

A Review on Stress and Coping Mechanism among the Parents of Intellectual Disabled Children

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Abstract: Globally intellectual disability is one of the most prevalent developmental disability of the children. It is a developmental disability marked by lower than normal intelligence and limited daily living skill such as communication skill, social skills and taking care of self. So, family is the main source of support for those disabled children in the society. Parenting of children with intellectual disability is long term commitment and is much more stressful than parenting for normal children. When the parents learn that the child is having some form of disability, it causes enormous distress to them. Giving birth to an intellectually disabled child is an unexpected stressful event which affects the whole family. Objective of this review is to explore parental stress and their adopted coping strategy and associated demographic factors. Several descriptive studies conducted on this area and it has been observed that parents of intellectually disabled child are confronted to so many challenges and problems. Mothers of the children with intellectual disability had more parental stress as compared to mothers of normal children. Most of the parents had severe level of stress and they used to cope up stress by using various coping strategies like use of instrumental social support, positive reinterpretation and growth, planning, suppression of competing activities and use of emotional social support. The parents having children with severe intellectual disability had low expectations, more negative attitudes towards child management and rearing practices as compare to parents with mildly and moderately disabled children. Coping strategies of the parents were decreasing with the severity of child's intellectual disability. Male parents having good coping skills and mild stress than female parents. Female parents perceived higher level of stress and lower level coping skill than male parents. Level of stress and coping skill depend on degree of intellectual disability. Mildly challenged children were comparatively better coped up and lower stress.

Keywords: Stress, Coping mechanism, Intellectually Disable Children, Parents

1. Introduction

Intellectual disability is combination of deficit in both cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior. Epidemiological studies reveal that about 2% of the general population fall within the range of mild retardation with an IQ of 70 and under 50 IQ affects about 0.4% of the population. At present prevalence of intellectual disability is 2 to 3 percent of the population. (Theodore DD., 2015). Overall, India has a prevalence of 10.5/1000 in intellectual disability (ID). Urban population has slightly higher rate (11/1000) than rural (10.08/1000). The prevalence of ID was 154 of the total disabilities recorded. Approximately 85% of the intellectually disabled population is in the mildly retarded category. About 10% of the intellectual disabled population is considered moderately retarded. About 3-4% of the mentally retarded population is severely retarded. Only 1-2% of the mentally retarded population is classified as profoundly retarded. (Ram L et al., 2015). Living with and caring for children with intellectual disability is very stressful and burdensome. The perceived stress score 33 was maximum which indicates high score, but the mean score was around 12 which indicates mild level of perceived stress over all. Behavioral problems in the child led to high levels of stress and poor adaptation strategies in parents. (Souza RD et al., 2019). One study showed that mothers of children with intellectual disability faces a lot of challenges in their day to day life, she suffers with stress as well as parenting stress, anxiety, depression, physical health problems and also face lack of family and social support. Parenting is the key process which helps in stimulation and supporting a child from infancy to adulthood in which the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development develops. Mothers of the children

intellectual disability are having more stress in different domains than normal control. (Kumari S, 2020). Parents of intellectually disabled child felt moderate level of stress and coping ability. Also, significant with gender, and locality wise difference are noted in the stress coping ability of parents of mentally challenged children. (Vijila S et al., 2022). Another reported that care stress and social stress in 83% of mothers, emotional stress in 80% of mothers and financial problem in 47% of mothers. (Seth, 1979)

Parenting stress:

The study revealed that the parents of children with mental retardation (PCMR) shared significantly greater stress score (34.27) than the parents of children with no mental retardation (PCNR) (21.66). Majority of the parents with mentally retarded children (71.4% mothers and 67.5% fathers) had higher mental stress than physical stress. Mothers had significantly higher mental stress score than the fathers of mentally retarded children. Parents of intellectual disabled children faced more level of stress, anxiety, guilt. They also lead unsatisfied life, poor parent child relationship. (Benjamin KR, 2016). A cross-sectional study conducted on parenting stress among intellectually disabled children with normal control and revealed that parenting stress of parents of children with mental retardation and normal control using independent t-test which indicated that there were significant differences in total stress score 88.95 ± 20.11 and 43.57 ± 11.90 in both the groups respectively. Mean score of parenting stress scale was found significantly high in the different domains such as parenting distress, parent child dysfunctional interaction and difficult child. (Lokesh K R et al., 2018). One study revealed that parents of children with intellectual disability had significantly greater stress score

(34.27) than the parents of children with normal children (21.66). Majority of parents with intellectual disability (71.4% mothers and 67.5% fathers) had higher mental stress than physical stress. Mothers had significantly higher stress than fathers. (Islam MZ et al., 2013) Another study findings showed that parenting stress of intellectually disabled children in defensive response was higher ($M=26.16\pm4.81$) than parents of normal child ($M=19.30\pm4.25$). They felt having a child with intellectual disability caused more problems, disturbed relationship with their spouse, over responsibilities. (Anjali K et al.,). N Lymaum et al. (2020) carried out a study on stress, burden among parents of intellectual disability. Finding revealed that 47.33% of the parents had mild-to-moderate stress, whereas 25% of the parents had high stress, 50.9% of the parents had mild-to-moderate burden, and 26.8% accounted for moderate-to-severe burden. The parents of children with disability undergo stressful events throughout their life.

