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SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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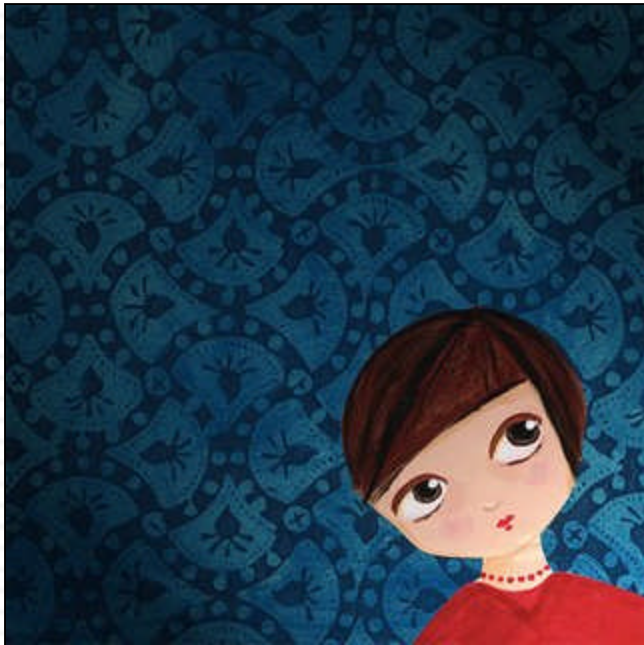


Objectives



- To address common issues expressed by parents of children with special needs
- To provide an overview of the current study
- To increase the public awareness of the issues and needs of such parents

Common Concerns/Issues Expressed by the Parents



Internal factors

Blaming themselves as cause of child's disability

Feeling shocked, depressed, guilty, confused, angry, hostile and/or desperate at time of diagnosis

Hopelessness about future of child and family

Lack of parenting skills

Lack of coping skills

High levels of stress

Limited personal time

Extra medical and treatment expenses

Lack of trusting relationship with professionals

Stereotypes and blame expressed by others

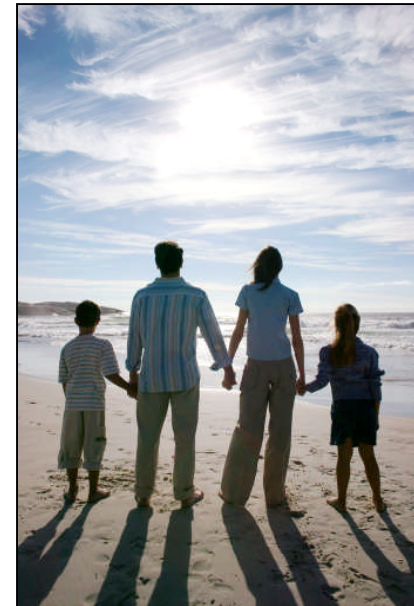
Not enough information about available resources

External factors

(Ergüner-Tekinalp and Akkk, 2004; Gettinger and Guetschow, 1998; Goddard, Lehr, and Lapadat, 2000; Heiman, 2002)

The goal of Study

- To investigate the types of services used by parents of children with special needs residing in the state of Michigan and their effectiveness for reducing the parents' stress levels as well as increasing their coping skills



Research Questions



- What are the types of services used by the parents?
- How effective are the services in reducing stress of the parents?
- How effective are the services in increasing their coping skills?
- What are some needs of such parents which may be met by counseling services?

Mixed Method



- Survey
 - ▣ Participants recruited through listservs, contact with local organizations, and word of mouth
 - ▣ Online, through www.surveymonkey.com
 - ▣ Paper, for the Counseling & Speech Therapy Clinic on campus
 - ▣ Total of 64 participants
- Focus group/interview
 - ▣ Recruited among the survey participants

