Student achievement outcomes or measures of achievement

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model of parental involvement

accentuates the complex nature of parent involvement. The first stage of the model serves

as a framework for understanding motivational elements that influence parents' decision

to participate in their children's education (Hirano et al., 2018; Hoover-Dempsey &

Sandler, 2005). The problem studied was the lack of SPs' involvement in IEP meetings.

Thus, I chose the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model to support additional literature on

parent perceptions of involvement, explore what motivates SPs to become involved, and

understand elements affecting their participation. The research question was based on the

elements of the first level. This framework is further discussed in detail and the key

elements more thoroughly explained in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

In this qualitative study, I employed case study research design to describe the

perception of involvement of SPs in their children's IEP meetings, as well as special

educators' perceptions of parents' involvement. A case study is contextual (Yin, 2015), is

data rich, and involves multiple sources or varied perspectives (Smith, 2018).

Researchers select the case study design to explore and understand the real-life

phenomenon of a group of individuals or people through a description of their views and

observable behaviors (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). A qualitative case study is a descriptive

study of a bounded system, such as programs, social units, processes, institutions, or

persons, used to study a group of individuals and their understanding of a specific

problem they encounter (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017).

Through the case study design, I obtained varied perspectives of evidence to

provide a rich and thick description of the real-world case. In addition, I was able to

describe the challenges that both groups of participants believed enhance or hindered

Hispanic parents' participation in IEP meetings. By using a case study design, I was able

to focus on how a group of Hispanic immigrant parents as a cultural entity in a suburban

area addressed the difficulties that affect their involvement in IEP meetings. Therefore,

the design was consistent with the intent of this research study, which was to address the

perceptions of a certain group of Hispanic immigrant parents on participating in their

children's IEP meetings in the United States.

To align with the aim of this study, I designed the research questions to address

the perspectives of SPs on their involvement in their children's IEP meetings. The

participants were six suburban public school special education teachers who taught ELL

students with disabilities and 12 Hispanic immigrant parents whose children were ELLs

with disabilities and enrolled in elementary, middle, or high schools in a suburban public

school district in the southern United States. I gathered data through one-on-one

interviews that were about 30 minutes in length. The analytical software used for qualitative data was MAXQDA 2018.

Definitions

Contextual motivators (invitations): Invitations from school, teachers, and students to become involved (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Education of All Handicapped Children Act: This federal special education law, originally enacted in 1975, guarantees all children and young adults with disabilities a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment (Castro-Villarreal, Villarreal, & Sullivan, 2016).

English-language learners (ELLs): The population of students who have limited English proficiency and are learning English as a second language (Fernandez, 2013).

English-language learners (ELLs) with disabilities: Students who are learning English as a second language and supported through an IEP.

Immigrant parents: Parents born outside of the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014) or first-generation immigrants (Moffett, 2019).

Hispanic: Hispanic and Latino are pan-ethnic terms used in the United States to identify individuals with Spanish or Latin American ancestry (Turner, Wildsmith, Guzman, & Alvira-Hammond, 2016).

Individualized education program (IEP): A document that describes specialized instructions and related services appropriate to the needs of each eligible student enrolled in special education (Hurder, 2014).

Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): The reauthorization of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, enacted in 1995, that governs the operation of special education and the way educators provide special education programs and related services to children with disabilities (Townsend-Walker, 2014). This law was reauthorized and renamed IDEA 2004 (Lipkin & Okamoto, 2015).

Latino: Any individual of a Latin American descent living in the United States (Gonzalez & Morrison, 2015).

Parental involvement: The participation of parents in activities related to the education of their children, such as participating in planning, developing, and implementing an IEP (Bryant, Bryant, & Smith, 2016).

Assumptions

This study was based on some assumptions. I assumed that the participants would respond to interview questions truthfully and openly. I also assumed that parents would provide responses that accurately reflected their beliefs and views about their involvement in their children's IEP meetings, and teachers would provide information that accurately reflected their views about parents' involvement. These assumptions were crucial because they could influence the credibility of the findings. Additionally, I assumed that I would be able to find participants who would be willing to provide honest responses to interview questions.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study is narrowed or defined by the participants and geographical area. Participants were Hispanic immigrant parents of ELLs with

disabilities in 4 schools across elementary, middle, and high schools in a suburban public school district in the southern United States and special education teachers who taught in these suburban schools. By limiting the focus of this case study to a specific geographical area, parents who belonged to a specific group of Hispanic parents and a specific group of educators provided an opportunity for effective data collection and analysis and for specific findings.

The delimitation in this study was the focus on Hispanic immigrant parents of ELLs with disabilities, although there are many second-generation Hispanic parents in the public school system. Second-generation parents' points of view might have been different from those of first-generation parents, as second-generation parents are educated in the United States and will be more familiar with the educational system. Thus, their experiences and their views might have been different from the experiences and views of the parents in this study. Available time and resources also resulted in a narrow focus in this study.

Limitations

Researchers must advance the potential weaknesses or problems of their studies that may affect the findings. Potential problems include loss or lack of participants, small sample sizes, and inadequate measures of variables (Creswell, 2015). One possible issue for this study was the loss or lack of participants. Issues related to confidentiality and time constraints (e.g., family commitments and workload) are the primary factors that discourage participation (Bardus, Blake, Lloyd, & Suggs, 2014). To address this, I explained the purpose and procedure of the study to participants and presented

confidentiality forms. I also scheduled each interview at a convenient time for the participants. Another potential weakness of this study was its sample size. The sample of schools was small; thus, the sample was less likely to be representative of other immigrant Hispanic parent and special educator populations in the United States, and transferability of the findings may be limited to similar populations.

An additional limitation of this study related to parent participants and the fact that English is not the official or native language of the parent participants in this study. Hispanic immigrant parents speak Spanish in their native countries. Thus, the language barrier or the lack of proficiency in English was a limitation of this study because many Hispanic immigrants are more comfortable expressing themselves in Spanish than in English. Antony-Newman (2019) noted that immigrant parents may be not comfortable engaging with school personnel due to their difficulty in communicating effectively in English. I provided effective translator and interpretation services to participants whose first language was Spanish and needed translation/interpretation to prevent misunderstanding of interview questions and enhanced participants' interview responses.

Significance

Hispanic parents' involvement in special education has received minimal attention in the United States (Durand & Perez, 2013). This study may benefit special education staff, Hispanic immigrant parents and their ELL children with disabilities, and other school stakeholders such as school board members and students. An IEP is a legally required component of public special education for students with disabilities. Hispanic immigrant parents must participate in their children's IEP because IDEA 2004 requires

all parents to participate in IEP meetings (Zeitlin & Curcic, 2014). Parents can share knowledge concerning their children, contribute ideas, and make choices for their children during IEP meetings. Parents can make choices regarding their children and provide the background information needed to develop IEPs that meet their children's educational needs (Canary & Cantu, 2012). Lack of parental participation in IEP meetings can result in inappropriate IEPs that do not meet children's educational needs (Mereoiu, Abercrombie, & Murray, 2016). School administrators and special education teachers may use the findings of this study to understand SPs' perceptions of their involvement in IEP meetings and to make changes that will encourage SPs to become more involved in these meetings. The increased involvement of SPs in IEP meetings may result in meaningful social change by increasing Hispanic parents' activities in their children's educational programs.

Summary

This chapter included an introduction to the study that included background information related to the study topic. It also included the problem, purpose, and significance of the study. The focus of the study was SPs' lack of participation and involvement in IEP meetings. The study is important for the educational well-being of ELLs with disabilities. Additionally, I addressed the research questions, which I developed based on conceptual framework of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model of parental involvement. I described the nature of this study, which related to the case study design that I used to examine how Hispanic immigrant parents expressed their perceptions of their involvements in their children's IEP meetings. The chapter also

included descriptions of the scope and delimitations, limitations, and assumptions. The next chapter includes a review of current literature relevant to parental involvement in their children's education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of SPs to gain insight into reasons for their lack of involvement in IEP meetings. The basis of the literature review is parents' lack of involvement in the IEP process and the corresponding effect on academic outcomes. To situate the study in the literature, the topics reviewed included parental involvement in education in general, cultural background and Hispanic parents' involvement, and Hispanic parents' experiences with the IEP process.

In this chapter, I review the literature on parental involvement, and I provide a brief overview of the trends in prominent studies. I focus on Hispanic parents' cultural backgrounds and experiences with the IEP process. I also provide a description of the literature search strategy and the conceptual framework of this study. In the summary and conclusion, I analyze the primary themes and gaps from the literature.

Literature Search Strategy

In searching the literature relevant to this study, I conducted a search of empirical journals indexed in EBSCOhost, ERIC, and ProQuest. I combined the phrase *parental involvement in education* with *learners with disabilities, Hispanic parents, IEP process,* and *IEP meeting* to search for literature related to parental involvement or participation. I also used the terms *parental participation, Hispanic parents,* and *ELLs with disabilities* to conduct searches. To address teacher perspectives, I searched *perception with educator, school professional, staff, parents, Hispanic parent, immigrant parent,* and *culturally and linguistically diverse parent*. I also used Google Scholar, the services of a

reference librarians, and interlibrary loans to locate pertinent articles cited in the works of other authors that were not available in EBSCOhost, ERIC, or ProQuest.

Conceptual Framework

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model of parental involvement was the conceptual framework for this study. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler described three key factors that influence the level of the parental involvement process: (a) parents' beliefs and insights about what is vital, necessary, and permissible for them to do on behalf of their children; (b) parents' self-efficacy regarding the extent to which they believe they have the ability to help their children be successful in schools; and (c) parents' belief that the school invited them to be involved. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler noted that any attempt to examine parents' involvement in their children's education should include consideration regarding what motivates parents to become involved.

Elements of the model of parental involvement have appeared in previous studies. Valdes (1996) studied underprivileged Hispanic parents and revealed that parents felt that their responsibility was to ensure their children behaved well in school, as they did not have the authority to influence school rules and regulations. This finding indicated that parent beliefs, values, and views were influential factors in their choice to be involved. Salas (2004) explored the perceptions of 10 immigrant Hispanic parents' experiences with IEP meetings on their children with disabilities. The parents described themselves as members of the low-socioeconomic working class. The parents reported a willingness to give input at IEP meetings if special education teachers asked, which supports the idea that parents would become more involved if school personnel invited them to participate.

Further, Myers (2014) noted that some factors of a school environment, such as a positive climate and invitations from administrators and teachers to be involved, motivate parents to become involved. When school personnel actively solicit parents' input on decisions involving their children, parents perceive their involvement as vital, which may influence their decision to become involved.

This study benefited from the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of parental involvement in many ways. The model helps Hispanic parents and school professionals to identify the types of elements that influence parental involvement that need improvement in their schools. In addition, researchers can use the model to identify the responsibility of parents, educators, and students in the parental participation process. Thus, the model encourages school professionals and researchers to perceive parental participation as a shared responsibility for school stakeholders, even though parents play a major part in this responsibility. To understand certain essential elements relating to SPs' involvement in the IEP process, it was necessary to explore how SPs' perceptions, values, and beliefs influenced their attitudes toward participating in the IEP process. The research questions addressed SPs' perceptions of the elements that influence parents' participation.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

Parental Involvement in General

Researchers have studied parental engagement for several decades and have noted the importance of parental participation in school processes for improving student achievement (Johnson et al., 2016; Wilder, 2014). McNeal (2014) defined *parental*

involvement as all components of activities that allow parents to be involved and become

partners in the school process either at school or at home. These activities include

learning at home, such as assisting in completing homework, managing behavior, and

engaging in conversations with a child about school expectations. Learning activities at

school include attending meetings and conferences, communicating with school

personnel, volunteering in school, and attending school functions such as parent nights or

workshops (Zeitlin & Curcic, 2014). Parental participation in these activities may have a

positive effect on learning outcomes (Ndebele, 2015). Zolkoski et al. (2018) found that

parental involvement not only promotes student academic achievement but also enhances

student mental functioning. Zolkoski et al. noted that students tend to feel motivated

when they see their parents attending school meetings or cheering them on at school

events. Further, positive parental support aligns with positive child emotional and

behavioral functioning (Serrano-Villar, Huang, & Calzada, 2017). Thus, it is important

for educators to build parent–school relationships to increase involvement.

Research has also indicated that, for students with disabilities, parental

involvement is necessary at all educational levels. Involving parents in developing

education and related services for their children promotes student learning and success

(McNeal, 2014). Cawthon, Garberoglio, Caermmerer, Bond, and Wendel (2015)

examined the effect of parent involvement on postsecondary outcomes for students who

are deaf or hard of hearing. Cawthon et al. found that parent participation in activities

such as school meetings and helping their children with homework resulted in an

increased achievement in grade-level schools as well as in postsecondary attainment.

Additionally, Stanley (2015) examined whether parents' involvement in the academic transition of their children with Asperger syndrome was effective and found that social skills improved among students whose parents provided their perspectives for children to learn from. Further, Bruder and Dunst (2014) explored the experiences of Hispanic parents of preschool children with disabilities and found that parents consistently involved in their children's preschool special education were able to assess the effectiveness of the special education services. Thus, parental involvement in the special education process can help distinguish services that enhance children's education. Parents who learn effective special education practices can also apply them at home (Bruder & Dunst, 2014).

Despite the importance of parental involvement, especially for children with disabilities, there are barriers to involvement. Francis, Regester, and Reed (2018) explored the perceptions of parents of students with disabilities who graduated from postsecondary education regarding the transition plan of their children to adulthood. The findings from 26 parents (22 mothers and four fathers) revealed feelings of disrespect by the school personnel, disagreement, lack of communication or communication stress, and mistrust as barriers to parent involvement. Additionally, Francis, Cross, Lavin, Velazquez, and Sheets (2018) found that Hispanic parents' limited involvement was due in part to ineffective transition participation in high school, distrust of school professionals and limited collaboration, and negative experiences with community-based service providers. Participants had limited knowledge of the transition services special educators provided for their children. Participants also reported that their input was not

accepted or asked for at IEP meetings and that English-language difficulties, concerns about authorization to live the United States, and lack of information about available services and resources were barriers during the transition plan (Francis, Cross, et al., 2018). However, parents' participation in transition plans is essential because students with disabilities may need continuing parent support (Francis, Regester, et al., 2018).

Cultural barriers can also affect the involvement of parents who have students with disabilities. Latino parents have reported language barrier, social isolation (stigma), lack of knowledge of autism spectrum disorder, stigma of autism spectrum disorder in the Latino community, and difficulty in understanding autism spectrum disorder in their culture as factors that constrained their efforts to intervene for their children with autism spectrum disorder. These findings highlighted the need for culturally customized interventions for Latino parents (DuBay, Watson, & Zhang, 2018). Additionally, St. Amant, Schrager, Peña-Ricardo, Williams, and Vanderbuilt (2018) examined the effect of language barriers on access to services for students with autism spectrum disorder based on the cases of 479 students and found that students whose parents' main language was English received considerably more hours of services provided by community-based providers. Further, the IEPs of the students whose parents were English speakers were likely to include more social plans and communication skills plans than the IEPs of the students whose parents were non-English speakers. Thus, communication challenges can influence not only parents' decisions to become involved but also their access to available services for their children (Zeitlin & Curcic, 2014).

In another study on barriers related to culture, Wassell, Fernandez-Hawrylak, and Scantlebury (2017) explored parents' involvement in ELL students' education in inner-city charter middle schools and found limitations that included language barriers, busy home schedules, lack of trust in school, and lack of formal education. Many teachers in that study also reported feelings of frustration due to parents' lack of attendance at required meetings, such as coming to the school to pick up their children's report cards or after-school events or activities, as well as lack of support for their children's homework. Because it may be challenging to ask parents to communicate more or help with homework when they do not speak English, educators may need to find other ways to address the varied ways in which Hispanic parents become involved in their children's education (Wassell et al., 2017).