Coping mechanism

One study revealed that fathers of moderately challenged children (88.00%) reported most favorable attitude towards child. While, in majority of mothers with moderately and severely challenged children also showed favorable attitude. In attitudes towards child management from low income families, majority of mothers of mildly challenged children (92.00%) However, only 56.00 per cent of fathers with mildly challenged children also showed favorable attitude. Parents having children with severe intellectual disability had low expectations, more negative attitudes towards child management and rearing practices as compare to parents with mildly and moderately disabled children. Coping strategies among these components were decreasing with the severity of child's intellectual disability. Overall, it was observed that families of mildly challenged children were comparatively better coped up. (Upreti R et al., 2017). 100% of mothers had significant level of stress. Seeking spiritual support as coping mechanism was being used by majority of the mothers. (Hardeep K, 2016). There is significant difference between male and female parents on coping. Male parents are having good coping skills in comparison to female parents. that the mean score of coping of parents of intellectually disabled children are 122.58 and 114.12 respectively and the difference between two is 8.46 which is very unnegligible. The study concluded that male parents are getting more burden, female parents gets more stress and when concerned about coping male parents are good in coping strategies than female parents. (Panday P, 2015). Maximum respondents have a moderate level of coping (86.9%) followed by a maximum level of coping (13.1%). There was a significant association on of level of coping with parents' education. maximum respondents (86.9%) have a moderate level of coping followed by a maximum level of coping (13.1%) and none had the minimum level of coping. The mean score of coping in fathers was 108.57 ± 10.19 and in mothers was 105.80 ± 9.50 with the overall mean score of parental coping 106.45 ± 9.72 . (Shrestha A et al., 2022). 88% respondent were used of positive reinterpretation and growth coping strategies and 70% parents used mental disengagement coping strategies were used by 81% parents were used of focus on and venting coping. Highest 92 % respondent were used of use of instrumental social support coping. 83 % parents were used active and 64 % was used

denial coping. Almost 80 % respondent used religious coping. Least respondents 48 % were used humor and 66 % respondent used behavioral disengagement. Three forth respondent (75%) used restraint. Respondent (86 %) were used of emotional social support coping. Here respondents 29 % were used substance use coping and respondent (82%) used acceptance, 86 % respondent used of Suppression of competing activities and finally 87 % respondent used planning coping.

(Thakuri BS., 2014). Present study shows that majority of parents (99.6%) had average (24-46) coping score, where 0.4% parents had high (47-70) coping score. Coping mean \pm SD score of parents was 36.54 ± 3.68 . Among coping strategies area wise, acceptance/redefinition mean \pm SD score (7.94 ± 1.35) was higher than problem solving, positive distraction, religion/faith, denial/blame social support and negative distraction (6.59 ± 1.24 , 5.69 ± 1.58 , 5.61 ± 1.81 , 3.88 ± 1.15 , 3.60 ± 1.11 and 3.23 ± 1.36 respectively) in parents of mentally retarded children. (Singh DS et al., 2015).

Association between parenting stress, coping strategies with socio demographic variables

Parenting stress associated with gender of the parents, education, age of the child and coping was associated with parent's education. (Shrestha A et al., 2022). Another study revealed that less educated, low- income group and rural parents have more problems with their spastic mentally handicapped children. (Gupta and Jain 2002). There was significant association between gender and stress which indicates female are more prone of having stress than male parents of intellectually disabled children and significant association between education and stress which indicating Post- Graduate parents are more stress than Graduate parents. In gender on coping which indicates parents male are more good coping skills than female parents of intellectually disabled children. (Dr. Thiyan KS et al., 2015).

2. Discussion

Birth of a child is very special to parents. Having the child with intellectual disability brings long lasting effect on the whole family. Extra care and demand of the child leads stress among parents. They felt different type of stress such as daily care related, social and financial stress. They don't get free time and also unable to enjoy life. Spend more time in taking care of child. Parents who have coping ability, self-esteem they face less problems than others.

The review has been proven that parents of intellectual disabled child having more parental stress and less coping ability than parents of normal child. Mothers had higher stress and lower coping ability than fathers. All these problems are associated with their demographic characteristics such as education, income, occupation of parents and Intelligence Quotient (IQ) level of child.

3. Conclusion

Parents have responsibility to take care of their disabled child. They are the primary caregivers. It is very much stressful to them. Specially mother face lot of problems. She

feel difficulties to maintain balance between daily care activities and household activities. Extensive caregiving stress among the mothers that causes different negative emotions. If they have poor coping ability or use maladaptive pattern of coping that has effect on their psychological wellbeing. They need rest, proper diet, support from family, ventilation, counseling, healthy coping to overcome all the problems and improve their parenting process.

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