Participant Demographics



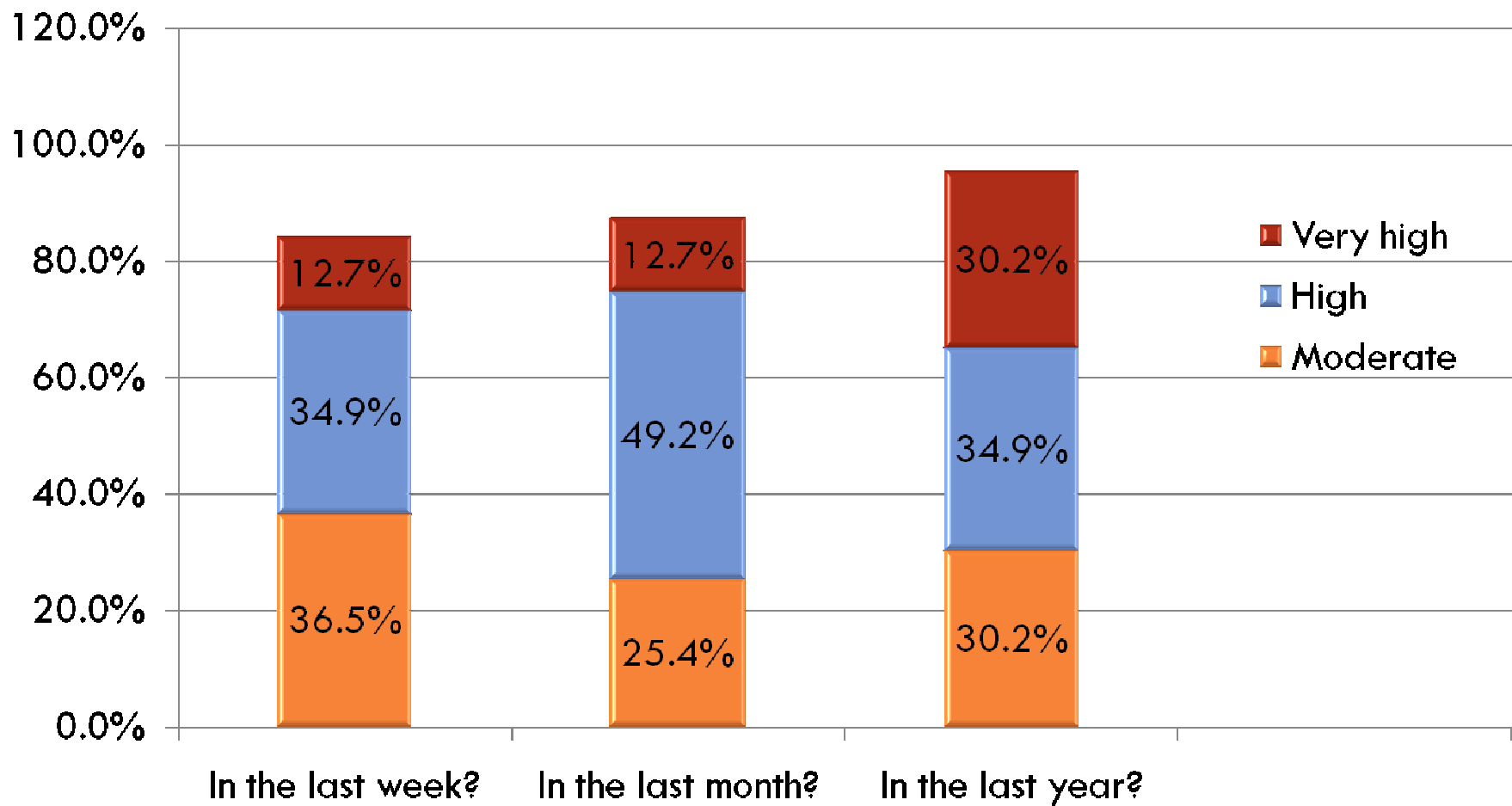
- 98.4% (60 out of 61) were female
- 93.3% (56 out of 60) were Caucasian
- 51.7% (31 out of 60) were between age 31 and 40
- 83.6% (51 out of 61) were married
- 88.3% (53 out of 60) had one child with special needs
- 47.7% (26 out of 55) rated the severity of the child's disability as moderate