In addition to cultural barriers, socioeconomic status and location can be barriers to parental involvement. Ndebele (2015) examined parents' involvement in their children's education at home and at school in Johannesburg based on socioeconomic status. Although all the parents reported that parental involvement is important to children's education, the involvement of high-income parents was greater than that of low-income parents. Similarly, Inoa (2017) conducted a study with 21 middle-class Latino parents to develop a better understanding of their involvement. The middle-class parents were parents of children who did not receive free or reduced-price school lunches. This group of parents was involved in their children's academic progress, but they were primarily concerned with promoting their children's emotional well-being. They saw being educated as having positive behavior, which involved being respectful,

having good moral values, and behaving in manners aligned with becoming a productive

member of the society (Inoa, 2017). Further, Huscroft-D'Angelo, January, and Duppong

Hurley (2018) explored the views of special education administrators and student

services staff regarding the challenges in rural school settings concerning how to support

students with emotional behavior disorder and their parents. Participants reported

transportation constraints, poor or ineffective methods of communication, unfamiliarity

with resources and supports available, and fear of being identified as the family of an

individual with emotional behavior disorder (stigma) as factors that limited parents'

involvement.

Regardless of barriers, training may be a way to affect parental involvement in

students' education. Latunde (2017) used a sample of 107 African American and Latino

parents of students who were gifted and students with special needs to examine the effect

of family skill-based training on parental involvement. The skill-building strategies

included explaining school expectations and exposing parents to the curriculum. The

findings indicated that the interventions influenced parental involvement, although the

parents of students in special education rated as slightly less involved than the parents of

students who were gifted. Therefore, parents of children with disabilities may need more

information on general curriculum; expectations; and special education modifications,

learning techniques, accommodations, and parent engagement.

Advocacy and special education programs can also increase parental involvement.

Burke, Buren, Rios, Garcia, and Magana (2018) studied 27 Latino parents of children

with autism spectrum disorder who completed a Latino family-based advocacy program

to determine their involvement in their children's education. In the program, participants learned special education policy and procedure and advocacy tactics that aid individuals with disabilities to obtain services. This program increased parental involvement, which can be especially important for recent immigrant parents. Parents' participation in the education of their children with disabilities is both socially and academically vital (Sukys, Dumciene, & Lapeniene, 2015; Zhou, 2014). Burke and Goldman (2018) also examined interactions between culturally linguistically diverse parents of students with disabilities and special education culturally linguistically diverse advocates in a public urban school in the southeastern United States. Training included evaluation and eligibility, IEPs, transition, disputes and resolutions, and advocacy strategies. The findings indicated that advocates experienced difficulties working with the parents, and parents lacked knowledge about available resources or services, such as intervention services. Therefore, training culturally linguistically diverse parents may ensure maximum involvement in their children's education (Burke & Goldman, 2018).

Other support involves social programs such as community partnerships. Cook, Hayden, Bryan, and Belford (2016) conducted a study of recent immigrant Latino parents, students, and school personnel to examine the effect of a school–parent community partnership intervention process model. The intervention involved 2 years of collaborative counseling meetings. The findings from 17 participants indicated that there was increased parental involvement among parents who completed the programs. Latino parents reported that the program allowed them to learn the school culture, have a voice, and increase their participation in their children's education. School personnel also noted

that the increase in Latino parents' involvement was the result of the collaborative efforts on various activities, especially the activities that focused on cultural responsiveness. Thus, specialized training that builds on cultural reciprocal or cultural competence can improve parental involvement (Cook et al., 2016).

Including fathers in research is important when developing family-directed interventions (Breaux, Brown, & Harvey, 2017). In a report on fathers' involvement in the education of their children with developmental disabilities, Lopez, McWhirter, Rosencrans, Giuliani and McIntyre (2019) found that fathers' participation across home and school settings led to positive outcomes for promoting children's behavior and academic achievement. In addition, Lopez et al. noted that school personnel can enhance fathers' involvement in special education programs by extending specific invitations to them and explicitly seeking their input.

The studies presented in this section provided the rationale for parental involvement, barriers to their involvement, and strategies to encourage their engagement. Parent participation in education is essential for children and promotes students' academic achievements (Johnson et al., 2016; Lopez et al., 2019; Serrano-Villar et al., 2017; Wilder, 2014; Zolkoski et al., 2018). Parental involvement also promotes mental and behavioral functioning (Serrano-Villar et al., 2017; Zolkoski et al., 2018) and increases the opportunity for postsecondary outcomes for children with disabilities (Francis, Regester, et al., 2018). However, the benefits of parental involvement may not be underscored across ethnicity or race, educational background, or socioeconomic status for students of all conditions and grade levels (Cawthon et al., 2015).

The authors of studies in this section also presented challenges faced by immigrant parents regarding parental involvement. A majority of the studies shared common challenges, including lack of trust relationships, lack of effective communications, English-language barriers, limited knowledge about available resources, and other limited information. Across studies, these challenges appeared to intersect and delimited the ability among immigrant parents to participate fully in their children's education. St. Amant et al. (2018) and Ghaedi, Kosnin, and Abedi (2016) addressed the effect of the communication in parental involvement, noting that effective parent–school communication promotes parent participation in IEP meetings.

Additionally, a majority of the studies were similar with regard to practices that promote active parental participation for students with disabilities. The positive strategies reported across these studies included empowering immigrant parents through training, such as providing family-centered programs, skills-based training, and community support for immigrant parents and establishing school–parent community partnerships for recent Latino immigrants. In contrast, Lopez et al. (2019) reported providing better support to fathers through extending specific invitations to them and explicitly seeking their input may result in higher levels of involvement by fathers in special education.

Cultural Background and Hispanic Parents' Involvement

Researchers have demonstrated that failing to consider cultural variables can result in challenges understanding familial involvement in special education (Cobb, 2014; Trainor et al., 2014). Cultural variation is a crucial factor that needs consideration when working with immigrant parents (Rogers-Sirin, Ryce, & Sirin, 2014). Hebel and Persitz

(2014) qualitatively examined the perceptions and experiences of 20 parents of students with disabilities in Tel Aviv concerning their involvement in the IEP process. The study involved collecting qualitative data through interviews and observations. One key finding was that the parents believed that IEP meetings did not reflect their beliefs and preferences. Hebel and Persitz concluded that teachers need to be aware of parents' culture in order to collaborate effectively.

Some Hispanic mothers have strong cultural backgrounds that interfere with their ability to participate in their children's schooling. Estrada and Deris (2014) conducted a qualitative research study with 10 Hispanic immigrant parents whose children had autism spectrum disorders and who resided in an impoverished urban area. The focus of the study was to determine how culture affected parents who wanted to be involved in the education of their children. The findings indicated that some Hispanic parents believed that it is the responsibility of educational professionals to help families educate their children. This finding revealed that the meaning of school involvement held by the parents differed from the meaning commonly associated with the dominant culture (Anglo-Saxon). Some immigrant parents perceived education and schooling as distinctive domains, with schooling and education being domains of schools and home, respectively (Durand & Perez, 2013; Rogers-Sirin et al., 2014).

Orosco and O'Connor (2014) reported that cultural difference was a major factor that contributes to communication difficulties and impedes the effective involvement of parents collaborating with practitioners in IEPs. Hispanic parents had a different belief of what it meant to have children with disabilities, and this culturally influenced perspective

affected the extent to which they became involved in IEP development (Rodriguez, Blatz, & Elbaum, 2014). For instance, Rodriguez et al. (2014) noted that some Hispanic parents did not view their children's disability as a deficit in their ability to learn effectively in school; instead, they perceived their children's disabilities as spiritual problems that required divine intervention. In a study of specific challenges relating to implementing inclusive education and in identifying and labeling students, Kalyanpur (2018) noted that different cultures have unique ways of responding to certain conditions or disabilities. Being aware of each other's culturally determined behaviors and the values that influence their responses to services or choices helps to improve team collaborations.

Liu and Barrera (2013) examined the factors that influence the learning outcomes of ELLs with disabilities. The findings from the study showed that parents of ELL students with disabilities reported that feelings of frustration from being ignored at IEP meetings limited their participation. The parents expressed that special education teachers make decisions about their children's IEP before the actual meetings take place. Liu and Barrera noted that parents felt that their voices were not heard and their knowledge about their children's cultural skills, likes, dislikes, and preferred learning style was not considered in the decision making of their children's educational plan. Thus, parents may feel discouraged from participating in IEP meetings.

This section indicated the dynamic nature of parental involvement as parents' cultural beliefs and practices merged with those of school professionals. All the studies in this section were about the effect of cultural differences on parental involvement in school activities. However, the findings among those studies varied. The authors of some

studies demonstrated the perceptions of disabilities in relation to cultural differences. For example, Rodriguez et al. (2014) demonstrated that perceptions of disabilities differ among dissimilar cultures, and Kalyanpur (2018) indicated that the culture from which an interpretation surfaces influences interpretations of the meaning of certain conditions to some extent. The beliefs of different families or individuals dictate the meaning attached to parental involvement (Liu & Barrera, 2013). Furthermore, the implementation of techniques, such as engagement in cultural reciprocity (Hebel & Persitz, 2014), and culturally sustaining support, such as community engagement or social support provided by school professionals to culturally linguistically diverse parents, especially new immigrant parents (Cook et al., 2016), can result in an increase in parental participation.

IEP Meetings and Hispanic Parents' Involvement

Lawmakers and school professionals encourage familial participation in all components of the educational process. In the IDEA of 2004, lawmakers require a team, including parents, to develop IEPs for students with disabilities enrolled in special education programs. Because the needs of students with disabilities are unique, the IEP serves as a legal agreement between a school and parents that details educational services a student will receive to meet his or her needs. The IEP also stipulates that parents become active participants throughout their children's education in special education programs. However, some parents have limited participation in the IEP process (Houser & Fontenot, 2015).

Researchers have documented indicators that have impeded Hispanic parents from participating in IEP meetings (Rodriguez & Elbaum, 2014). Williams-Diehm et al.

(2014) examined special education teachers' perceptions of the participation of parents of students with disabilities in IEP meetings to determine whether distinctions exist across rural, suburban, and urban areas for all grade-level public schools in the southwestern United States. The findings from 150 participants surveyed indicated that Hispanic parent attendance was more of a constraint to IEP meetings than the students. The parents' participation was equally lacking across the schools settings. Parents who had difficulties comprehending special education services and were not familiar with legal provisions for parental involvement in IEPs tended to have negative experiences and were likely to refrain from participating in the process (Baker & Scott, 2016; Sousa, Luze, & Hughes-Belding, 2014).

Larios and Zetlin (2018) examined bilingual and monolingual Latino parents' involvement in their children's IEP meeting in elementary schools within urban areas of Los Angeles. Larios and Zetlin defined a bilingual Latino parent as a parent who speaks both Spanish and English and a monolingual Latino parent as one who only speaks Spanish. The findings from eight participants indicated that monolingual parents' efforts to participate in IEP meetings were often thwarted by school practices. These parents shared that school professionals were more comfortable communicating with parents who speak both Spanish and English than with parents who only speak Spanish. Teachers felt that involving parents who only speak Spanish in IEPs involves extra burdens, as having those parents involved required scheduling an interpreter, which involved waiting for an interpreter to be available, and school personnel had to translate IEP documents into both English and Spanish. Additionally, monolingual parents reported that limited English-

language proficiency as well as a lack of understanding of cultures of legal IEP processes limited their participation in IEP meetings. These findings uncovered gaps that exist when including immigrant parents in IEP meetings (Larios & Zetlin, 2018). To ensure parents would want to participate in their children's IEP meetings, educators need to communicate with parents in the style they are most compatible with or prefer.

Ghaedi et al. (2016) examined parents' perceptions of involvement in the IEP process, and parents' communication with school personnel in Isfahan, Iran. The findings from 52 participants showed that a majority of the parents were involved in their children's IEP process, and communication occurred frequently between parents and teachers. Sixty-six percent of the elementary school participants reported a high level of involvement in IEP meetings, 30% of participants reported a moderate level of participation, and 5% of participants indicated minimal involvement. For middle school parents, 58% of the parents expressed a high level of participation, 28% reported a moderate level of participation, and 14% reported a low degree of participation in their children's IEP meetings. The parents also reported that clear communication that existed between the special educators and the parents was of paramount importance in their involvement in their children's IEP meetings.

The studies in this section highlighted that school professionals' attitudes toward Hispanic parents influenced the Hispanic parents' decision to participate in their children's IEP meetings. Almost all the studies shared commonalities regarding educators' attitudes, including limited interest in parents' opinions and ignoring parents' inputs in decisions regarding their children's education (Francis, Regester, et al., 2018;

Larios & Zetlin, 2018; Lee et al., 2014). Despite these similarities, differences also exist across these studies. For example, Hispanic parents' attendance at IEP meetings is often minimal (Houser & Fontenot, 2015; Williams-Diehm et al., 2014). As the focus of IEPs is students with disabilities, it is important that all stakeholders have a chance to contribute to the formulation of a plan that is in the best interest of the students.

Summary

A review of the literature on parental involvement and the perception of Hispanic parents with the IEP process in the United States revealed that many researchers have conducted studies concerning Hispanic parents' involvement. However, few studies involved SPs, even though the education of these students is vital (Durand & Perez, 2013; Trainor et al., 2014). The literature reviewed indicated that several barriers, such as language, cultural differences or beliefs, teachers' attitudes, and lack of understanding of special education programs, contribute to the lack of Hispanic parents' involvement in IEP meetings. Although these barriers are likely to discourage parents' participation, limited research has revealed the difficulties faced by SPs with regard to IEP involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) identified elements that influenced parental involvement in school affairs, and I have built on their work in this study.

A need for an in-depth understanding to promote SP involvement in IEP meetings is vital. This study was necessary because I hoped it would provide a better understanding of the complex reasons that influence SPs' involvement in IEP meetings. The next chapter includes a description of the research methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to explore the influence of SPs beliefs, self-efficacy, and school invitation to understand their lack of involvement in IEP meetings. The topics discussed in this chapter include research methodology and design, the role of the researcher, participant selection, instrumentation, procedure for recruitment, types and sources of data, and data analysis. Other topics include trustworthiness, ethical procedures, tracking data, discrepancy, and a summary of the chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

Methodology includes research designs, sampling techniques, and data collection methods used to solve a research problem (Palaiologou, Needham, & Male, 2016). Researchers commonly use quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method methodologies in social science or educational research. The type of the methodology a researcher uses depends on the research questions or assumptions (Vail & Hamilton-Jones, 2014). I used the qualitative methodology to gain insights into SPs' lack of involvement in IEP meetings. The central problem and questions required exploration and an understanding of the perceptions of SPs regarding their lack of involvement in IEP meetings with the goal of offering some strategies that could encourage more SP involvement. Therefore, the qualitative method was most suitable. Qualitative researchers tend to rely on learning from participants' insights into a phenomenon under study, as participants' perceptions can be different based on their experiences (Creswell, 2015). Researchers can use qualitative research to capture complicated details about a problem such as individuals'

beliefs, values, thought processes, and feelings that are not easily understood through

other methods. Using a qualitative method also allows participants' genuine voices to be

heard (Yin, 2015). Thus, the qualitative method was the best fit for examining Hispanic

parents' perspectives of IEP meetings.

In contrast to the qualitative methodology, the quantitative methodology consists

of philosophical perspectives, assumptions, postulates, and approaches that researchers

employ to conduct a research study (Vail & Hamilton-Jones, 2014). The basis of the

quantitative methodology is the assumption that researchers can acquire knowledge only

by collecting facts in a systematic and objective manner, by experimental methods, or by

testing a hypothesis (Yin, 2015). A quantitative study would not have addressed the

purpose and research questions; therefore, a quantitative methodology was not suitable.

The qualitative methodology can involve various approaches, such as grounded

theory, phenomenological ethnography, narrative analysis, and case study (Sarvimaki,

2017). Case study, action research, and ethnography research methods are the most

common approaches in qualitative research (Creswell, 2015). A case study method

addresses social problems in a bounded system (Smith, 2018); the focus of the action

research method is on solving specific problems in order to produce guidelines for better

practices (Ma, 2015), and the focus of ethnography research is discussing and interpreting

the culture sharing of groups (Sarvimaki, 2017). A case study method is the most

appropriate for examining a social or human problem because the method yields rich,

descriptive data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). Therefore, I used this method to examine

Hispanic immigrant parents' and special education teachers' perceptions of involvement

in children's IEP meetings, which helped explain human problems in school settings and present a rich picture of the participants' perspectives.

