

A Correlation Study on Parental Needs and Selected Demographic Variables of Parents with Autistic Children

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Abstract: *The study on 'A correlation study on parental needs and selected demographic variables of parents with autistic children' was conducted in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad with an Expost- facto research design by adapting Snow-ball sampling technique. Sixty Parents of children with Autism with or without associative conditions were chosen as the sample of the study. Face- to face interview was conducted to collect the information. Major findings of the study revealed that, parental age, income and the duration of marriage had a significant negative correlation with their felt needs at 1% level of significance. At the same time child's age, duration of identification of the problem and duration of the treatment for the child had significant negative relation with the felt needs of the parents at 1% level of significance.*

Keywords: Autism, felt needs, variables, problems, in-home training

1. Introduction

Autism is a neurobiological disorder, which affects the brain and thereby the whole body. It is reflected in terms bodily impairments such as deficits in social relations, communication with repetitive and self stimulatory behaviours. Unique characteristics of autistic children create many unique challenges to parents. These parents are under going through lot of stress in dealing with their autistic children. Thus presence of an autistic child in the family has a multidimensional effect in varied ways such as generating special needs not only for the child but also for the parents at personal or social or at community. Research studies revealed that most of the parents of children with Autism experienced problems like financial burdens due to attending the therapies, social stigma due to less awareness in the society, problems in marital relationships, loss of social and recreational activities, difficulties in finding proper diagnostic procedures for the child, career related problems etc. (Divan *et al.* 2012, Montes and Halterman, 2007). Though there have been a number of attempts to examine the experiences of parenting a child with Autism in developed countries, a few have successfully been able to discuss about the felt needs of parents with autistic children. Recently a study on parents with autistic children by Derguy *et al.* (2015) found 6 dimensions of emerging parental needs and among them more needs were expressed in the areas of material, informational, parental guidance and emotional support. The study of Benson and Dewey (2008) traced higher parental needs for in-home training to manage the child as well as the self. Whereas Brezis *et al.* (2015) findings revealed that parents with relatively less income focused on their child's immediate and material needs, while higher income parents discussed their parental roles and vision for society.

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revealed that parents with relatively less income focused on their child's immediate and material needs, while higher income parents discussed their parental roles and vision for society. Very few studies in India have been undertaken to focus on the parental needs rather than child's needs. (Brezis, *et al.* 2015; Desai, *et al.* 2012 and Divan, *et al.* 2012). Studies on parental needs of autistic children are almost non- existent in the State of Telangana when compared to parents of children with other disabilities. The present study was therefore undertaken to study the relationship of parent and child related variables with the parental felt needs.

2. Material and Methods

This study was conducted in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad with an Expost- facto research design. Snow-ball sampling technique was adapted to trace the sample based on the rarely availability criteria of the sample. The sample of the study was comprised of 60 parents of children with autism, with or without associative conditions. The data was collected through a direct face-to face interview by using the NIMH Family Needs schedule – Parents (Peshwaria *et al.* 1995), to know the relationships of parent and child related variables with the specific felt needs of parents with autistic children. The collected data was analyzed to find out the relationship of parent and child related variables with the parental felt needs.

3. Results and Discussion

This section deals with the relationship between the parent and child related variables with the special needs.

4. Relationship between parental personal variables and their needs

The results from the table 1. present interesting facts. Parental age, income and the duration of marriage had a significant negative correlation with their felt needs at 1% level of significance, which meant that as age of the parent, income of the parents, duration of marriage increasing, parental felt needs were decreasing. Hence it can be predicted that older parents with higher income had lesser needs especially in terms of information needed on the autistic condition of the child, handling the child, general and specific services available for the child, finding social support system and maintaining relationships with it and information on respite care and transportation services available for the child etc. The present study was corroborated with study of Akshoomoff and Stahmer, 2006, who found that parents with limited amount of money are unlikely to be recipients of adequate services for their families and need it more. Similarly Brezis *et al.* (2015) findings revealed that parents with relatively less income had a high needs for immediate and material needs.

However younger parents' needs were higher when compared to older parents; the needs expressed in terms of needs for information on autism condition, referral services, personal- social relations, physical care support for the child and information on government legislations intended for the betterment of the child and training on child management. It can also be inferred that as income levels were increasing their felt needs were decreasing. As family size was increasing physical support and care needs for the child were also increasing at 5% level of significance.

Parents with a larger family size and from joint family expressed more needs when compared to their other counterpart. This study was on par with that study of Harper *et al.* (2013) who found that the number of children in the family was associated with greater stress, and reduced relational quality in the family and also suggested that adequate respite care services could be helpful in reducing their stress and might be helpful in improving marital as well as family relationship, thus created a need. Mothers felt more intense needs in terms of