Overview of Survey Results



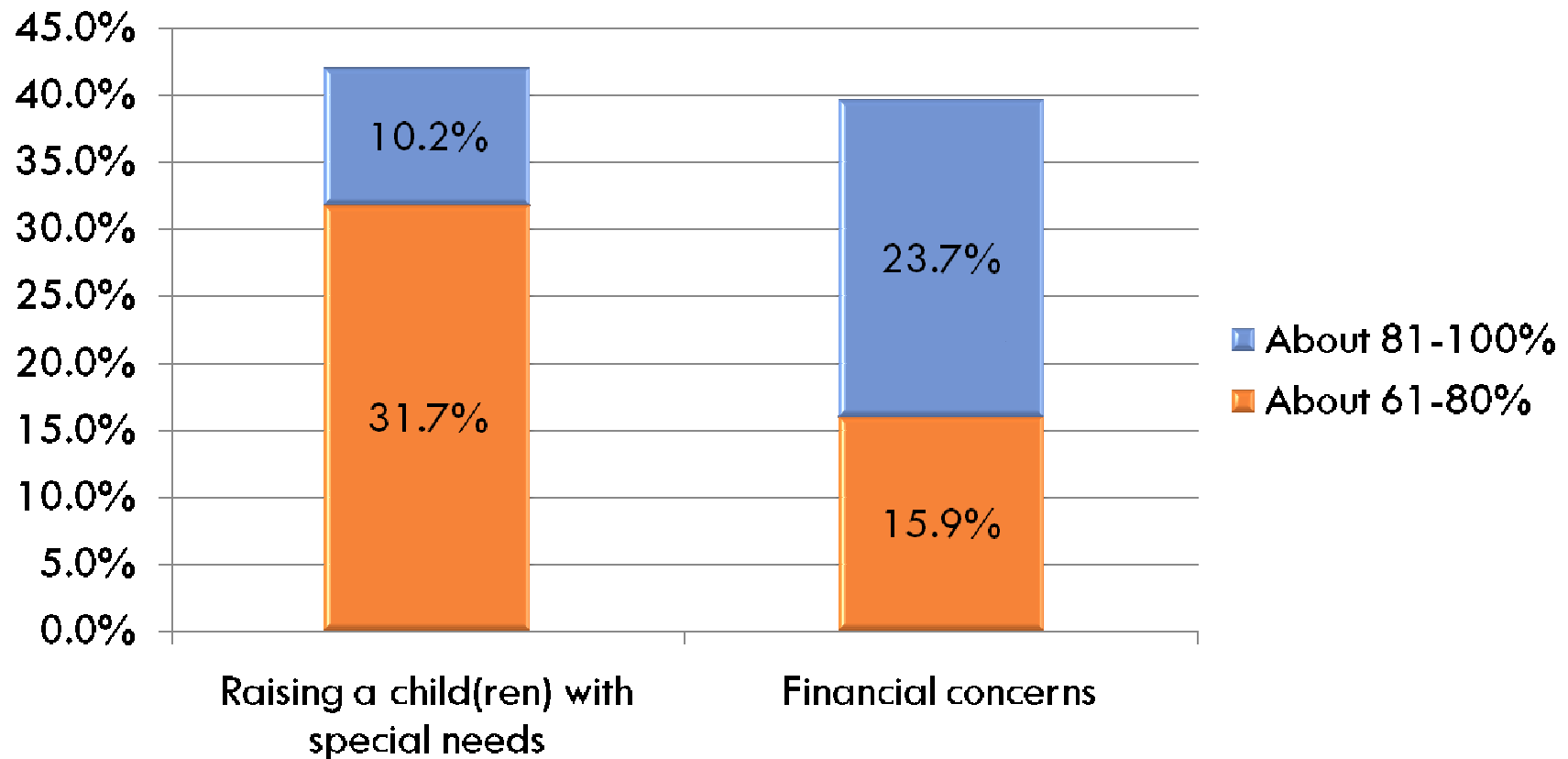
“How would you rate your level of stress?”

Number of responses

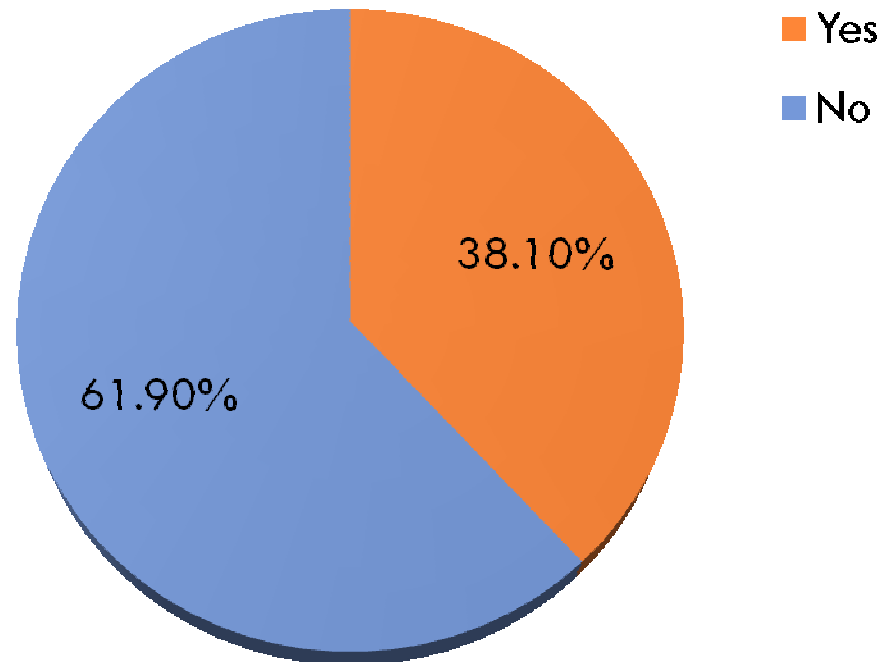


“What would be the ratio of each factor that might be contributing to your stress level?”