I used the design to address the following research questions:

Research question: How do Hispanic immigrant parents' beliefs, self-efficacy, and school invitations for involvement play a role in their attitudes toward participation in the IEP meetings of their children?

Subquestion 1: What are Hispanic immigrant parents' perceptions of their involvement in IEP meetings?

Subquestion 2: How do Hispanic immigrant parents describe their ability to become involved?

Subquestion 3: What are school special educators' perceptions of Hispanic immigrant parents' participation in IEP meetings?

Subquestion 4: How do school personnel invite Hispanic immigrant parents to become involved in IEP meetings, and how effective do Hispanic immigrant parents perceive the school invitation?

Role of the Researcher

As a qualitative researcher, I was an instrument of data collection and analysis. I have been a special education teacher for more than 4 years. As part of this doctoral program in special education, I learned how to conduct research, including qualitative interviews. I had many roles in this study. I followed ethical procedures in selecting participants and informing them of their rights, I did not select any participants whom I

had previously met, I conducted face-to-face interviews with each participant using interview questions that I created, and I analyzed and interpreted the data.

It is easy for the beliefs and attitudes of a researcher to bias data (Mertens, 2015). As a classroom special education teacher in the public school system, an observer and a participant in IEP meetings, and an immigrant, African parent in the United States, my experiences provide a lens through which I look at certain aspects of the empirical world and ignore others. I maintained a reflective journal to document my biases before gathering and analyzing data. For instance, one of my biases was that immigrant parents do not care much about being involved in school-based events or activities, which was based on my observations of school events as a special education teacher in a public school system. Additionally, I grew up not in a different culture from the participants of this study, though I am an immigrant parent like some of the participants. Nonetheless, I questioned my thoughts and ideas for possible bias and personal distortions. As a single researcher for this qualitative case study, I had the responsibility of maintaining the trustworthiness of the study by minimizing my bias as much as possible using strategies such as triangulation, maximum variation in the sampling, and member checks (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). I also kept a journal in which I reflected on my potential biases (Berger, 2015).

Methodology

Participant Selection

Participants of this study were chosen from population of Hispanic parents and special educators in suburban area in the southeastern United States. Potential

participants were determined based on the following inclusion criteria: (a) parents must

be immigrant parents of Hispanic or Spanish descent, (b) parents had ELL student or had

ELL students who received special education services during the period of this study, and

(c) parents were living in the United States during the period of this study. For special

educators, (a) participants must be special education teachers, (b) had to have an ELL

student or ELL students who received special education services during the period of this

study, and (c) were teaching in suburban public school system. The inclusion criteria

were determined based on the list of parent IEP attendance and Hispanic ELL students'

records. In all the participating schools, the special education and ELL student

department leaders identified the potential participants and delivered the letter of

invitations to participate in the study to them. Most of the participants who agreed to

participate contacted me directly by phone, e-mail, or text, although some parents

returned the invitation letters to their children's teachers, who then contacted me through

e-mail.

     I used homogenous sampling to select participants who met the inclusion criteria.

This sampling strategy is a form of purposeful sampling in which a researcher

purposefully samples individuals based on membership in a subgroup that possesses

specific characteristics (Creswell, 2015). I sampled Hispanic parents of ELL students

with disabilities and special education teachers who participated in IEP meetings in

public schools. I selected participants from elementary, middle, and high schools. I did

not invite teachers from my place of employment to participate. Eighteen individuals

participated in this study; the parent sample consisted of 12 Hispanic immigrant parents

of ELL students with disabilities, and the educator sample consisted of six special

education teachers in public schools. Though sample size is not as important as obtaining

information to answer to the research questions, when collecting qualitative case study

data through interviewing, a range of four to 20 interviews can be appropriate (Bodd,

2018; Marshell & Gardon, 2013). Furthermore, the adequate sample in qualitative

research is the number that takes the researcher to the point of data saturation (Gentles,

Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015). In data gathering, a saturation point is where

additional information gathered contributes minimally or nothing new to the phenomenon

under study (Gentles et al., 2015). I reached saturation when no new themes emerged

from interviews toward the end of data collection. Thus, the sample size was adequate to

acquire information useful to understand the topic under study.

I sent letters to participants that included an explanation of the aim and purpose of

the study and a request for voluntary participation (see Appendix B). A criterion for

eligibility in the parent group was that individuals were Hispanic immigrant parents and

had an ELL student or ELL students who received special education services during the

period of this study. A criterion for the special education teachers was having an ELL

student or ELL students who received special education services during the period of this

study.

Instrumentation

I created open-ended questions for the study (see Appendix A), which I used to

obtain in-depth responses from respondents (Palaiologou et al., 2016). Researchers use

open-ended interview questions to allow participants' concerns and interests to surface,

which provides a wide lens for a researcher's vision. An interview protocol served as a guide to the interview.

I constructed the interview questions. Conducting effective interviews starts with designing constructive questions that align to the needs of the interviewees and the type of approach used for study (Bogdan & Bikden, 2016). Therefore, in designing interview questions, researchers should use words or phrases that are appropriate and meaningful to the participants. I used perspective and behavioral questions because the focus was how participants perceive their involvement in their children's IEP meetings. To enhance the content validity of the questions, I used peer examination (i.e., field testing). This peer-review process serves as an external check of research instruments (Creswell, 2015). I asked two students who were in the advanced stages of their doctoral studies in the Richard Riley College of Education at Walden University to review the interview questions to ensure they were consistent with the research questions of the present study. The students indicated the questions were clear and aligned with the research questions. Table 2 displays the alignment of the interview questions to the research questions.

Table 2

Alignment Between Research Questions and Interview Questions

Research questions	Interview questions	
	Parents	Teachers
1. What are Hispanic immigrant parents' perceptions of their beliefs about their involvement in IEP meetings?	1. Tell me about the IEP meetings that you currently attended concerning your child's placement in special education programs. 2. What does disability mean to you? 3. How do Hispanic people view disability? 4. How do you perceive culture as a barrier between the educators and yourself during theses IEP meetings?	1. How would you describe the participation of Hispanic parents of ELL students with disabilities in the IEP meetings? 2. Do you perceive culture as a barrier between the educators and Hispanic parents in participating in the IEP meetings? Why?
2. How do Hispanic immigrant parents describe their ability to become involved?	1. What are some ways that you participate in your child's education in general?	1. What elements, from Hispanic parents' perceptions, encourage or discourage their involvement? 2. Do you have any suggestions for IEP meeting to improve Hispanic parents' involvement?
3. What are school special educators' perceptions of Hispanic immigrant parents' participation in IEP meetings?		1. How would you describe the participation of Hispanic parents of ELL students with disabilities in the IEP meetings? 2. Do you have any suggestions for IEP meeting to improve Hispanic parents' involvement?
4. How do school personnel invite Hispanic immigrant parents to become involved in IEP meetings, and how effective do Hispanic immigrant parents perceive the school invitation?	1. Do you have anything else you would like to suggest/ recommend about the IEP meeting and process to improve Hispanic parent involvement? 2. How do you perceive culture as a barrier between the educators and yourself during these IEP meetings?	1. What efforts/activities do your schools provide to Hispanic parents that facilitate their involvement in the IEP meetings? 2. Do you have any suggestions for IEP meeting to improve Hispanic parents' involvement?

Procedure for Recruitment, Participant, and Data Collection

Upon receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Approval No. 02-12-18-0351175) for this study, I contacted the director of the research department of the district under study to explain the aim of my research and to determine whether the school district would be my research partner. The research director required me to complete the school district's application for research, which I completed. After obtaining the school district's approval of the study and a signed letter of cooperation that indicated support for the study, I started the process of selecting research sites. I sent e-mails to principals of public schools that appeared to have a large population of potential participants to request a meeting to explain the study. Four principals agreed to allow me to conduct the study at their schools. In addition, I asked the school principals to solicit their school personnel's participation in the recruitment process. All the school principals referred me to the chair of special education department as my points of contact.

I contacted the special education department leaders of the elementary school, the middle school, and the high school of the partner district to ask them to be the gatekeepers for my potential participants, and they agreed. Gatekeepers in qualitative research are members of the research population who agree to act as intermediary or liaison between the researcher and the potential participants (Creswell, 2015). The special education department leaders facilitated my access to the participants who met inclusionary criteria. Criteria for participant eligibility were that individuals were Hispanic immigrant parents and had an ELL student or ELL students who received special education services during the period of this study. Another criterion was that the

special education teachers had an ELL student or ELL students who received special

education services during the period of this study. Inclusionary criteria were determined

based on the order of scheduled IEP meetings during the period of this study by special

education department leaders.

I started the process of participant selection using purposeful sampling approach.

My intentions for selecting participants using the purposeful sampling method included

selecting participants based on the anticipated relevance of information for use in the

study (Gentles et al., 2015). The special education leaders delivered letters that included a

description of the study and an invitation to all the eligible parents and special education

teachers. The schools had different mailing systems for contacting potential participants.

For the two elementary schools that participated, one special education leaders sent out

the invitation letters to parents and special education teachers through e-mail, whereas the

other sent the invitation letters to parents through their students and to special education

teachers through e-mail. The middle and high schools special education leaders sent the

invitation letters to parents through their students and to special education teachers

through e-mail. They also personally delivered them to teachers' mailboxes. Most of the

participants who agreed to participate contacted me by phone, whereas some parents

returned the invitation letters to their child's teachers to indicate their interest in

participating, and the teachers contacted me through e-mail. Special education teachers

interested in participating contacted me through e-mails or texts.

All the interviews took place face-to-face in school buildings and in public

locations such as libraries. For privacy, I made reservations for a conference rooms in

school buildings and public libraries. Interviews took place at each school. Each interview lasted 18–30 minutes, and I scheduled them at a convenient time for participants. Some parent interviews took place during school hours in the school conference rooms, while other parent interviews took place after school in a library. Interviews for special education teachers only took place in the school buildings during their grade-level faculty lunch time and after school in a conference room. I audio recorded each interview and obtained each participant's permission before I started the audio recording.

In alignment with the interview protocol, I started the interview by welcoming the participant and introducing myself again. I explained the consent form by describing the aim and purpose of the study and the request for voluntary participation; I then obtained the signed consent form from the participant before I began each interview. I ended the interview by thanking the participant for participating. The 18 interviews included 12 parents (one interview per parent) and six special education teachers (one interview per teacher). All the participant interviews followed the same format. After each interview, I wrote field notes that included the climate of the interview and any specific themes that emerged. Furthermore, a transcriber transcribed the audio recording of each interview.

At the end of the data collection process, I e-mailed each principal and each of the gatekeepers at the partner schools to thank them. Each participant received a debriefing note that contained the title of the study, a description of the purpose of the study, and my contact information. Additionally, I informed them that I will send a summary of the

findings when the study is complete. The participants also received a thank-you card for participating in the study.

The data came from interview responses from two groups of participants who represent the primary components of IEP team meetings: parents and teachers. I selected parents and teachers as the sample so that I could understand the issue from both perspectives. Interviews were the primary approach to collecting data in this study. Interviews allow researchers to reveal participants' words (Creswell, 2015). Interview approaches involve using personal contact and interaction to collect the data necessary to address the questions under study. Such contact can be face-to-face or can occur by telephone. Face-to-face interviews are often more preferable than phone interviews because researchers can have direct contact with participants (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013). Sustaining direct contact with interviewees promotes unlimited communication and enables a researcher to comprehend interviewees' perceptions of a problem (Yin, 2015). In the face-to-face interviews, I was able to ask probing questions if interviewees failed to answer the questions directly. Using probing questions enhanced my understanding of interviewees' perceptions of the problem.

Data Analysis Plan

I used a thematic network in data interpretation. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method for identifying and analyzing patterns or themes within data (Clarke & Braun, 2014). The method involves searching for and identifying common themes or categories that extend across an entire interview data set or a set of interview responses (Vaismoradi, Turumen, & Bondas, 2013) and was appropriate for the study. In case study

research, researchers seek to understand what they are studying. They can obtain this knowledge by reading data and segmenting themes or by matching patterns that emerge from respondents' responses (Palaiologou et al., 2016).

Upon completion of interviews with the participants, a transcriber transcribed the audio-recorded interviews and I coded them, which reduced the data to a manageable size for reporting. The study included an open coding strategy to code the data. A benefit of this coding technique is the ability to stay close to participants' responses and analyze them based on the patterns or themes that emerge from the data without bringing in preexisting data (Mertens, 2015). I used MAXQDA software to sort and organize the data that accumulated during the interviews.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Taking measures to report findings that are accurate is important in qualitative research. Three popular strategies to achieve this objective are triangulation, member checking, and auditing (Creswell, 2015). To establish validity, I triangulated the data sources. This type of triangulation involves using multiple data sources in the same study for validation purposes (Palaiologou et al., 2016). Thus, I used data from different perspectives (parents and teachers) for triangulation and corroboration. Triangulation helped to increase the credibility of the data and the trustworthiness of the analyzed data. I also used respondent validation. Member checking involves asking research participants to review a copy of an interview transcript or a draft of a final report to ensure accuracy (Simpson & Quigley, 2016). During member checking, I took the interview transcripts

back to interviewees and asked them to determine whether the findings were accurate or

reflected their perceptions of the phenomenon, and they all agreed with the findings.

Participants who needed translation received their transcribed responses translated into

Spanish.

Dependability

A vital aspect of dependability is whether findings are congruent with data

collected (Mertens, 2015). To improve the dependability of qualitative research,

researchers should use the techniques of triangulation, an audit trail, and peer review

(Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). As noted earlier, I triangulated the data to enhance their

validity by interviewing participants with different educational backgrounds. For

example, I interviewed K–12 special education teachers with varied teaching experience.

I also interviewed Hispanic parents with ELL students with disabilities who were in

different grade levels that ranged from kindergarten to 12th grade. In addition, I used the

peer-review strategy by asking two doctoral students in the College of Education at

Walden University to review the findings to determine whether I stayed open to emergent

themes in the data. I also kept an audit trail by keeping a reflective research journal in

which I documented essential details of data collection, data analysis processes, problems

encountered, and decisions made throughout the study.

Transferability

In qualitative studies, researchers define transferability as the degree to which the

findings of the study are generalizable to other similar settings (Creswell, 2015;

Palaiologou et al., 2016). To improve the transferability of a qualitative study, Yin (2016)

suggested that researchers use the tactics of rich, thick description and supportive data from a variety of sources. In this case study, I used the method of rich, thick description by providing the detailed, accurate, and vivid descriptions of the participants, the setting, the interactions, and the findings. Additionally, I was mindful of the sample size and selected a sample that was typical of other Hispanic immigrant parents who resided in the southern United States and who had ELL children with disabilities in public schools as well as special educators who teach these children. I also collected data from different perspectives by interviewing individuals who held different points of view: Hispanic parents of ELLs with disabilities and special education teachers.

Confirmability

Connelly (2016) defined confirmability as the degree to which findings are consistent and could be repeated. Connelly recommended that researchers use the technique of reflexivity, which involves the process of reflecting on oneself as researcher. I applied this strategy by keeping a research journal in which I reflected on my beliefs about parental involvement in IEP meetings in public schools, which stemmed from my experiences as a special education teacher in suburban and urban public schools in the United States. As a special educator in public school, I have firsthand experience with the operations of an IEP, its influence on student performance, and the lack of parental involvement at IEP meetings. I believed that some parents often do not appreciate the need to participate in their children's education. Furthermore, some of the empirical scholastic studies I reviewed for this study indicated that some cultures support a lack of parental involvement in schools (Fallah, Murawski, & Moradian, 2018; Kalyanpur,

2018). Thus, I used reflexivity to reflect on the need to minimize my own views and feelings about parental involvement in IEP meetings as I interacted with participants in the data collection stage.

