

Denying to Embracing: A Mother's Path to Acceptance, Love, and Resilience in Raising a Child with Down Syndrome

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Introduction: Raising a child with Down Syndrome brings deep, personal lessons and challenges. While many mothers share similar struggles, each follows a unique path shaped by their child's specific needs. The research aimed to explore and describe the experiences of mothers raising children with Down Syndrome in Negros Island Region. The findings of the study served as a basis for public awareness among mothers raising children with Down Syndrome.

Methodology: This study used a qualitative research approach grounded in phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of five mothers raising children with Down Syndrome. Open-ended questions and flexible methods were used to gather data directly from the participant in their natural settings. The analysis was inductive, starting with specific details and building toward broader themes, allowing the researcher to interpret the data and uncover its deeper meaning.

Results: This study examined the journeys of mothers raising children with Down Syndrome, uncovering a transformative path from initial denial to acceptance. It revealed their resilience in facing numerous challenges, including as denial with the reality, handling expectations, dealing with misbehaviors, caregiving exhaustion, stretching patience, teaching the child to walk and worrying over the future. Despite these hardships, the mothers showed acceptance, love, and resilience for their child's development. Their faith played a central role, providing strength through prayer and reflection, while they emphasized the importance of teaching life skills to prepare their children for greater independence, particularly in their absence.

Conclusions: Mothers of children with Down Syndrome often begin their journey with denial, gradually learning to accept and cherish their child for who they truly are, shifting their focus from former expectations to more meaningful, realistic goals. Their love is instinctive and profound, expressed through simple gestures and rooted in the deep bond they share with a child who will remain close to them throughout life. Through unwavering devotion and strength, these mothers face challenges with resilience, turning hardships into growth and embracing their journey with love, purpose, and acceptance.

Practical Value of the Paper: This study's findings are essential in increasing public awareness about the experiences of mothers raising children with Down Syndrome. By shedding light on their unique challenges, it encourages stronger community support, guides new mothers, and promotes family involvement to build a reliable support system. Ultimately, this awareness fosters a more inclusive and empowering environment for these mothers as they navigate their journey.

Direction for Future Research: Future studies could improve knowledge by including a more diverse range of participants, such as fathers and siblings, and examining families in different locations. Additionally, employing various research methodologies, including quantitative approaches, can provide a more comprehensive view, ultimately enriching public awareness and support for families dealing with the complexities of raising children with disabilities.

Keywords: special education, down syndrome, mothers, phenomenology, Philippines

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