Percentage of responses



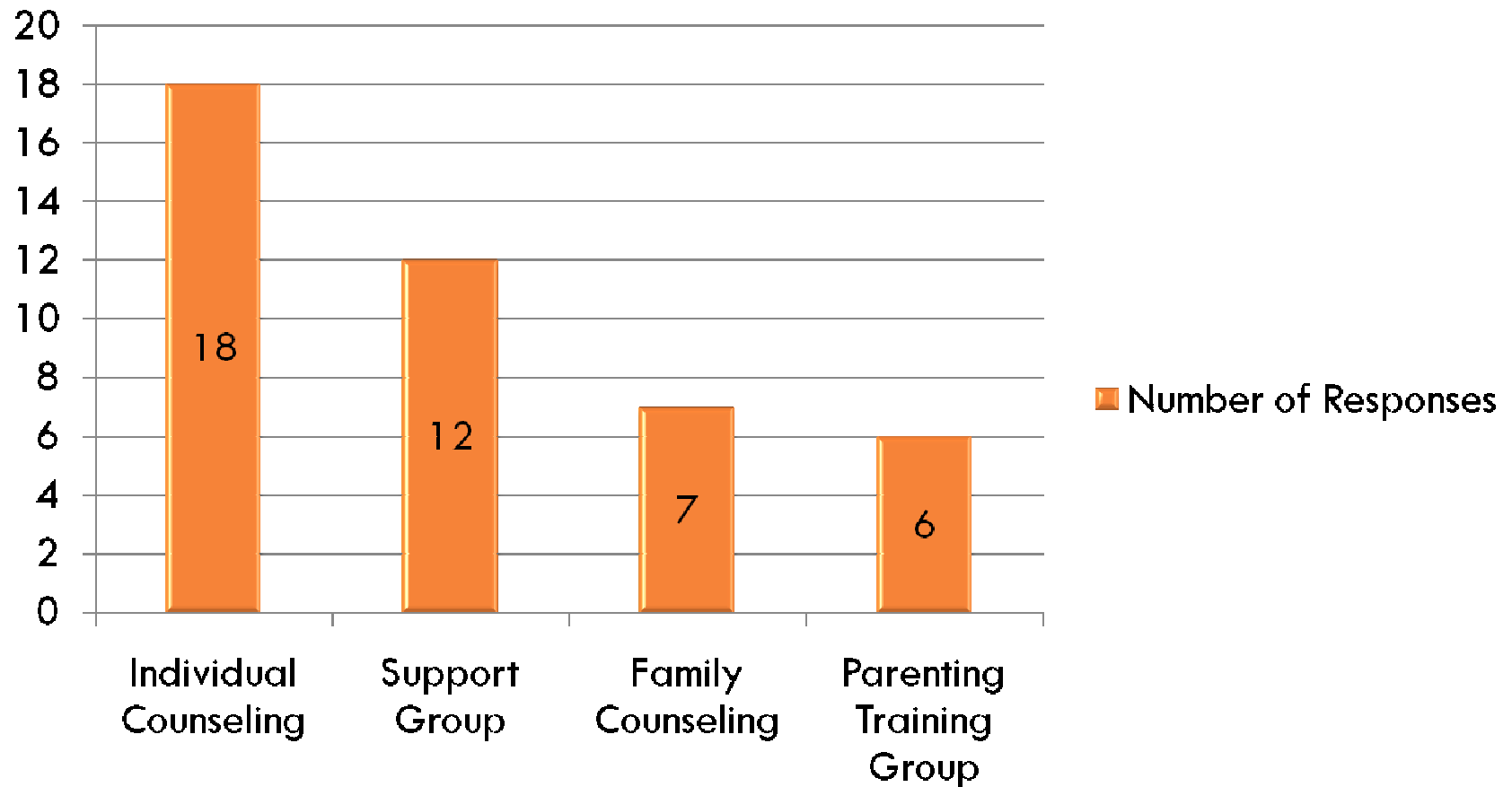
“Have you sought professional services in dealing with your stress of raising a child(ren) with special needs?”