Ethical Procedures

Trustworthiness has become a cornerstone for conducting effective and meaningful research, and, as such, the ethical behavior of researchers is under unprecedented scrutiny (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). The primary purpose of a researcher's involvement in research is to ensure the protection of participants' confidentiality (Vail & Hamilton-Jones, 2014). To ensure the trustworthiness of this research, I first sought and obtained approval to conduct this study from the IRB at Walden University. I also obtained approval to conduct research from the director of the research department of the district under study. As required by the IRB, I treated the participants ethically and with respect. Parents and teachers received assurances that their responses would remain confidential and that their involvement in the study would be voluntary. I did not force participants, implicitly or explicitly, to participate. I planned and presented the information so participants would understand it completely, and I obtained direct consent from the participants before the interviews started.

Before the inception of the interviews, I asked participants to sign consent forms that indicated their names would not appear in the study because codes or pseudonyms would be used, and participation was voluntary. Participants were able to choose a Spanish version of the consent form if they preferred. To put participants at ease, I introduced myself as a special educator. I reviewed the purpose of the study and the data

collection procedures included in the consent form. After the transcription process was complete, I asked participants to review their interview transcripts for accuracy.

At every stage of the study, I tried to ensure I met the requirements of the IRB and ensured the data were high quality. In relation to reflexivity, I carefully examined my biases throughout the study, including the information, assumptions, and decisions that could have an effect on the findings. I constantly reflected on my thinking and assumptions through journaling and used member checking to verify the data to ensure credibility in the findings and to keep personal biases in check. In addition, I contacted the chair of my research committee at various stages of the data collection for advice.

The data collection times were scattered throughout a 6-month period. I used the time period wisely by writing detailed field notes. I also spent a considerable amount of time systematically reading and cross-checking my notes.

To protect the participants and maintain data confidentiality, I used codes instead of names to identify the participants. Each participant had a code that consisted of a letter and a number that allowed me to identify each participant by the code rather than his or her name. Additionally, I defaced or marred other participant identifiers such as signatures and genders that I recorded in this study. I also used passwords to protect saved transcripts and voice recordings in electronic format, and I was the only person who had access to the data during this study.

In case any individuals refused to participate or withdrew from the study early, I interviewed three extra participants to ensure that I would obtain enough data to carry out detailed data analysis and to protect against participant early withdrawal. The number of

participants approved for the study was 15 (10 parents and five teachers), but I

interviewed 18 participants (12 parents and six teachers).

I processed (coded) the transcribed data using MAXQDA software on my

computer and used a removable flash drive for storing the findings. The removable flash

drive containing the findings will be available for up to 5 years after the publication of

this study in a locked box at my home that will remain in a cabinet drawer to which only

I have access. After 5 years, I will erase the data and destroy the drive. At the completion

of this study, I plan to send each participant a copy of the dissertation summary of the key

findings and interpretations.

I kept a reflective journal to track the research process and to help establish

confirmability. Qualitative researchers engage in reflective practices to document

emergent ideas and concepts and to track their data collection and analysis processes

(Orange, 2016). Keeping the reflective journal involved reflecting on obtaining access,

tracking recruitment and participation efforts, and reflecting on data collection and data

analysis. A reflective journal serves as a way to improve many areas of research studies,

such as data gathering, data analysis, and ethical procedures (Berger, 2015). Through

journaling, I tracked my progress throughout the study and developed insight into my

motivation toward specific processes or questions.

Summary

I described the research methodology for this study in this chapter and addressed

the research study design and my role in the study. The case study research design was

suitable because it provided me with the means to examine individual participants'

perceptions within a social and cultural context. Additionally, I was able to describe how the participants expressed their points of view and what these views meant to them. My role as a researcher included creating interview questions, selecting specific parents and teachers as participants, and analyzing data. I also addressed how to enhance the trustworthiness of the study by using specific strategies related to the concepts of validity and the ethical procedures used in the data-gathering stage. In the next chapter, I present the findings of this study based on this research methodology.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the SPs' involvement in their children's IEP meetings, as well as special educators' perceptions of parents' involvement. The goal was to understand parents' lack of involvement in IEP meetings. The research questions were as follows:

Research question: How do Hispanic immigrant parents' beliefs, self-efficacy, and school invitations for involvement influence their attitudes toward participation in the IEP meetings of their children?

Subquestion 1: What are Hispanic immigrant parents' perceptions of their involvement in IEP meetings?

Subquestion 2: What are school special educators' perceptions of Hispanic immigrant parents' participation in IEP meetings?

Subquestion 3: How do Hispanic immigrant parents describe their ability to become involved?

Subquestion 4: How do school personnel invite Hispanic immigrant parents to become involved in IEP meetings, and how effective do Hispanic immigrant parents perceive the school invitation?

The focus of Chapter 4 is the results. The chapter includes a description of the setting, participants, and data collection procedure; evidence of trustworthiness; and analysis of the results. It also includes a summary of the chapter.

Setting

Hispanic parents and guardians of approximately 11,000 ELL students receiving special education and the special education teachers of the ELL students receiving special education in a suburban school district with approximately 100,000 students in a K–12 system comprised the potential sample. Hispanic parents and guardians and special education teachers who were eligible to participate received an invitation letter from the chair of the special education department of the partner schools. The content of the letters included an explanation of the aim and purpose of the study and a request for voluntary participation (see Appendix B).

Demographics

The method used to select participants was purposeful sampling, which involves drawing samples from a subgroup of participants who meet specific characteristics. For this study, participants had to be Hispanic immigrant parents or special education teachers of an ELL student or students who received special education services during the period of this study. Limitations to purposeful sampling can include an inability to generate findings across a setting (Creswell, 2015). Although it would have been ideal to interview the total population of members of IEP meetings, the strategy was neither practical nor necessary in qualitative interviews (Yin, 2015). Table 3 shows the demographic profiles of the participants. Participants had codes to conceal their identities, which fulfilled the promise of anonymity, where P = parent and T = teacher.

Table 2

Research Participants' Demographic Profiles

Participants	Gender	Student's grade level
Parents		
P1	Female	High school
P2	Female	High school
P3	Female	High school
P4	Female	High school
P5	Male	Middle school
P6	Female	High school
P7	Female	Elementary school
P8	Female	Elementary school
P9	Female	Elementary school
P10	Male	High school
P11	Male	High school
P12	Female	High school
Teachers		
T1	Female	Elementary school
T2	Female	High school
T3	Female	High school
T4	Female	High school
T5	Male	High school
T6	Male	High school

Data Collection

The data collection process lasted 6 months. The data collection procedure included procedures for obtaining access to participants, specific plans for interviews, and the interviews.

Procedure for Obtaining Access to Participants

I gained access to the participants through the department of special education chairs of the partner schools, who had access to the district's office administrative database of scheduled IEP meetings. I chose qualified participants based on the order of scheduled IEP meetings during the period of this study. Based on purposeful sampling, 18 participants participated in the study. I interviewed 12 Hispanic parents and six special

education teachers from three K–12 public schools. The invitation letters delivered to the participants included informed consent forms and confidentiality forms.

Specific Plans for Interviews

All interviews with participants were open-ended and took place face-to-face in school and in public settings that participants chose, such as libraries. For privacy, I reserved a conference room in each school. Each interview lasted 18–30 minutes. All the Hispanic parents had the choice of being interviewed in English or Spanish. The participants who chose Spanish were provided with interpreters/translators. Nine parent participants chose English and three parent participants chose Spanish. For those who preferred English, their responses did not indicate any difficulty with understanding the interview questions; however, two parents struggled to provide in-depth responses. I asked probing questions when participants provided short responses. To put participants at ease, I started each interview by introducing myself and establishing rapport. Afterward, I explained the nature, purpose, and method for the study. Before each interview began, the participant signed and dated the consent form. I presented the format and the sequence of the introduction and explanation to each participant in the same way. I also used an interview protocol to ensure I maintained the sequence of the questions (see Appendix A).

During the interview, I used a small voice-recording audio device, and I asked five open-ended questions to the special education teachers and seven open-ended questions to the Hispanic parents about perceptions of Hispanic parents' participation in IEP meetings (see Appendix A). I recorded the question and the response portions of the

interviews. After the interviews, I listened to the interpretations of the responses several times and sent the audio-recorded interviews to a professional transcriber to create the transcriptions.

Data Analysis and Validity Procedures

This section includes a description of the data analysis procedures, findings, validity and trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. In this case study, I analyzed the data using MAXQDA data analysis software, Version 2018, for qualitative research. I used the lexical search (advanced function) of the software to identify patterns in the data using thematic codes. This process involved searching the transcribed documents without first coding them.

Searching the transcriptions involved multiple steps. The first step involved constructing a list of all expressions relevant to participants' perceptions. The listed expressions or words served as key words in the lexical search module or window. The second step involved importing the participants' transcribed documents into MAXQDA and organizing and grouping participants into two levels: teachers and parents. The third step involved entering the constructed expressions or words into the lexical search module and executing the search. The search results included participants' names or identification codes, coded segments, line numbers that linked to the original documents in which the coded segments were located, and search items. The fourth step involved reduction and elimination to determine the important categories or themes. I read and reread the coded segments to determine meaningful segments that would add to the understanding of Hispanic parents' and special educators' perspectives about parent

involvement. I validated the codes or segments by checking them against the original

transcribed documents. I eliminated the codes or segments that were not clearly stated in

the transcript or were duplicated. The final step was clustering, in which I exported the

coded data to a Microsoft Excel file to refine, condense, and group the codes into

categories and core themes of the perspectives of each participant.

Coding

During initial coding, I selected meaningful segments of the data from the search

results that reflected the transcribed data as closely as possible. After initial coding was

complete, I worked to validate the codes, which yielded 47 codes. I compared and refined

the initial codes, I analyzed teachers' and parents' codes for commonalities and

similarities, and I clustered identical codes. The process yielded 26 distinct codes that I

reviewed for accuracy and then reduced the initial codes to 20 refined codes.

Category

The category process involved grouping or clustering the refined codes into

categories. A category is a unit of information consisting of instances, happenings, and

events that form concepts or constructs (Bryant et al., 2016). Through in-depth analysis, I

came up with 15 categories by clustering the codes based on commonalities. The

following section depicts the process used to extract themes.

Themes

A theme is developed through the summarizing of each category to find the

underling patterns and meanings (Creswell, 2015). To develop themes, I examined the

categories, reviewed them for similarities and differences, and arranged them into five

emergent themes that I formulated into summative explanations. I formulated these

statements and linked each theme to explanatory and summarized statements. The data

analysis path from categories to themes to summarized statements appears in Table 4.

Summary

Tables 4 and 5 illustrate categories, themes, and summary statements based on

participants' interview responses, as well as key findings based on the research questions;

for the participants' interview responses, (see Appendices C, D, E, F, G. H, and I).

Table 4

Analysis Chart

Categories	Themes	Summary statements
Definition of disability; nature of disability; experience with disability; rejection of disability/stigma	Cultural construction of disability	The culturally constructed meaning connected to disability, parents' limited experiences with disability, and the condition of their children's disabilities resulted in parents' rejection of disability designations, thus limiting their participation in IEP meetings.
Limited knowledge of IEP meeting; limited knowledge of rights; legal status	Parental role/rights and limited involvement in IEP meetings	School professionals' inadequate scaffolding of the technical aspect of the IEP meeting couple with cultural feature and nature of parents' legal rights led to limited parental knowledge of special education, which reduced parents' involvement in the IEP meetings.
Work schedule; tight schedule; issue of getting off work; transportation	Inflexible work schedule	Tedious job and problem getting off work discouraged parents from participating.
Language difficulties; translator	Language barrier Decreased trust in special education school translators	Parents' language difficulty and their weakened level of trust in the interpreting system affected their collaboration with school staff, which dictated their level of participation in the meeting.
Condescending; differential treatment	Disrespect	School professionals' failure to revere or defer to parents created a disconnection between school staff's expectation and parents' perceptions of the meaning of involvement.

Table 5

Summary of Key Findings

Research question	Key findings
RQ1: Perceptions of parental beliefs	Hispanic parents culturally and socially constructed the definition of disability.
	Have limited experience and exposure to disability
RQ2: Parents ability to participate	Parents noted that limited education was an interference with their capacity to participate fully in their children's IEP meetings.
	They also noted that a lack of understanding of special education in the United States influenced their parental involvement.
RQ3: Special educators' perceptions of Hispanic parental involvement	Noted Hispanic parents are less involved in their children's IEP meetings
	Noted that cultural differences may contribute to their limited involvement
RQ4: School personnel's invitation	Teachers were not sure if any activity targeting SPs' involvement was in place.
	Parents noted that a lack of activities targeting Hispanic immigrant parents' involvement influenced the parents' involvement.
Other factors affecting parental involvement	An understanding that English-language barriers, cultural differences, school professionals' attitudes, balancing work schedule with children's educational needs, immigration status, and stigma attached to disability affect parental involvement.

Results

This study involved examining the involvement of Hispanic parents of ELLs in

IEP meetings for their children and special educators' perceptions of parents'

involvement. As a qualitative researcher, I analyzed the data using deductive reasoning.

When conducting deductive reasoning, concepts, patterns, and themes emerge from the

iterative logic employed by the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016).

I focused the discussion of the findings on five key sections that reflect the five

main themes as they relate to Hispanic parents' participation in the IEP meetings of their

children and special teachers' perceptions of parents' participation. The themes were (a)

cultural construction of disability; (b) language barrier and decreasing trust in school

translators; (c) parental roles, rights, and involvement; (d) inflexible work schedules; and

(e) disrespect. The themes organized by school groups appear in Table 6.

Table 6

Themes by School Levels

Theme	Elementary school	Middle school	High school	Parents	Teachers
Cultural constructions of disability	2	1	7	8	2
Language barrier	2	0	10	7	5
Inflexible work schedule	2	1	6	7	2
Parents' role/rights	1	1	9	7	4
Disrespect	0	1	1	2	0

Note. Qualitative data analyzed and grouped into themes.

As described earlier, the findings described in this section resulted from two types of perspectives: interviews with parents and interviews with special education teachers. I interweaved these different perspectives into the result to illustrate each theme.

Theme 1: Cultural Constructions of Disability

Hispanic parents' involvement in IEP meetings for their children was largely guided by their definition of disability, which was culturally defined and socially constructed, whereas special educators' definition reflected the formal definition of disability in the United States. The definition stated under IDEA and used by school special education staff when talking about disabilities covers all learners who fall within one of the 13 specific categories of qualifying conditions: autism, specific learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, intellectual disabilities, speech and language impairment, traumatic brain injury, visual impairment, hearing impairment, orthopedic impairment, deaf-blindness, deafness, multiple disabilities, and other health impairments (Bryant et al., 2016). These categories represent a wider range in determining disabilities than noted by the Hispanic parents in their definition of disability.

The disabilities of the children of most Hispanic parents I interviewed were mild and might not be typically noticeable by laypersons or other individuals. This category of disability did not align with Hispanic parents' understanding of disability.

Definition of disability. The way the Hispanic parents in this research study defined disability aligned with common definitions of severe mental or developmental and physical disability. Most of the parents provided a definition of disability associated with a physical, apparent manifestation. Only through probing or further discussion did a few parents consider types of disabilities other than severe mental or physical disability.

Most of the Hispanic parents defined disability in terms of its severity or visibility, such as a severe mental disability or physical disability that affects basic functioning. P3 provided the following definition: "Well, that's like I say, sometimes we don't even understand the word and we just look at it like, you know, some person like, is missing something, like you know, is not a normal person." P7 stated that disability means "sometimes kids that don't have their leg, an arm, or you know, not mentally. . . ." Some of the Hispanic parents did not believe that their children had disabilities. T5 noted, "As far as, you know, they don't believe that their child has a disability." P1 provided another instance: "Disability for me, um, real, my son, he don't have a disability, because for me disability is the person who don't accept another person, Yeah." These statements were examples of parents' typified views about disability.

Hispanic parents' limited exposure to disability in their Spanish-speaking countries influenced their definition of disability and their limited experience with U.S. definitions of disability. As noted, parents defined disability mainly in terms of a physical

manifestation. Some Hispanic parents reported having limited prior experience with individuals with disabilities. P8 said, "I haven't ever see a disability school in my country." Similarly, P12 stated, "In my culture, they don't really have meetings like this, like the IEP over there in. . . ." P10 shared similar accounts; he said, "There's no school. Like, people come to the house sometimes to help them but no schools for the disability people." The Hispanic parents' lack of exposure to disability was associated with their cultural and social views toward disability.

Stigma attached to disability. The disability label carries heavy connotations in Hispanic cultures. Special education teachers expressed that, because of the stigma, some Hispanic parents strive to avoid being identified or being seen with special educators; thus, they do not want to attend IEP meetings. P1 offered the following explanation:

> And the only thing I can say, like, me as being Spanish, it was hard for me to see the things the different way. All the times when I was calling for these meetings, I feel like maybe they would look at my son like he was retarded or like he was not a normal person.

Further, P12 noted,

> Sometimes people don't notice when people has a disability, that it's more common, it's more normal for them. Like, they don't like to put labels on disability kids or, like, on anybody and everyone is just normal over there in my country.

These parents' accounts indicated that labeling disabilities carries a stigma in Hispanic culture.

The concept of disability posed a challenge to the Hispanic parents, who tended to define disability using its physical manifestation, as the lack of physical ability to function in one's social environment, as an act of prejudice, or as a means of segregating learners from their peers. Hispanic parents' limited exposure to individuals with disabilities and limited resources available for the care of individuals with disabilities might contribute to how they perceive the assignment of disability labels.

Theme 2: Language Barrier

Language difficulties affected Hispanic parents' participation in IEP meetings. The language used at IEP meetings makes it difficult for Hispanic parents who have limited proficiency in English to participate. The IEP meeting, which is a federal requirement, includes technical language that can be difficult to understand even for a layperson who is a native English speaker. Of the six special educators interviewed, five stated the language barrier is a major factor that affects Hispanic parents' participation in IEP meetings. T5 noted communication is a "huge factor" that encourages and discourages Hispanic parents' involvement because the more English they speak, the more involved they are, and vice versa. P1 stated, "The language, the language bad, some people they don't understand the language, because the teacher and other people they speak English that make it appear hard." P7, the parent of a 6-year-old child, reported,

> The Hispanic parents, the majority that I see that are my friends and everything. They can't ask some questions that they want to because the translator sometimes just says like, "Oh we don't really ask that" or like, "Oh no, we're good," so they just keep quiet.

Parents who are unable to fully express their opinions and concerns may refrain from attending IEP meetings.

Theme 3: Inflexible Work Schedule

Another issue or factor that kept Hispanic parents from participating in IEP meetings was the limited opportunity to participate in the meetings. Most Hispanic parents interviewed worked in blue-collar jobs at which attendance is vital. Managers or supervisors of these jobs are often stricter than in other types of employment, as they need to find another worker to cover absent employees' shifts. Five Hispanic parents complained that they have limited time to attend the meetings because of their tight work schedule. For example, P8 said, "Currently, I haven't attended any because of my work schedule. I work too much, so I haven't been able to go." P4 indicated that school personnel should strive to accommodate Hispanic parents' work schedules:

> Maybe to be able to have parents come when they're able to. Because sometimes they have work and they're not able to show up, so it would be better if they could come on a day they are off, so they would be able to speak more and understand more what the teachers are talking about, about their kids in the IEP program.

These two parents noted that balancing work and involvement posed a challenge to participating in IEP meetings.

Theme 4: Parents' Roles and Rights

In addition to having language difficulties, Hispanic parents' limited participation is due to factors that fall outside their cultural norms. A lack of knowledge of the U.S. special education system and immigration issues are other barriers that prevent Hispanic

parents from fully participating in the IEP meetings as required in IDEA. Unlike special

educators who are guided by the legal procedural framework of IDEA, which provides a

blueprint for school professionals to follow, Hispanic parents lack the guidance, cultural

knowledge, and experience needed to increase their involvement in their children's IEP

meetings. Hispanic parents' lack of understanding of typical special education practices

and lack of experience with similar programs for individuals with disabilities in their

home countries reduced their familiarity with U.S. special education concepts.

Consequently, they were unable to comprehend the essence of the IEP meetings. P11

noted,

> They help people, but they don't give them that much information about what's
>
> going on during the activity. Just like, it helps but it doesn't make any sense what
>
> they're saying. They just like want to keep you in the right place and the right
>
> time. No schools for children that have disability. They just like, they just go to
>
> their house and they just like talk about it. They don't even have schools for it, so
>
> they just like, some people will knock on your door and tell you about disability
>
> and that's like basically it. There's no school for it.

T5 indicated that many Hispanic parents might be "ill-informed, or they may be

intimidated by the entire school process."

Immigration status emerged as another barrier affecting Hispanic parents'

participation in IEP meetings. P10 noted that Hispanic parents were perceived to be less

involved in the IEP meetings because they did not feel welcomed and because of the way

they were treated in the United States. P10 stated, "I mean, I think like, they should talk

about the rights for the people. The Hispanic people, they have rights to be here and speak up. Some parents don't speak up for their own child because they're Hispanic." T6 also noted that many Hispanic parents do not ask too many questions because they may not want to draw attention to themselves.

Theme 5: Disrespect

Disrespect might hinder Hispanic parents' involvement. Some Hispanic parents in this study felt intimidated by the system due to the treatment they experienced in the United States. They felt that Caucasian and African American children had an advantage at school, as they were most likely to receive better treatment at school from school personnel because of a sense of entitlement. P6 indicated how Hispanic parents were being disrespected by school personnel:

> I experienced it as a parent. Sometimes they're very condescending to the Hispanic parents and that shouldn't be that way. When a parent is treated that way, they are not going to act in, you know, in a, how to say . . . in a more becoming, more becoming, more agreeable—if a parent is feeling attacked or is feeling like she's being judged, I don't think that it will help.

Others reported feeling a lack of respect. Some Hispanic parents expressed a feeling of differential treatment and disrespect. P5 stated,

> In the school . . . if some White kid complains to the teacher something, they call attention to the person they complained to. But if Latino or . . . say anything about a White man, classmate like that, they don't say anything. And they put the guy

punish because it's not the same color they are. They need to . . . to forgive others, to respect others . . . treat each other as if they want to treat you.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, a few parents admitted that they rarely missed IEP meetings because the information they receive from the meetings helps them learn how to assist their children. Other parents who admitted that they often or sometimes missed IEP meetings reported that they found alternative ways to become involved in their children's education. Some of these parents revealed that their efforts to enhance their children's education included making sure that a child gets to school on time, requiring their children to behave well at home and in school, attending after-school practices, and finding help for homework. P12 noted, "I always encourage them to do their homework, to go to school, to do their work, do their best, get enough sleep, sleep early and get ready, not to be late for school." P5 reported,

> You need to see everybody in the class, that's . . . education. No matter if they have disability, I told him, you need to do this, you need to be good, you need to not notice disability. You need to think about, not because color, not because language, you need to be friends with everybody. Good relationships. That's the first education I told him. Because if I guide my kid very good in home, they're supposed to be the same I guide him in the school.

P6 stated,

> I have participated in every way possible as a Hispanic parent. I have gone to games, I have gone to band, almost every single band presentation to the band when they have the biggest competition for the state, all of that. I think it's

important, and it's important for the children to know the parents are interested in the education they're getting.

P11 noted, "Sometimes he comes up to me like if he needs help with his homework, . . . his math homework, I basically help him get like some tutorials."

Regarding soliciting or encouraging Hispanic parents' involvement, special educators in this study had different responses on whether they provide activities to encourage Hispanic parents' participation in their children's education. T3 stated, "We have a parent liaison who also calls them." However, T1 responded, "I wish I could say yes. If there are activities like that, I don't know about it." Similarly, T5 stated, "Not that I know of at this moment as far as specifically for Hispanic parents to come in and get involved."

Relating to how to improve Hispanic parents' involvement, some parents believed that some changes in IEP meetings are necessary. P1 described her perception as follows: "I think some school, set the school meeting, one meeting, one class for prepare all parents. I think so in my opinion that Hispanic, the school meeting need something for prepare all, all parents, so they know." P8 also believed that Hispanic parents need to be motivated. She added the school should "cheers on the parents to help motivate them to go to school, to always motivate the parents to go to meetings."

Similarly, some special education teachers believed that Hispanic parents needed more support to increase their participation. T1 noted that developing good relationships by having fun events and inviting Hispanic parents to participate would help them to feel more comfortable and they might subsequently be more willing to participate in

meetings. T5 indicated that in-depth explanations are essential to promote Hispanic parents' participation. T5 stated,

> If we could go in and kind of have someone explain to them, not necessarily everything in the IEP—that's explained during the meetings—but just explain to them, this is a meeting for, to help your child get a better education. I think they would be more open to, or more involved into, the process.

The participants noted that additional challenges related to improving Hispanic parents' involvement in the IEP meetings include overcoming the challenges related to providing sufficient explanations and motivations.

Discrepant Data

Discrepant data are variations and responses of individuals that may challenge or not support major themes that emerged in a study. In this study, I found discrepant data related to teachers' perceptions of Hispanic parental involvement, which was about attendance of SPs in their children's IEP meetings, the influence of cultural difference, and the school invitation. With regard to school special educators' perceptions of Hispanic parents' participation in IEP meetings, a majority of the teachers noted that the attendance of the SPs in their children's IEP meetings was minimal. However, two special teachers responded differently. T3 stated,

> All of my parents have come. I at least have one parent come, and I always have a translator. So for me, and I've been doing this a number of years, for me, I've always had parents that come, at least one.

T4 noted, "Yes. They are coming to the meetings." These teachers indicated that experience and preparation are better ways of collaborating with their students' parents.

Regarding cultural influence, a majority of the special education teachers noted that cultural differences limit SPs' involvement in their children's IEP meetings. However, T4 stated that cultural differences do not contribute to Hispanic parents' limited participation in IEP meetings T4 explained,

I don't perceive culture as a barrier. I think that, for the most part, they've been living in America, so they are aware that women have a more active. I do think sometimes Hispanic males can be. . . . But in general, I think that generally they've lived in America for a period of time, and so I don't think they're biased.

T4 did not perceive cultural differences as a barrier that contributes to Hispanic parents' limited participation in IEP meetings; rather she noted that Hispanic parents understand and know that the teachers were there to further their child's education.

Relating to school personnel's invitation, many special education teachers reported that they were not sure if any activity that targets SPs' involvement was in place. However, T3 responded differently. T3 noted, "We have parent nights for the ESOL [English for speakers of other languages] parents, and so they're informed a lot. We have a parent liaison who also calls them." This teacher indicated that establishing a program for students whose parents speak languages other than English does necessarily mean that all Hispanic parents will attend the events.

In addition, I found discrepant data related to SPs' perceptions of their parental involvement regarding their attendance at their children's IEP meetings, the influence of

cultural difference, the effectiveness of the school invitation, and the suggestions parents made about improving their participation in their children's IEP meetings. In relation to SPs' perceptions of their participation in IEP meetings, a majority of the parents believed that their attendance in their children's IEP meetings was minimal. However, several parents responded differently. P1 reported, "Always I go to meeting; this is good for me and my son too, because I'm in this meeting the teacher explaining about all things that is learning." P3 explained,

> I came to all the meetings. When they need me to come, I come to the meetings all the time. I think that it's been like, really very helpful for him because it helps him to develop everything. Like in different areas that he was having difficulties, so now he's doing a lot better.

These parents indicated that attending their children's IEP meetings is an effective way to collaborate with their children's teachers to help their children receive a better education.

Regarding cultural influence, a majority of the Hispanic parents noted that cultural differences influence their involvement in their children's IEP meetings. However, three parents indicated they did not believe that cultural differences contribute to their limited participation in an IEP meeting. P1 explained,

> The culture, I don't think so. Only the language, the language bad; some people they don't understand the language, because the teacher and other people they speak English that make it appear hard.

P3 stated, "I feel very comfortable most of the time because they've been very nice to me. They always try to make me feel comfortable and answer any questions, if I have

any. They explain everything to me well." P9 said, "I see no barriers because I think that the educators are doing a great job. . . . When I'm not taking care of my child, the educators are taking care of them and giving them the education that they need." These parents did not perceive cultural differences as a barrier that hinders Hispanic parents' participation in IEP meetings; rather, they understood that the teachers were there to help them further their child's education.

Relating to parents' Interview Question 2, which was about SPs' perceptions of the effectiveness of school invitations, a majority of the parents did not fully address the effectiveness of school invitations. Nevertheless, two parents responded differently. P11 noted, "Sometimes, well, some teachers they send you text messages or they just send you a letter and sometimes you miss it. The information don't get to you before the meeting I think it's like every, each year or half-year." P5 stated, "Letters, letters, yeah; sometimes letters arrive late." These parents indicated that school personnel's contact techniques need improvement.

A majority of the parents indicated that school personnel should increase motivational support to facilitate Hispanic parents' efforts to increase their involvement in their children's IEP meetings. However, P12 made a different suggestion regarding parental involvement as it relates to improving Hispanic parents' participation in IEP meetings, contending that Hispanic parents can play a part in improving their involvement in their children's IEP meetings. P12 noted that Hispanic parents should consider their children's education their main concern. P12 stated,

The parents have to be putting their children as first priority, so whenever you

have a meeting about anything like that has to do with your kids, you should be

encouraged to go, like no matter what. If you have work, if you're busy, like, you

know, you should just leave everything aside. But being a parent is also hard

because, you know, you always worry about what bills to pay, what you have to

pay, being at work, you know. You always have to, you have other things, but

when it comes to your children's education you should put that as your number

one priority.

P12 indicated that, by giving more time to support their children's education, Hispanic

parents would be more likely to become involved in their children's IEP meetings.

Summary of Key Findings in Relation to Research Questions

This study included one central research question based on the conceptual

framework and four subquestions that narrowed the focus of the central question into

specific issues that I sought to learn more about from the participants. The research

question was as follows: How do Hispanic parents' beliefs, self-efficacy, and school

invitations for involvement play a role in their attitudes toward participation in the IEP

meetings of their children?

The first subquestion was as follows: What are Hispanic parents' perceptions of

their involvement in IEP meetings? I designed this research question to determine

whether a national culture and shared behaviors or views of the parents influence their

involvement in IEP meetings. The findings indicated that Hispanic parents culturally and

socially constructed the definition of disability. The parents' perception of disability was

narrower than the school professionals' definition of disability. The wide range of disabilities recognized in the United States is not part of Hispanic parents' worldviews. Thus, Hispanic parents' limited participation in IEP meetings was the consequence of their early cultural socialization, which influenced their behavior and their ways of seeing the special education system.

The second subquestion was as follows: How do Hispanic parents describe their ability to become involved? The reason for designing this research question was to determine parents' ability to participate in their children's IEP meetings. In this study, Hispanic parents reported that their lack of understanding special education in the United States influenced their parental involvement role. Parents also reported that their own limited education interfered with their capacity to participate fully in their children's IEP meetings.

The third subquestion was as follows: What are school special educators' perceptions of Hispanic parents' participation in IEP meetings? The reason for creating this research question was to identify special educators' views about the nature of Hispanic parents' involvement in IEP meetings. The special education teachers reported that Hispanic parents are less involved in their children's IEP meetings. They also reported that cultural differences and language barriers may contribute to Hispanic parents' limited involvement.

The fourth subquestion was as follows: How do school personnel invite Hispanic parents to become involved in IEP meetings, and how effective do Hispanic parents perceive the school invitation? I also created this research question to determine if school

personnel actively solicit parents' input on decisions involving their children. The findings of this study indicated that Hispanic parents felt the school personnel needed to do more to encourage Hispanic parents to become more involved in IEP meetings. Some special educators also reported that they were not sure if any activities targeted SPs becoming more involved.

The findings aligned with the four research subquestions. Hispanic parents demonstrated that their core beliefs, values and views, and self-efficacy, as well as invitations from teachers to be involved, influence parents' participation in IEP meetings.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

In qualitative studies, evidence of trustworthiness is important because it shows that the researcher has followed a strict process for data collection. According to Connelly (2016), researchers should address the trustworthiness of qualitative research as it relates to the concepts of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. The following subsections include a description of each concept and the techniques that I used to enhance the trustworthiness of this study.