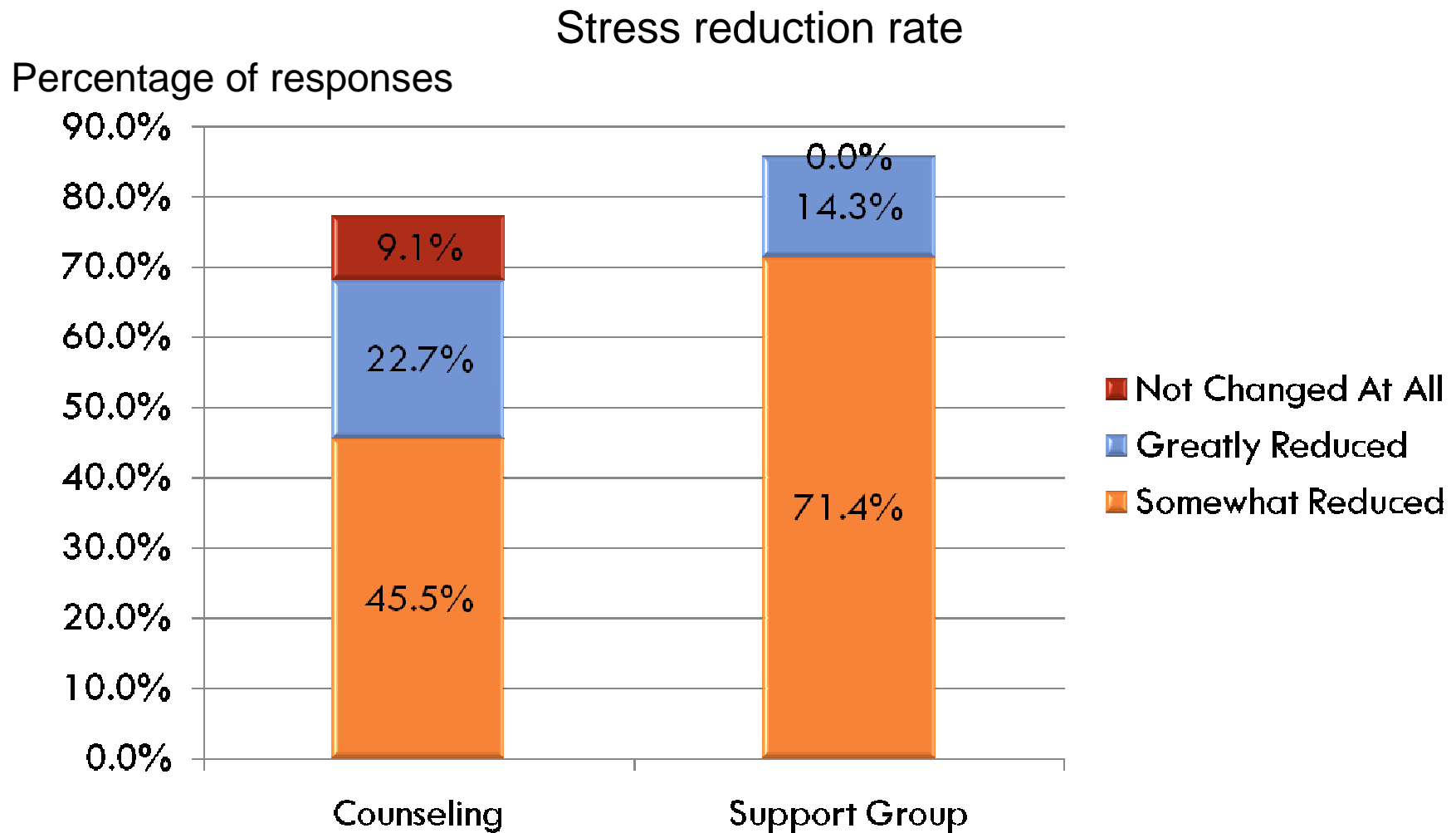
Most frequently cited reason for not seeking such services

→ “Unable to find services that seemed helpful for my needs” (25.6%; 10 out of 39)