Credibility

Yin (2015) referred to credibility in qualitative research as the degree to which the findings match participants' perceptions of the events or settings. The techniques Connelly (2016) recommended to improve the credibility of qualitative research include member checks, triangulation, and adequate engagement in data gathering; peer examination; and reflexivity. In this study, I triangulated data by comparing information gathered from Hispanic parents and special educators with different perspectives

regarding parental involvement in IEP meetings. Another approach to promoting the credibility of a research study is member checking (Creswell, 2015). I used the member-checking technique by sending the interviews transcript to each participant and asking the participants to review the transcript for accuracy. In addition, I used the technique of sufficient engagement in data gathering by spending time, an average of 35 minutes, with each interviewee to ensure I obtained rich data from the interview questions. The data collection period spanned 6 months.

Dependability

According to Creswell (2015), dependability refers to the extent to which the procedure and process used to gather data can be replicated. The strategies Connelly (2015) noted to enhance the dependability of a qualitative research included triangulation, peer review, and audit trail. As noted earlier, I used triangulation by collecting data from parents with different educational backgrounds and whose children who were enrolled in the school district under study at different grade levels, as well as special education teachers with different educational backgrounds who taught different grade levels. Furthermore, I used peer examination by asking two doctoral students in the advanced stages of their doctoral studies in the Richard Riley College of Education at Walden University to review the findings for plausibility. I also maintained an audit trail by keeping a research journal in which I documented vital details of the data collection and analysis process, the notes of the activities or events that occurred during the study, the problems I encountered, and the decisions I made on certain aspects of the study, such as whom to interview or how to gain entrance to the settings.

Transferability

Bogdan and Biklen (2016) defined transferability or external validity as the extent to which a researcher can transfer a research finding to other similar situations. To improve the transferability of qualitative research, Creswell (2015) suggested that researchers use the technique of rich, thick descriptions. To support the transferability of this study, I used the technique of rich, thick descriptions, which provided a clear and accurate picture of the case study. I described the settings, participants, and findings pertaining to this study in detail, and I paid careful attention to the sample size by choosing participants from the population of research interest, which consisted of Hispanic parents who resided in the Southern United States who had ELL students with disabilities in public schools as well as special education teachers who were teaching these students. I selected participants from each school grade level for in-depth interviews. I also used Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's conceptual framework model to construct a list of interview questions to ensure they aligned with the research questions for this qualitative study. Therefore, the study is relatively valid or dependable for use within the school district.

Confirmability

Connelly (2016) defined confirmability as the objectivity of a qualitative study. Connelly also recommended that researchers use the strategy of reflexivity, which involves reflecting critically on oneself as researcher. I used the reflection strategy by maintaining a research journal in which I reflected on my beliefs about parental involvement in schools, which may have developed as a result of my experiences as a

teacher in suburban and urban public schools in the United States. My experience

teaching in public school led me to believe that some parents did not place great value on

the need for their involvement in their children's education. Furthermore, some of the

literature I reviewed for this study indicated that some cultures define the meaning of

schooling differently and as such may not support parental involvement in schools

(Fallah et al., 2018; Kalyanpur, 2018). Thus, using the tactic of reflexivity helped me to

reflect upon the need to minimize my own thoughts regarding parental involvement as I

interacted with participants in the data collection stage.

Summary

In this section, I described the setting, participants' demographics, the data

collection procedures, and data analysis. The data analysis section included information

on arranging and organizing, listing and preliminary grouping, searching, reducing and

validating, categorizing, and developing themes. In addition, I discussed strategies for

enhancing trustworthiness for the qualitative research study using the concepts of

reliability and validity. I presented the core findings in relation to the research questions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the SPs' involvement in their children's IEP meetings, as well as special educators' perceptions of parents' involvement. I conducted this study because research is minimal on how Hispanic parents of ELL students with disabilities perceive their involvement in their children's IEP meetings. Data analysis led to five themes that outlined Hispanic parents' participation in IEP meetings and special education teachers' perceptions of parents' involvement. In this chapter, I will situate the findings in literature, provide possible explanations for the findings, reflect on the implications of the findings, and provide recommendations for professional practice.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this study were supported by five key concepts discussed in the literature review. Cultural influence was one of the barriers that emerged as affecting the involvement of Hispanic parents of ELLs with disabilities in IEP meetings. Research has shown that Hispanic parents' lack of involvement might be due to cultural differences in how they are involved and encourage school academic achievements (Alexander, Cox, Behnke, & Larzelere, 2017; Cobb, 2014). For instance, many Latino parents believe that their role is to teach their children to become moral and responsible individuals, and school professionals are in charge of academic development (Berkule-Johnson et al., 2016). Poza et al. (2014) examined how immigrant Latino parents living in suburban areas of California approached their children's education and determined that the parents

often found alternative ways to become involved in their children's education. Poza et al. also concluded that educators do not give culturally and linguistically diverse parents credit for their involvement in their children's education. The findings of the current study, Williams-Diehm et al.'s (2014) study, and Orozco's (2014) study indicated that educators perceive Hispanic parents to be less involved in IEP meetings based on their expectations of involvement.

Interview data revealed that Hispanic parents in this study expressed similar views as those presented in the literature regarding alternative ways to be involved. For example, many of the parents reported being involved in their children's education by supporting them in after-school events and activities such as soccer practice, selling tickets to school events, making sure their children wake up in time to get ready for school, and securing support services to help their children to learn, which was not apparent to school personnel. Some also expressed a willingness to participate more in IEP meetings if they received more support to help them understand the aim of the meeting. School professionals in the study assumed that they needed to encourage Hispanic parents' involvement but did not realize that their attempts to involve the parents might conflict with Hispanic parents' situations or beliefs. For instance, Hispanic parents perceived and interpreted the limited participation of parents in IEP meetings as rational based on their own set of values and beliefs.

In the literature, immigrant parents' experiences were also characterized by parents reporting a lack of understanding of the policies of the special educational system and limited understanding of IEP meetings (Aceves, 2014; Baker & Scott, 2016; Lo,

2012). The Hispanic parents interviewed reported similar experiences. This finding indicated that some Hispanic parents may struggle to understand the meaning of IEP meetings. Research on advocacy training for Latino parents' involvement in IEP meetings showed an increase in involvement, which indicated that Latino parents can increase their involvement in meetings if the special educators incorporate effective strategies to educate and empower them (Burke, Rios, Lopez, Garcia, & Mangaña, 2018).

Another of the key findings was stigmatization, which previous research also supported. For example, Lalvani (2015) explored the perceptions of 32 culturally and linguistically diverse parents of students with disabilities with various socioeconomic backgrounds and 20 teachers (10 regular education teachers and 10 special education teachers) in a New Jersey public elementary school and found that parents had strong reactions to labeling children under disability categories because they felt such labeling was restrictive and stigmatizing. However, teachers perceived disability categories as guides to educational planning and vital in understanding individual children's needs. Lalvani concluded that parents' views toward labels hinge on their cultural values that involve respect for all human dignities or humankind. Rossetti, Story-Sauer, Bui, and Ou (2017) also noted that culturally based beliefs affect how immigrant families relate to disability labels. Therefore, school professionals might motivate involvement in meetings by making efforts to understand the positions that culturally and linguistically diverse parents hold regarding disability categories (Lalvani, 2015).

In addition to the obstacle that stigma presents, immigration status was another finding in this study that the literature also supported. Many Latino parents who are not

documented to be in the United States see the schools as representatives of the lawmakers and thus as a place to avoid (Petrone, 2016; Suarez-Orozco, 2014). The undocumented status of many Hispanic parents is an impediment to attempts to promote their involvement in schools. For example, Alexander et al. (2017) found that members of one immigrant family reported that they avoided traveling due to their apprehension of being stopped by police or immigration authorities. Parents who do not have documents to live in the country may feel helpless and feel that they are not accepted (Alexander et al., 2017). They may be frightened and not want to participate in the meetings or be exposed. Given this view, Hispanic parents may be unlikely to engage in school dialogue or become involved in IEP meetings.

During the interviews, both teachers and parents also repeatedly raised the issue of a language barrier. Parental involvement in the United States is seen as English-only, and parents who have a limited proficiency in English have little hope of communicating with school personnel (Petrone, 2016). English-language difficulty is one of the main elements that make parental involvement challenging (Sheppard, 2017). Research on school interpreters has also indicated that an interpreter may communicate the dialogue at meetings inaccurately (Burke, 2017). Language translators can cause interpretation errors of omission, addition, condensation, and substitution (More, Hart, & Cheatham, 2015). Such errors are likely to go unnoticed by team members in an IEP meeting (More et al., 2015). Educational interpreters also have control over the informational material parents have to share by telling parents which of their input they interpret or ignore, which does not empower parents and restricts parents' ability to become part of the entire dialogue at

a meeting (Fitzmaurice, 2017). Parental trust in school interpreters can break when parents realize that they are being intimidated from voicing their opinions about their children's education. The weakened level of trust by parents in the translating system could adversely affect their collaboration with school professionals.

Another finding was work schedule difficulties, which corroborated with and supported the findings in other studies. Latino parents often struggle to cope with the demands placed on them outside of school, such as working and caring for their children or working multiple jobs (Hill & Torres, 2010; Vera et al., 2017). This finding indicates that parental stress and obligations may be relevant for recent immigrant families who are trying to adapt in a unique cultural environment. School personnel can address this by using their structure and system to support Hispanic parents' involvement in IEP meetings. For example, holding meetings in the evenings or before and after school hours and providing child care may help parents improve their participation. Additionally, school personnel can review their scheduling procedure to identify requirements that might affect parental participation. It is also important that activities school leaders adopt to facilitate Hispanic parental involvement in IEP meetings are implemented throughout all schools in a district and that they are school-wide interventions. However, establishing a program for students whose parents speak languages other than English does not necessarily mean that all Hispanic parents, especially Hispanic parents of ELLs with disabilities, will attend the events.

Two of the parents in this study reported that disrespect by school personnel made participating in IEP meetings challenging. Thus, school personnel should be careful when

communicating with their students' parents because different people can interpret certain behaviors in different ways. Parental noninvolvement might occur due to parents' feeling uncomfortable at schools (Vera et al., 2017). When parents feel that they are not welcome at school, their children are more likely not to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance (Alexander et al., 2017). However, a sense of belonging at school is an important factor in Latino students' academic achievement (Berkule-Johnson et al., 2016). An effort to reach out to Hispanic parents to encourage their participant in IEP meetings may foster a welcoming environment.

Findings Related to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of parental involvement, which indicates why and how parents become involved and the multiple levels of parental involvement. The model consists of five levels, and the first level, which attends to parents' decision-making process (Anderson & Minke, 2007), was the guiding conceptual construct for this study. The main findings of this study, which related to parental perceptions of their roles, the factors they believe affect their participation in their children's IEP meetings, and school personnel's perceptions of parents' involvement, aligned with the three main factors for parental involvement that Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler described: (a) parents' beliefs and insights, (b) parents' self-efficacy, and (c) invitation.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) defined the first factor for involvement as parents' beliefs and insights about what is vital, necessary, and permissible for them to do on behalf of their children, which entails a national culture and shared behaviors or views

of the parents informing the way they act. In this study, Hispanic parents' definitions of disability were culturally and socially constructed; thus, their views of disability were affected by their cultural and historical backgrounds, which subsequently affected their participation in IEP meetings.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) defined the second factor as parents' self-efficacy regarding the extent to which they believed they had the ability to help their children be successful in schools, which involves parents' ability to act in a manner that yields positive outcomes for their children's education. In this study, Hispanic parents reported that they had limited knowledge of the U.S. special education system and difficulties balancing work with involvement in their children's education. The parents also felt they did not have control over these issues. Research has shown that underprivileged Hispanic parents felt that they did not have the authority to influence school rules and regulations (Valdes, 1996). Research on efficacy also indicates a need for substantial support on influence as a motivator of parents' ability and sense of empowerment in participating in their children's education (Burke, 2017). Hispanic parents' limited knowledge of their rights in their children's education and the demands of daily life are influential factors in their choice to be involved.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) defined the third factor as parents' belief that school personnel invited them to be involved, which indicates that parents will become more involved if school staff actively solicit parents' input on decisions involving their children. In this study, the Hispanic parents reported that they felt that school personnel needed to do more to encourage Hispanic parents to participate in IEP

meetings. Similarly, many special educators in this study expressed that they need to intensify efforts to provide more support to Hispanic parents so they can participate more effectively in school activities.

In sum, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) parental involvement model supported the findings of this study, which related to Hispanic parents. The findings of this study align and are consistent with the three factors of parental involvement that Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler described, which were parents' beliefs and values, parents' self-efficacy, and invitations to be involved. Hispanic parents demonstrated that their core beliefs, values and views, and self-efficacy, as well as teachers' invitation to be involved, influence parents' participation in IEP meetings.

Limitations of the Study

This study included some insights for understanding the reasons that Hispanic parents of ELL students with disabilities are less involved in IEP meetings for their children; however, the study did include some limitations. First, the sample size was small, so the findings should be considered groundwork for future research. The study took place in the Southern United States; therefore, due to the small sample size and limited location, the findings may not be transferable. The sample also reflected Hispanic parents of ELLs with disabilities who were required by IDEA 2004 regulations to participate in IEP meetings, so this sample may not be representative of all Hispanic families.

Another limitation was that Interview Question 2 generated a relatively small number of responses that related to the effectiveness of school invitations for

involvement. Of the 12 parent participants who responded to Interview Question 2, only two parents' interview responses addressed the effectiveness of school invitations for involvement. Thus, future research on the effectiveness of school personnel's invitation is recommended. Future research in this area is recommended to address this population's perceptions about the effectiveness of school invitation to involvement.

Parents in this study stressed the importance of training to facilitate Hispanic parents' understanding of the IEP process in order to improve their involvement. Thus, future research on the effect of training through workshops is recommended. Furthermore, cultural understanding of practices, views, and social factors that guide Hispanic parents' way of dealing with the educational system is important. Research on reciprocal practices with school personnel through training is recommended.

Nevertheless, this study led to vital insights into the potential reasons that Hispanic parents of ELL students with disabilities are less involved in IEP meetings, including cultural differences and the English-language barrier. By identifying these obstacles, school professionals can develop effective strategies to enable Hispanic parents to participate further in the IEP meetings for their children with disabilities. Additionally, by encouraging Hispanic parents and building strong parent–teacher partnerships, ELLs with disabilities may receive appropriate educational services and improve their academic progress.

Recommendations

Different people have unique views of disabilities due to cultural distinction. Educational professionals should be aware of cultural values when working with

individuals from Hispanic backgrounds. Alkahtani (2016) asserted that, in an attempt to

understand the behavior and development of a society, it is necessary to learn the culture

of that society. Alkahtani's approach provides ways that dignify and respect individuals'

values and choices while providing them with support vital to fortifying their functioning.

The approach requires educators to have positive perspectives of Hispanic parents by

developing cultural sensitivity with a focus on parents' strengths and choices. In essence,

school professionals need to develop multicultural competency and awareness, as noted

by Wilt and Morningstar (2018), which include a set of behaviors, actions, attitudes, and

skills that enable them to function effectively within cultural and diverse environments.

Culture was crucial in analyzing the parents' attitudes or actions toward

participation in IEP meetings, as cultural background influences the way immigrant

parents respond to special education programs (Alkahtani, 2016). In determining parents'

adaptation to U.S. culture, it is essential to be mindful of culturally based values and

behaviors that influence their response to educational demand (Kalyanpur & Harry, 2012;

Wilt & Morningstar, 2018). Likewise, teachers and administrators should be familiar with

Hispanic parents' mode of involvement in education so they can become sensitive to the

level of participation they can expect.

Many of the Hispanic parents interviewed reported that they had limited resources

for individuals with disabilities in their home countries and that they were not

accustomed to receiving the social support available in the United States with regard to

disabilities. The limited social support might affect how they seek assistance and

advocate for their children in the United States. Educators need to ensure Hispanic

parents are aware that educational resources are available for students with disabilities to provide services to them effectively in a culturally and socially harmonious manner. As Rodriguez et al. (2014) noted, there should be cultural reciprocity, in which school professionals pay careful attention to parents and learn from them in order to provide services that are compatible with their needs. Educators should explain to Hispanic parents the aims, values, and benefits entrenched in special education policy and practices, and school district leaders might consider providing more advocates to attend IEP meetings with Hispanic parents so the parents can fully advocate for their children's educational rights.

In this study, parents and teachers contended with English proficiency as a constraint of Hispanic parents' involvement in IEP meetings. This issue was equally as important in the literature reviewed. U.S. educators need to recognize that the most prominent challenge Mexican parents face when intending to become involved in their children's education is English proficiency (Petrone, 2016). Latino students and their families continue to be the largest immigrant ethnic minority group in the United States, comprising 14% of student population in 2014 (Pew Research Center, 2014). To serve this increasingly large population effectively, school professionals have had to cope with both cultural and English-language differences (Yu & Shandu, 2017). Modifying and adding effective school practices, such as hiring more bilingual staff and offering basic English-language training classes to non-English-speaking Hispanic parents, could help reduce the difficulties concerning the English language. Providing parents with their children's report card in Spanish may not be enough to enhance parents' communication

with school professionals. Special educators may want to consider translating IEP

meeting minutes or providing meeting summaries in Spanish to help Hispanic parents to

improve their communication with school personnel and to create a school climate in

which parents feel welcomed. Parents who feel that educators are responding to their

primary needs are most likely to be involved in school activities.

Furthermore, the recommendation for additional research is based on one of the

key findings. The recommendation relates to the finding regarding parental perceptions of

their role in their children's IEP meetings. The recommendation is to conduct additional

qualitative case study research. As Yin (2015) noted, using the case study design would

enable researchers to use interview or observation methods to obtain perceptions of

events or programs of particular group of participants. Therefore, using a qualitative case

study design would enable qualitative researchers to gather in-depth information over a

specific period of time for a particular ethnic group of immigrant parents.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Many implications for positive social change emerged from the findings of this

study. The first implication for social change involves Hispanic parents and special

education teachers. Understanding the findings of this study might help Hispanic parents

and special education teachers to collaborate more effectively to revolve issues that

restrict Hispanic parents' involvement in IEP meetings. After reading the findings,

Hispanic parents might understand the U.S. definition of disability, and they might

understand that special education teachers have limited powers over IDEA policies and

regulations, which require all parents to participate in the IEP meetings of their children,

that they may develop realistic approaches to work with teachers to enhance their involvement in meetings. Teachers may realize that Hispanic parents who ask for more support to improve their participation are grateful for and admire the teachers who work with their children and may want to be more involved in the meetings. This understanding might help school personnel to plan and design programs that maximize Hispanic parents' efforts to participate in IEP meetings.

The next implication for social change relates to families. Hispanic families who read the findings from this study might more clearly understand that they are no longer under the special education policies and practices in their native countries. Thus, they might want to learn how the public special education system operates in the United States. They also might want to work together with special education teachers and administrators as a team to make decisions for their children's education.

The third implication for social change could affect K–12 public schools in the United States. The schools might benefit from the findings of this study because the findings might help educational professionals understand the challenges Hispanic parents face in participating in their children's IEP meetings. Additionally, this study may contribute to positive social change by helping special education teachers in public school districts develop and implement effective strategies that encourage Hispanic parents to become more involved in IEP meetings. Special educators in K–12 schools may adopt some of the parental involvement strategies addressed in this study, such as friendly partnerships that encourage immigrant parents to feel welcomes at schools and to interact more frequently with school staff.

The fourth implication affects special education policy makers. Hispanic parents in this study reported they lacked knowledge in the policies and regulations of the U.S. special education system. Thus, special education policy makers may want to consider translating IDEA regulations into Spanish for Hispanic parents.

Another implication that emerged from this study was implications for empirical studies. Knowledge relating to how Hispanic parents support the education of their children seems to be lacking; thus, researchers need to conduct a larger number of empirical studies to learn how Hispanic parents and other immigrant parents manage problems they encounter involving their children's education. This study may serve as a means to stimulate the interest of other researchers in exploring the experiences of immigrant parents with other ethnicities concerning the problems they encounter with regard to participating in their children's IEP meetings. Equipped with knowledge from such studies, school special education administrators and teachers might design school parental involvement plans that inspire Hispanic parents, and Hispanic parents might feel less intimidated about participating in their children's IEP meetings. Eventually, students' achievement might improve as their parents' involvement improves.

Conclusion

The findings of this study shed light on the challenges Hispanic parents face that limit their involvement and impede their abilities to advocate for their children's educational rights. Hispanic parents' perceptions of disabilities were narrower than the educators' definition of disability. The perception of disability in the United States is

wider than Hispanic parents' views of disabilities, which resulted in the parents being less involved in IEP meetings.

Educators who are unaware of the various ways that Hispanic parents are involved in their children's education often seek to increase the parents' school participation. However, the Hispanic parents' limited involvement in IEP meetings was a result of their culturally and socially determined behavior that influences their ways of perceiving the educational environment. Hispanic parents need time and exposure to U.S. practices and explicit practicing to facilitate cultural and social influences that affect their involvement in IEP meetings. The findings of this study demonstrated that even though there are many challenges, Hispanic parents attach great importance to their children's education. This study adds to the findings in other research about the barriers that prevent Hispanic parents' involvement in their children's IEP meetings (Sheppard, 2017; Petrone, 2016; Orosco & O'Connor, 2014). School professionals' support is imperative in order to help Hispanic parents of ELL students with disabilities learn more about the educational system in the United States so that they may become fully involved partners in the IEP meetings for their children.

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Appendix A: Protocol for Interview Process

Project: Hispanic Parents Involvement in IEP Meetings
Time of Interview:
Place:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:
Interview Process:
      1. Introduction
      2. An explanation of the type of interview and the researcher's plan for using the findings
      3. Indication of how long the interview will last
      4. Obtain signed consent from participants
      6. Ask participants if they have any questions before the inception of the interview
      7. Begin interview process

Open-ended Interview Questions for Parents:
      How can you describe your ethnicity?
      What is your child grade level?
          1. Tell me about the IEP meetings that you currently attended concerning your child's placement in special education programs.
          2. How did the school notify you of the meeting?
          3. What does disability mean to you?
          4. How do Hispanic people view disability?
          5. How do you perceive culture as a barrier between the educators and yourself during theses IEP meetings?
          6. What are some ways that you participate in your child's education in general?
          7. Do you have anything else you would like to suggest /recommend about the IEP meeting and process to improve Hispanic parent involvement?

Spanish Version
Preguntas de la Entrevista

   Preguntas abiertas a los padres para la entrevista
Como describe usted su etnicidad?
En que año escolar esta su hijo?

1. Hábleme de las juntas de IEP que usted esta atendiendo sobre la colocación de su hijo en programas de educación especial.
2. Como le informo la escuela sobre la junta?
3. Para usted, que significa la discapacidad?
4. Como miran los Hispanos la discapacidad?
5. Como percibe usted la barrera cultural entre educadores y usted durante estas juntas de IEP?
6. Cuales son algunas maneras en las que usted ayuda a la educación de su hijo en general?
7. Tiene algo mas que decir o agregar/recomendar sobre las juntas de IEP y el proceso de mejorar la involucración de los padres Hispanos?

Open-ended Interview Questions for Special Education Teachers

   What grade level do you teach?

1. How would you describe the participation of Hispanic parents of ELL students with disabilities in the IEP meetings?
2. What efforts/ activities do your schools provide to Hispanic parents that facilitate their involvement in the IEP meetings?
3. What elements, from Hispanic parents' perceptions, encourage or discourage their involvement?
4. Do you perceive culture as a barrier between the educators and Hispanic parents in participating in the IEP meetings? Why?
5. Do you have any suggestions for IEP meeting to improve Hispanic parents' involvement?

Appendix B: Reflexive Journal

Topic	Description
Reflection on getting access.	Once I received approval from IRB to conduct research, I contacted research director of the district under this study seeking for obtaining cooperation letter. The director told me to complete an application for research study. The application package includes research proposal, IRB approval letter to conduct research, research supporters' letter, and an essay that explains how the topic of the study meets/aligns with the school district's targeted strategic plan of improvement. Getting the district's approval was time consuming. The application and consideration processes are rigorous. There is a deadline to submit an application. I completed and submitted the application in February 2018. I waited and waited, a month passed, I haven't heard/received anything from the research department. I started feeling being little worried and wondering if it is my topic. Finally the application was approved in late April 2018 when schools were getting ready to close for summer vacation. Immediately, I received the approval, I reviewed the school district's research ethic compliances for conducting research, signed and dated an agreement that indicated that I have reviewed the policy, and returned it to the district.
Reflecting on ethics while conducting the study: What sorts of things could put my participants at risk, and how can I minimize them?	Some participants' risks include Privacy Confidentiality Minimizing the risks Participants' privacy: Use anonymity or codes instead of the participants' names. No participants' names or other identifiers will be used in the study. Confidentiality: To ensure that all participants were properly informed, I have to clearly articulate the purpose and process of the study for the participants. I also have to go over the consent forms with the participants, address any questions and concerns they will have because an informed consent form assured confidentiality and anonymity. Participants will be treated equally.
Professional reflections How does my role shape the data collection?	My role as a special educator: I am not a teacher at the sites where I am conducting study; potential participants will not be friends or colleagues. I do not have power position thus; I believed that my position in the school buildings and relationship with the participants will not influence the data I

gathered.

Biases Identity/Role	Considering my identity, one of the potential biases is my immigrant status. I grew up not in the same culture as the participants of this study. I am African descent, but I am immigrant parent like some of the participants. Another bias is that immigrant parents do not care much about involving in school-based events or activities. This bias may have been the consequence of observation I made concerning school-based parental events at the school where I work as a special education teacher in public school system. At this school, immigrant parent involvement in activities such as, parent-teacher meetings, parent-child donut mornings, parents' report card was often discouraging.
	Plans to keep my bias in check: (a) reflecting and questioning my thoughts and ideas for possible bias and personal distortions while collecting and analyzing data (b) using specific approaches such as, member checks and triangulation of perspectives or sources.
Tracking recruitment/participant efforts.	Gaining access to the site was not as easy as I thought. I approached several principals that have large ELL students in their schools to ask them to be my study partners. I explained the purpose of the study, time commitment and what participants need to do. Some principals were interested in the topic of the study, but they declined because of the timing of the study. They said that they were busy and that they do not have enough time to deal with the research study. One principal said "Unfortunately at this very busy time I do not have the opportunity to sit down with my special education staff to see if this is something they can accommodate. Since time is of the essence, I regret that we will not be able to assist you." Another principal said "At this time we have two research studies starting up with our students and we will not be able to accommodate another research investigation at this time. Our high ESOL population has made us a desirable location for such work. Should you continue to do research in this area, you are welcome to reach out in future years." These responses did not distract me; I continued searching or looking until I got principals who granted my request or agreed to be my research partners. Concerning the invitation letters, special education leaders of each partner school delivered them to parents and special teachers.

Reflection on data collection	Instrument and data gathering: Personal face- to- face interviews with participants were the main instrument used to gain valuable information. The data collection occurred when schools were about to close out for the summer vacation breaks. Initially, special education teachers were not responding. They were busy with their reviewing and testing students, but some of them responded immediately after they have completed their finals. Teachers' responses were great. Six special education teachers were interviewed during this period. I was able to get a good number of the teachers and data. The participants offer deeper insight. I definitely see some themes emerging through the common language used by the participants such as, "language barriers". Pertaining to Hispanic parents, the situation was different. Of 60 invitations letters sent out or delivered, only two parents have responded. This made me nervous because I was hoping to get more responses or perspectives. Nonetheless, the two parents interviewed were comfortable to speak---and I was able to get good data from them. One of the parents said that she participated to help her child; she said "I wish my friends will come, yeah language hard or they busy." During the summer vacation the data collections activities halted. I contact the chair of my research committee for updates about my data collections—focus on strategies to get more parent participants. As school Reopened in August 2018, I resumed data collection hoping to get more Hispanic parents. At this time, special education teachers interviewed were very supportive. They resent invitation letters to Hispanic parents through students. I attended PTA meetings to observe and to pass invitation letters to Hispanic parents, but I could not identify any Hispanic parent. When I asked about Hispanic parents, I was told by the parent liaison that immigrant Hispanic parents "hardly" attend PTA meetings. Fortunately, the strategy of resending the invitation letters yielded responses from some Hispanic parents and I was able to get enough participants to complete the interview.
Reflection on data analysis	Data analysis started with a transcription of each participant recorded interviews. I sorted and reviewed all the transcripts to preview the emergent codes. Next, I imported the documents into MAXQDA software for coding. After I completed the first round, I coded again; I examined the codes by groups, and compared the special education teachers' codes to parents'

codes. This comparison of codes enable me to see the similarities and the differences between the two groups and to better determine if the codes are relevant. I used an open coding strategy to code the data to ensure I only searched or looked for themes that emerged from the data. Upon the completion of this process, the codes were grouped into themes and a table with categories/ themes and summaries was created. This table allowed me to visualize the data.

Appendix C: Parent Participants' Responses for Interview Questions 1, 3, and 4

Parent	Interview question and response
1	IQ1: Parent reported being involved in meetings; she noted "this is good for me and my son too, because I'm in this meeting the teacher explaining about all things that is learning."
2	IQ1: Parent reported being involved in meetings most of the time: "I attend most the time."
3	IQ1: Parent reported participating in IEP meetings; she explained, "When they need me to come, I come to the meetings, very helpful for him because it helps him to develop different areas that he was having difficulties, so now he's doing a lot better."
4	IQ1: Parent reported that she attends IEP meetings to obtain needed information; she noted, "Just the information she needs to do better in school; what are the special aids that she's getting."
5	IQ1: Parent stated that she was interested in participating in his child education, but too busy to attend meetings; "I'm so busy . . . work, but sometimes they call me and say, 'Hey, your son, on the box he's standing on. He's not supposed to stand on.' I talk to him at home."
6	IQ1: Parent reported participating in IEP meetings; she reported, "I attend meetings or if they call me saying I need to go talk to a counselor."
7	IQ1: Parent reported not being able to participate in IEP meetings due to a tight work schedule: "I haven't attended any because of my work schedule . . . so I haven't been able to go."
8	IQ1: Parent responded that she has not been able to attend IEP meetings due to many responsibilities at home and work. She noted she "hasn't been able to attend much because I have too much work."
9	IQ1: Parent stated that she participates in her child's IEP meetings to learn about her child's progress; "I got good news that she was doing good in school and that she was progressing really well."
10	IQ1: Parent indicated that he does not participate in his child's IEP meetings all the time due to a tedious work schedule; the parent reported, "sometimes, yeah, my work schedule . . . hard."
11	IQ1: Parent responded that sometimes she missed meetings due to late notification of the meeting: "The information doesn't get to you before the meeting."
12	IQ1: Parent reported attending IEP meeting and asking questions about her child's performances at the meetings: "I always attend the meetings and . . . always able to answer the questions and ask questions."
1	IQ3: Parent description of disability indicated minimal understanding of the meaning of disability; she noted, "For me disability . . . is the person who don't accept another person." IQ4: Parent reported that in her native country, people do not focus on disabilities because almost everyone was ignorant of the cause. She stated, "We don't see disabilities, . . . for Hispanic, they don't understand, they don't understand what it is. It's hard."
2	IQ3: Parent described individuals with disabilities as those individuals with only physical or severe intellectual disabilities. The parent noted, "I knows what it means, like job of taking care of a lady." IQ4: Parent believed that having a disability means people who need assistance more than others. She noted, "The people that have disabilities, they just need help more than others."
3	IQ3: Parent perceived people with disabilities as having serious mental problems like severe intellectual disabilities or dementia. She stated, "Now I see it like different. Different because before I had this problem with my son, I thought that disability was something like, you know, maybe people think that you are retarded or you have some kind of dementia." IQ4: Parent believed that people in her native country did not understand the real meaning of disability. She noted, "Well, that's like I say, sometimes we don't even understand the word and we just look at it like, you know, some person like, is missing something, like you know, is not a normal person; so now I see it different."
4	IQ3: Parent believed that people with disabilities were those who cannot do tasks the same way other people do it; she said, "I see someone just having a disability . . . not able to do things that other people do, they have to do it a different way to be able to understand."