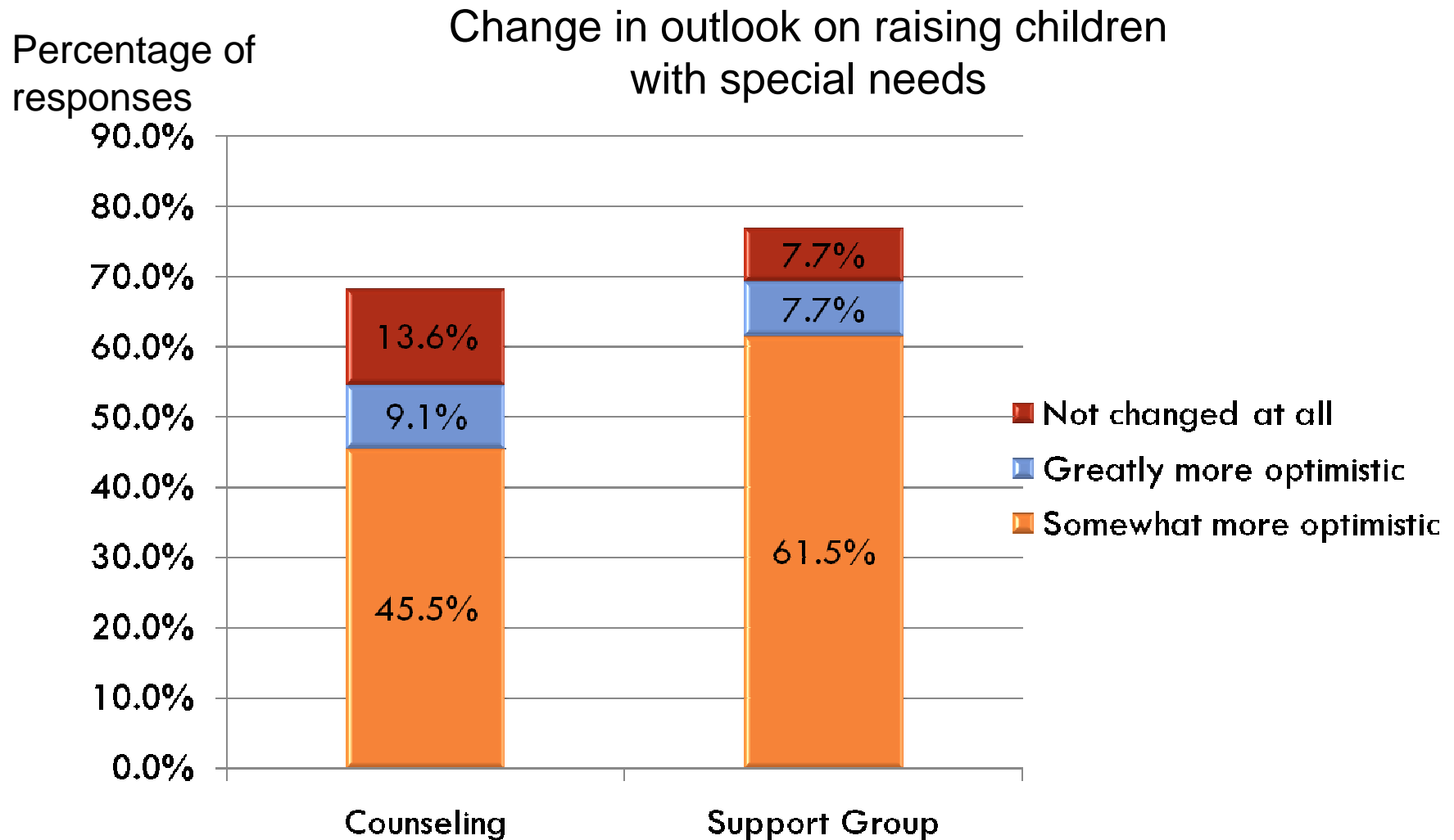
Most Frequently Used Services



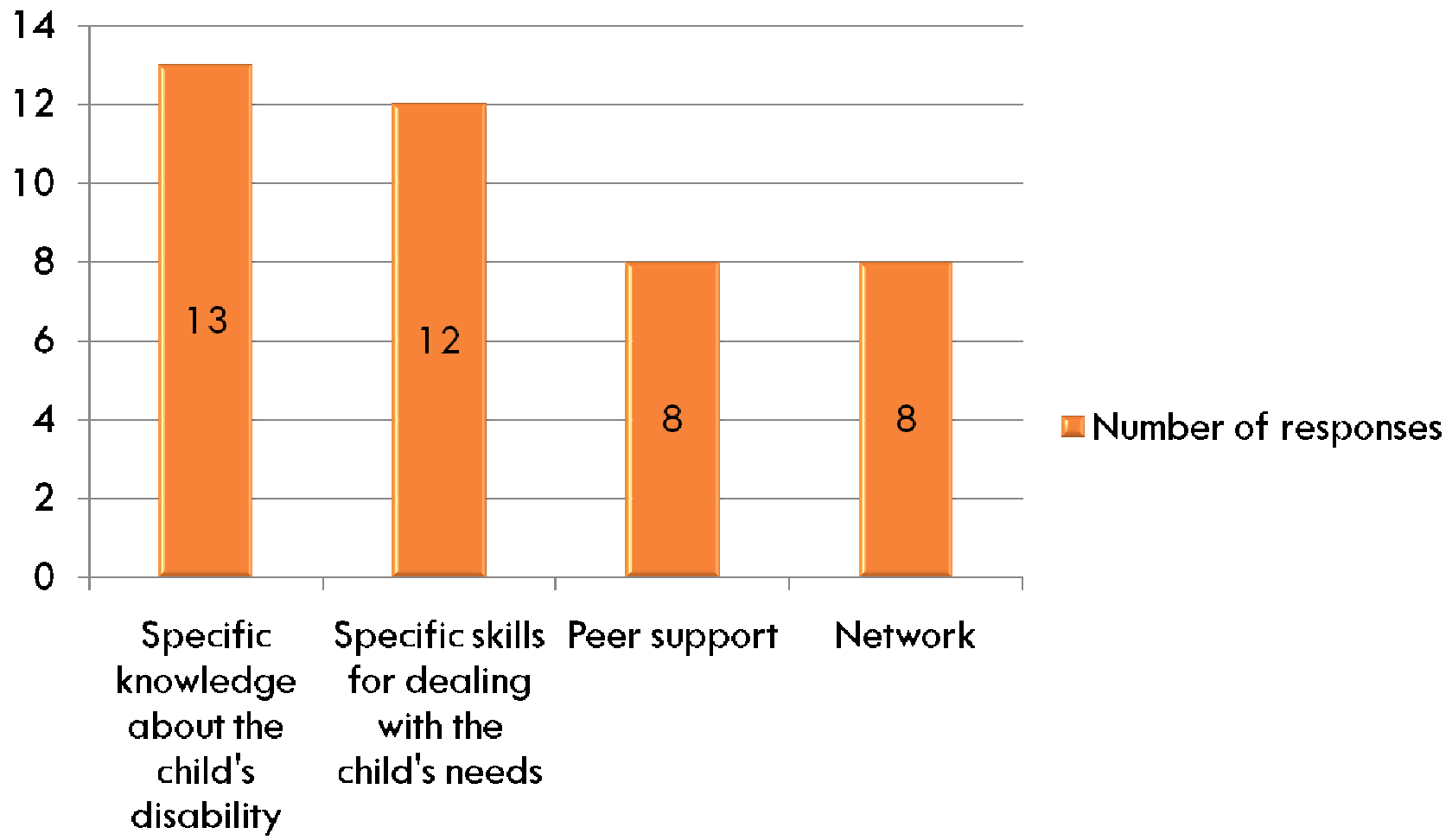
Effectiveness of Services



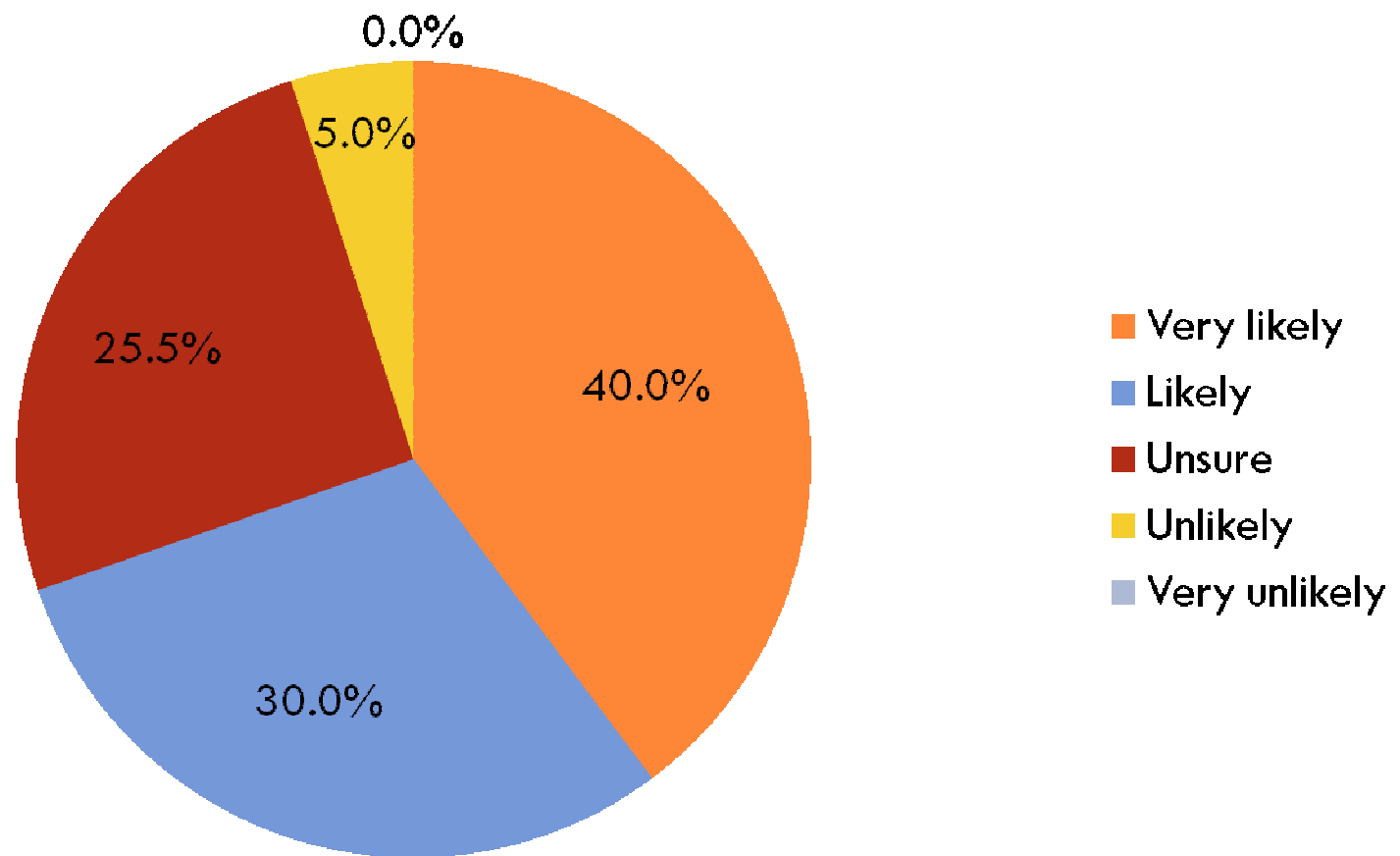
Effectiveness of Services



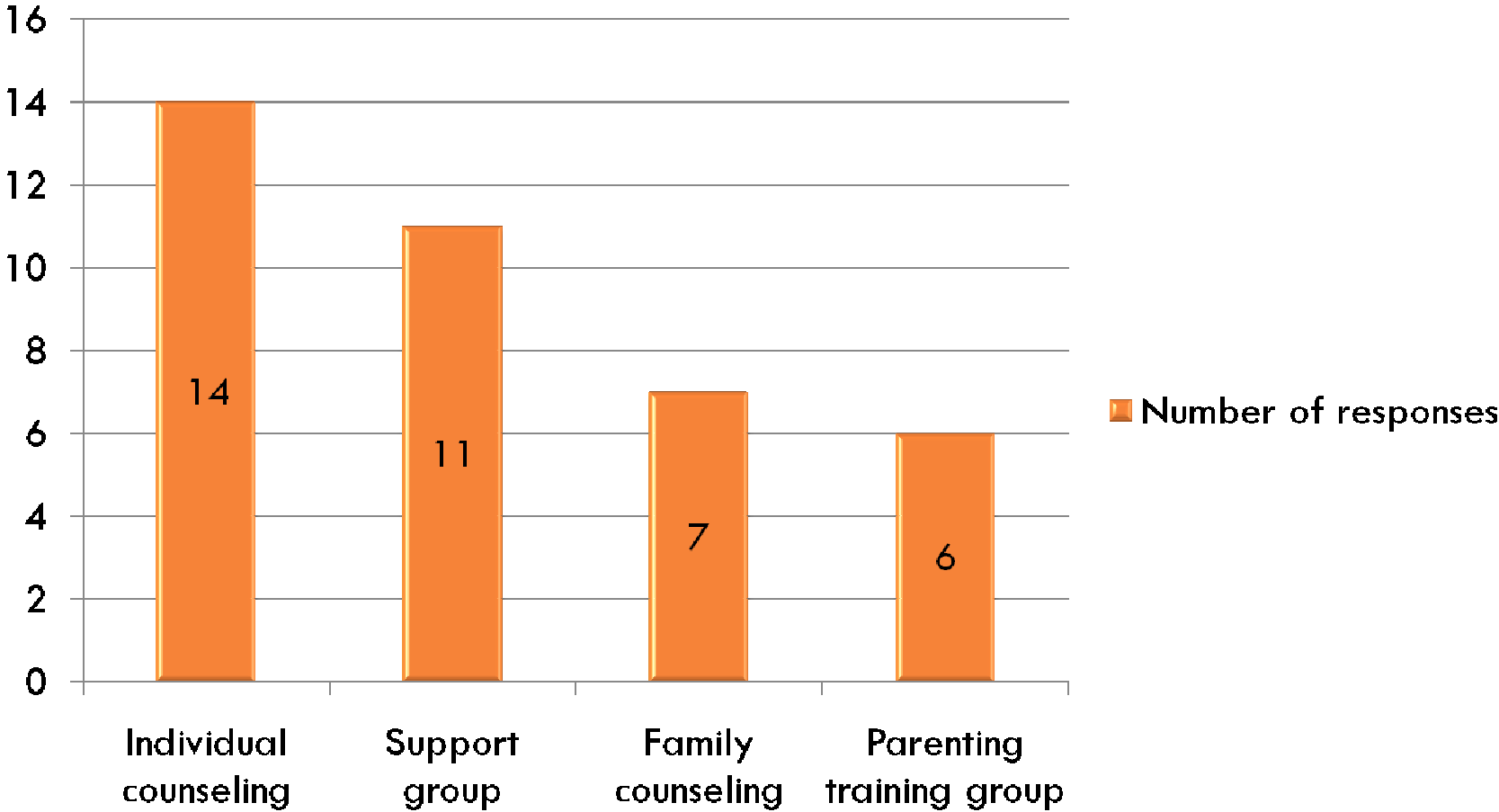
“What have you gained from receiving the service(s)?”



“How likely are you to seek an additional service(s) in the future?”

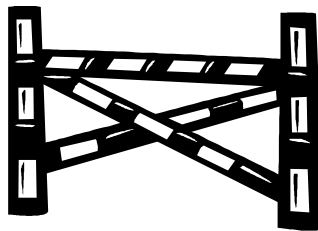


“If you were to receive an additional service(s), what would be the most likely format?”



Limitations

- Very few male participants?
- Confusion with some terminology
- Distinction among various services was vague
- Accessibility to Internet
- Limited to Michigan participants



Implications for Counseling Services



- Primary format – group (low-cost, mutual support)
- Sessions divided into two parts: psychoeducation and support group
- Individual or family counseling as a follow-up service
- How they meet should be flexible (face-to-face, home visit, email, by phone etc.)

References

- Ergüner-Tekinalp, B., & Akkök, F. (2004). The effects of a coping skills training program on the coping skills, hopelessness, and stress levels of mothers of children with autism. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 26*, 257-269.
- Gettinger, M., & Guetschow, K. W. (1998). Parent and parent/child groups for young children with disabilities. In Stoiber, K. C. & Kratochwill, T. R. (Eds.), *Handbook of Group Intervention for Children and Families*. (pp. 345-360). Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon.

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- Goddard, J. A., Lehr, R., & Lapadat, J. C. (2000). Parents of children with disabilities: Telling a different story. *Canadian Journal of Counselling, 34*, 273-289.
- Heiman, T. (2002). Parents of children with disabilities: Resilience, coping, and future expectations. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities, 14*, 159-171.

Contact Information

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Bio

Hensley, Chiharu, is a Master's counseling student at Eastern Michigan University. Her research interest in parents of children with special needs has come from her experience of working with individuals with special needs as a board-certified music therapist (MT-BC). Her goal as a professional counselor is to integrate music therapy into counseling.