(table continues)

Parent	Interview question and response
4	IQ4. Parent shared that there were not many schools that offer special education services in his country. She explained, "I see it as when you see a person and they have hearing aids, . . . there's not usually that many schools that offer that like how they do here."
5	IQ3: Parent interpreted disability in term of physical disability; the parent noted, "I understand . . . disability in the form of maybe physical, people can't do something."
	IQ4: Parent reported that in his country everybody is the same; the parent stated, "In my country, we don't discriminate anybody, no matter disability or not."
6	IQ3: Parent perceived individuals with disabilities as being unable to do tasks due to physical or mental difficulties. She noted, "A person that's not able to work anymore, . . . somebody who is not capable of learning like other kids or need help to do the same thing other kids do at school."
	IQ4: Parent noted that in her country some people hardly admit they have a child with a disability. "Like in Hispanic countries, I think it depends on the parents. I mean, if they're aware of disability, some of them help and some of them don't because they don't like to admit that their child is disabled."
7	IQ3: Parent interpreted disability basically in terms of physical disabilities; "you know, sometimes kids that don't have their leg, an arm, or you know, not mentally."
	IQ4: Parent shared that, in her country, parents take care of their children with disabilities. When the children become adults, they still remain in their parents' house. She stated, "When they're children, obviously the parents take care of them. When they're older, if they're not mentally capable, they're always going to be in their mother or their father's house."
8	IQ3: Parent responded that disability referred to person with severe intellectual disability, "like someone mentally retarded."
	IQ4: Parent expressed not being aware of any school for individual with disabilities; "when I was in my country, I didn't ever see a disability school."
9	IQ3: Parent perceived someone with disability as a person that was not normal; "someone that has a disability is someone that doesn't function as we do normally."
	IQ4: Parent explained that in her country they respect individuals with disabilities because they strive to "do things people without disabilities take for granted."
10	IQ3: Parent perceived individuals with disabilities as those who need more assistance than others. "Like someone needs more help, you know, like helping them out with learning or things."
	IQ4: Parent expressed that in his country individuals with disabilities receive services at home; "people come to the house sometimes to help them but no schools for the disability people."
11	IQ3: Parent perceived individuals with disabilities "like those who need assistance to complete their tasks."
	IQ4: Parent indicated that there was no special education in her native country. "They don't even have schools for it, so they just like, some people will knock on your door and tell you about disability and that's like basically."
12	IQ3: Parent responded that having disability means someone is weak. This parent noted, "I think a disability would be not having the courage or, like, strength to turn in work, or go to school, or, like, do your best in classes."
	IQ4: Parent responded that in her native country, there were some special schools, but only for children with severe disabilities. She noted, "They do have certain schools that are just for the disability kids by themselves, but if it's not like a severe problem, they can be with everybody else."

Note. Quotes from Parents 2, 4, and 8 were translated from Spanish.

Appendix D: Parent Participants' Responses for Interview Question 5

Parent	Responses
1	Parent responded, "The culture, uh, I don't think so, only the language, the language bad, some people they don't understand. I have more friends, they don't understand English. Always, the teachers say your son, he did this, your son did that, they just accept all that about a teacher."
2	Parent's response indicated she had some difficulties understanding everything at the meeting; she said, "I don't understand it. Sometimes I can't describe some words, someone translates for me."
3	Parent responded, "I don't feel, you know, like any different; I feel very comfortable most of the time. They explain everything to me well, . . . the goals they have for my son."
4	This parent's response indicated that she has difficulty with language at the meeting. She stated, "I would just talk to other people to be able to understand what they're saying and like know how my child is doing, and being able to ask questions."
5	Parent responded, "The culture is different, or is not matched with my culture, but you have to do whatever you have to do without culture to treat people equally."
6	Parent responded, "The meetings will go really well if the professionals involved in the special education acts the correct way and they are not disrespecting or criticizing Hispanic parents. They explain to the parents what's going on, what needs to be done."
7	This parent said, "Not really. Yeah, sometimes they treat you the way you treat them."
8	Parent responded, ". . . maybe, sometimes culture, but I mostly needs help from translators."
9	Parent stated, "I see no barriers because I thinks that the educators are doing a great job. As in, when I'm not taking care of my child, the educators are taking care of them and giving them the education that they need."
10	Parent responded, "Sometimes it does, you know sometimes speaking back to them, you not knowing they would understand you or would you get the right information."
11	Parent responded, "The culture is different; I will basically stay calm in the meeting, just like, pay attention to what they're saying about my child. And just like listen to them and then just like follow the rules. Just don't get mad or nothing."
12	Parent responded, "The difference in my culture is they don't really have meetings like this, like the IEP over there in. . . ."

Note. Quotes from Parents 2, 4, and 8 were translated from Spanish.

Appendix E: Parent Participants' Responses for Interview Question 6

Parent	Responses
1	Parent responded that she did not understand as much as she used to, but she was striving as much as she could to participate; she stated, "I try long to visit in the school, meeting them face to face is better, . . . and I like to volunteer in the school."
2	Parent noted English-language difficulty hindered her efforts to fully help her child; she noted, "I really tries to help . . . child in any way I can, but . . . can't always help because I'm not very good at English."
3	Parent shared that initially she was sad because she did not understand her child condition, but as soon as she understood his disability, she started supporting him. She noted, "He wasn't learning like the other kids. So, it made me sad and angry . . . maybe I didn't know his disability. Like, now I know . . . I always try to help him . . . him read at home… and having dinner with the family."
4	Parent response indicated she was not sure how to assist her child. She noted, "I'm able to understand and make sure that I'm getting the right help by asking teachers to give me the right way to learn things."
5	Parent explained that the way he supported his child was by giving him advice to behave well at school; "I told him, you need to do this, you need to be good, you need to not notice disability. . . . Good relationships . . . that's the first education I told him."
6	This parent responded, "I support the child, I make sure that he, that he is doing their homework, what's going on in school, encourage him to be part of some activities in school."
7	This parent shared that she could not help her child much, but tried to help with simple things at home. She stated, "I always look for something that's going to help him improve a little. I teach him a little bit more about left, right, colors, numbers, you know, those simple things."
8	Parent responded that she was involved by helping her child with homework; "the way I does is helping in homework, and any other way at home."
9	Parent expressed that English language was a problem for her to participate in school meetings, but she always tried to motivate her child to learn. She noted, "Helping her, with the little English . . . knows, motivates child, checks her papers, the child's papers, the ones that the school sends her."
10	Parent responded, "I come up to the school for meetings, or asking how he's doing during school days. At home, I help when he needs help with . . . or something."
11	Parent expressed that sometimes he uses tutoring services to help his child at home. "I help him. His math homework, . . . or he needed like some tutorials."
12	Parent believed that she participated in her child's education by providing emotional support; she noted, "Always encourages them to do their homework, do their best, get enough sleep, . . . and get ready, not to be late."

Note. Quotes from Parents 2, 4, and 8 were translated from Spanish.

Appendix F: Teacher Participants' Responses for Interview Questions 3, 4, and 5

Teacher	Responses
1	IQ3: Teacher believed that limited English-language proficiency and job schedule were concerns. Teacher noted, "The parents don't speak any English at all or very, very limited . . . so that's kind of where the language barrier is."
2	IQ3: Teacher noted, "A lot of the parents don't use e-mails, they don't have e-mail addresses, and they don't use technology, so it is even difficult to get in touch with the parents."
3	IQ3: Teacher stated, "Language barrier is discouraging and, getting off of their place of work is discouraging, because they can sometimes not get off work."
4	IQ3: Teacher explained, "What hold them back sometimes is their students, children, they don't want their parents to come. They don't want to be identified like that. It's still in that culture. It's a stigma. So they try to avoid being identified or being seen with a special ed teacher or being in an IEP meeting."
5	IQ3: Teacher responded, "I think that's the most important thing that encourages or discourages parents if they don't understand what's the language of the meeting."
6	IQ3: Teacher stated, "I really can't get inside of their head. But if I were to guess, I would say it's the language and cultural."

(*table continues*)

Teacher	Responses
1	IQ4: Teacher believed that it was English-language difficulty; "I perceive . . . language differences as a barrier." IQ5: Teacher suggested improvement in motivation. "Having better communication with parents maybe have like an event after school, like doing something fun, where there could be people who are bilingual to help facilitate communication between families and teachers."
2	IQ4: Teacher explained, "I think culture plays a role. There is a barrier there, because . . . unless you are a Hispanic educator yourself and part of the culture, it is difficult to explain to the parent how important it is that they try to stay involved in their child's education, especially children with disabilities." IQ5: Teacher stated, "I think that if the team reaches out more to parents, and does that cultural mediation, then their involvement would be greater."
3	IQ4: Teacher responded, "I don't perceive culture as a barrier. I think that for the most part, . . . they've been living in America, so they are aware that women have a more active." IQ5: Teacher noted, "Having an availability of approved translator on short notice would help."
4	IQ4: Teacher reported, "I do, I have to be honest that I do. But I think that to our shame is that we do not know the culture enough. . . . They would not be embarrassed . . . to participate." IQ5: Teacher noted that explaining to Hispanic parents their rights and the benefit of special education might encourage them to become involved, "but to have something that is like explaining to them like, 'Hey, this is for the benefit of your child, and your participation is important.'"
5	IQ4: Teacher noted, "Mainly it's that language barrier. That language barrier is probably the hardest obstacle to overcome." IQ5: Teacher suggested, "I don't know if every school has a liaison like how we have. If the county could do something where, you know, they would go out to communities where it's a language barrier and kind of explain, you know, like the IEP process, I think that would make it."
6	IQ4: Teacher indicated cultural barriers and immigration status are issues: "Yes. I definitely would think there's a cultural barrier, especially in this political climate, because we don't know if our students are legal or not. And I'm sure many parents really don't want to raise too many questions, because they may not want to draw attention to themselves." IQ5: Teacher responded, "I perceive the school and the parents, there may be a huge cultural lag, . . . and many parents may be ill-informed, or they may be intimidated by the entire school process, . . . so I really don't know if we get as much of their real involvement as I'd like to think we do."

Appendix G: Teacher Participants' Responses for Interview Question 1

Teacher	Responses
1	Teacher noted that parents' participation varies: "There's some parents who are very involved, voice their opinions, have questions, while there are other parents who tend to be more passive . . . don't come to the meetings. "
2	Teacher responded, "They get less involved. Hispanic parents of ELL students sometimes they are not quite familiar with the IEP process itself, and what their role is in determining the best decisions for their child."
3	Teacher stated, "I've been doing this a number of years; for me, I've always had parents that come, at least one."
4	Teacher explained that some Hispanic parents were interested in attending IEP meetings, but "many of them do not have transportation, do not drive a car. They don't speak English to be able, you know, to book an Uber; they don't have the finances to come."
5	Teacher noted that Hispanic parents' participation in IEP meetings varies; "It varies on an individual basis. You have some parents that are not really involved, and you have some parents that are very involved."
6	Teacher responded, "I would think that their level of participation is commensurate with the participation of . . . almost every other student that I teach."

Appendix H: Teacher Participants' Responses for Interview Question 2

Teacher	Responses
1	Teacher noted, "I wish I could say yes, . . . if there are activities like that, I don't know about it."
2	Teacher responded, "We provide a Spanish-speaking interpreter in the IEP meetings . . . and they have Hispanic nights. So, that's another way they get the student and the parents more involved in the school."
3	Teacher stated, "We have a parent liaison who also calls them. We also have translators from the county who are skilled and able to translate . . . parent nights for the ESOL [English for speakers of other languages] language."
4	Teacher explained, "We don't have the, the activities . . . because the process of them being in, in special education with disabilities, they were like discovered to be with a disability sooner than they come to us. So there's not a specific activity to prepare them for that."
5	The teacher stated, "Not that I know of at this moment as far as specifically for Hispanic parents to come in and get involved."
6	Teacher noted, "As far as I know, there's no one who goes into the community. There may be, but to my knowledge, I, I have no knowledge of that."

Appendix I: Parent Participants' Responses for Interview Questions 2 and 7

Parent	Responses
1	IQ2: Parent responded, "They send two letters with my son house, but sometimes he calls me."
	IQ7: Parent expressed that Hispanic parents need some types of support to encourage their involvement. She noted, "I think some school, set the school meeting, one meeting, one class for prepare all parents. I think so in my opinion that Hispanic, the school meeting need something for prepare all parents, so they know."
2	IQ2: Parent responded, "They called me on the phone to set up a conference."
	IQ7: Parent expressed that English-language difficulty was her major concern. She remarked, "I can't always help because I'm not very good at English . . . so everything is fine."
3	IQ2: Parent responded, "Sometimes they call me, or they send me a letter with my son. If I'm available for a certain day to come, then I just sign it agreeing to come that day."
	IQ7: Parent explained that initially she was not interested to attend the IEP meetings because of the stigma of disability. She noted, "All the times when I was calling for these meetings, I feel like maybe they would look at my son like he was retarded or like he was not a normal person. But now I see the things different. I think as a Spanish community that maybe we see things a different way."
4	IQ2: Parent said, "By phone and sometimes by sending letters home to get signed."
	IQ7: Parent expressed that work schedule was an issue. "Because sometimes they have work and they're not able to show up so it would be better if they could come on a day they are off so they would be able to speak more and understand more."
5	IQ2: Parent responded, "Letters, letters, yeah; sometimes letters arrive late."
	IQ7: Parent noted that Hispanic students were being disrespected and school personnel need to improve their behaviors. The parent stated, "They need . . . to forgive others, to respect others. So I would recommend to them, to don't look at the world like that. Look at the world like, treat each other as if they want to treat you."
6	IQ2: Parent responded, "Either by phone or by e-mail."
	IQ7: Parent's response indicated an English-language issue. "If the parent makes it down there and they can't understand English, they need to present it in Spanish for the parent to understand that they, their child, how they're progressing in school. I think that's a big problem."
7	IQ2: Parent responded that a teacher contacts her "through phone call."
	IQ7: Parent noted that the school interpreter was her concern. "The parents, the Hispanic parents, the majority that I see that are my friends and everything, they can't ask some questions that they want to because the translator sometimes just says like "Oh we don't really ask that" or like "Oh no, we're good." So they just keep quiet."
8	IQ2: Parent responded that school personnel contact her "by phone and sometimes e-mail."
	IQ7: Parent expressed lack of motivation. The parent noted, "The thing that I can mostly suggest is that the school, you know, cheers on the parents to help them motivate them to go to school, to always motivate the parents to go to meetings."
9	IQ2: Parent said that teachers' contacts varied in some ways; she noted "sometimes by letter or sometimes . . . gets a call."
	IQ7: Parent noted that school personnel should use effective means to communicate with Hispanic parents. She noted she would encourage "the school to communicate more with parents . . . don't just send a letter because sometimes the letter wouldn't reach the parents."

(*table continues*)

Parent	Responses
10	IQ2: Parent responded, "They send papers home or call."
	IQ7: Parent emphasized the lack of authorization for Hispanic parents to live in the United States. "I think like, they should talk about the rights for the people. Hispanic people, they have rights to be here and speak up. Some parents don't speak up for their own child because they're Hispanic."
11	IQ2: Parent reported "a letter or a phone number texting me. Sometimes, well, some teachers they send you text messages or they just send you a letter and sometimes you miss it. The information don't get to you before the meeting I think it's like every, each year or half-year."
	IQ7: Parent noted work schedule issues and English-language difficulties were the problem. The parent stated, "Some Hispanic parents, they don't come to the meeting often because they have a lot of work to do, or basically they just don't want to come because they don't know . . . what they're going to say, because teachers speak English."
12	IQ2: Parent responded, "They either send an invitation through mail or they call from phone."
	IQ7: Parent's suggestion indicated motivation issues. Parent noted, "I . . .would just want to have the program to insist on the parents to be coming and be more engaged with their kids' education because it's different at home and different at school."

Note. Quotes from Parents 2, 4, and 8 were translated from Spanish.