Table 1: Relationship between parental personal variables and needs

Parental personal Variables	Needs of parents													
	Information conditioning	Child management	Facilitating interaction	Services	Vocational planning	Hostel	Personal- Emotional	Personal- Social	Support- Physical	Financial	Family relationship	Future planning	Government benefits & legislation	Grand total needs
Parent age	-0.460**	-0.286*	-0.170	-0.502**	-0.071	-0.102	-0.016	-0.332**	-0.412**	-0.158	0.037	0.032	-0.376**	-0.402**
Education	-0.022	-0.099	-0.093	0.092	-0.075	0.106	-0.085	0.018	0.012	-0.439**	0.010	-0.252	-0.196	-0.119
Income	-0.469**	-0.409**	-0.092	-0.315*	-0.219	0.242	-0.128	-0.062	-0.113	-0.750**	0.000	-0.418**	-0.372**	-0.446**
Family size	0.148	0.069	-0.078	0.117	0.086	0.135	0.134	0.140	0.314*	0.217	0.216	-0.047	0.005	0.169
Occupation	-0.097	-0.030	-0.020	-0.138	-0.260*	0.056	0.013	0.042	-0.163	-0.102	-0.100	-0.018	-0.001	-0.095
Gender	-0.014	-0.116	0.200	0.112	0.264*	0.087	-0.122	0.025	0.301*	-0.089	0.019	-0.054	-0.199	0.021
Duration of marriage	-0.456**	-0.460**	-0.083	-0.419**	0.095	-0.204	-0.018	-0.357**	-0.257*	-0.102	0.012	0.178	-0.335**	-0.386**
Family type	-0.094	-0.150	0.191	-0.072	-0.013	-0.203	-0.123	-0.018	-0.071	-0.052	-0.141	0.066	0.020	-0.088

*Significant at (P<0.05): **Significant at (P<0.01)

information on vocational choices and vocational planning suitable services and physical support and care needs than the fathers. Education has negative correlation with financial support needs. Occupation had negative correlation with vocational planning. Those who were in higher posts in their professional life/ job life expressed lesser needs and who were under lower posts as well as housewives needed more information on vocational services for their children. Parents from Joint family and extended family expressed more physical support needs when compared to parents of nuclear family. Younger parents expressed more needs for establishment of parent social support systems and formation of parental groups and parental associations than the Older parents.

5. Relationship between child-related variables and parental felt needs

It is depicted in the above table no.2. that child's age, duration of the problem identified and duration of the treatment had significant negative relation with the felt needs which means parents of younger children (Hodgetts, Zwaigenbaum and Nicholas 2015), with a recent diagnosis of autism (Benson and Dewey, 2008), exposed to treatment and services for the lesser period of time expressed greater need for information on autism, available services, legislations and government benefits, training on management techniques as well as personal-social support needs. This might be because they would have undergone through lesser sources of information regarding the particular unique condition of the disability and parents were not prepared for the particular situation/ crisis suddenly aroused to them and/or were unable to accept the situation at

their personal level. However Benson and Dewey (2008) found that parents of preschool children ranked two needs significantly higher than parents of school age children in terms of need for early/consistent diagnosis and need for in-

home training in managing the child while parents of school-age children ranked three needs more highly than parents of preschool children viz. need support

Table 2: Relationship between child-related variables and parental needs

Child related	Needs of parents													
Variables	Information on condition	Child management	Facilitating interaction	Services	Vocational planning	Hostel facility	Personal-Emotional	Personal-Social	Support-Physical	Financial	Family relationshipship	Future planning	Government benefits & legislation	Grand total needs
Child's gender	0.054	0.063	0.097	0.111	0.121	0.078	-0.081	-0.024	0.257*	0.095	-0.095	0.086	0.155	0.103
Age	-0.478**	-0.448**	-0.067	-0.483**	0.0202	-0.199	-0.113	-0.386**	-0.328*	-0.024	-0.02	0.063	-0.475**	-0.426**
Severity	0.047	0.111	0.096	-0.074	0.158	0.117	0.055	-0.116	0.028	0.151	0.028	0.075	0.012	0.081
Birth order	-0.096	-0.007	-0.238	-0.087	0.067	0.096	0.082	-0.1	-0.351**	-0.225	-0.111	-0.127	-0.111	-0.157
Class of study	-0.151	-0.143	0.072	-0.16	-0.014	0.038	-0.01	-0.056	-0.156	0.018	-0.108	-0.001	-0.113	-0.115
Associative problem	0.024	-0.027	-0.068	-0.145	-0.208	-0.261*	0.189	-0.053	-0.068	0.235	0.143	0.154	-0.076	-0.00029
I.Q. level	-0.002	-0.027	-0.064	0.074	0.074	0.143	-0.157	0.108	0.026	-0.138	0.01	-0.253	0.069	-0.028
Duration of problem	-0.494**	-0.480**	-0.21	-0.458**	-0.058	-0.146	-0.03	-0.342**	-0.324	-0.209	-0.008	-0.059	-0.424**	-0.468**
Duration of treatment	-0.488**	-0.510**	-0.053	-0.382**	-0.047	-0.234	-0.093	-0.369**	-0.270*	-0.229	0.035	0.054	-0.328*	-0.431**
Delays	0.11	0.288*	-0.018	0.02	-0.034	-0.209	0.157	0.017	-0.134	0.097	0.075	0.041	-0.056	0.104

*Significant at (P<0.05)

:: **Significant at (P<0.01)

of relatives, need for other parents' contact and need for community acceptance/ understanding neighbours. Whereas Brown *et al.* (2011) discovered parents who experienced greater impact of the child's disability had more unmet needs. At the same time it can be said that with the advance child's age, number of years of problem from the time of autism identification and treatment period lessened the needs required by the parents. The specific needs expressed by them were in-terms of information on autism, services available, legislations and government benefits, training on management techniques as well as personal-social support needs like need for establishment of parental groups and parental associations. Child's birth order was positively correlated with the parental felt needs especially with the physical care and support needs. This meant that the

Parent's of first born child with Autism needed more physical support and care than the parents of 2nd and 3rd born children. Additionally Bashir, Khurshid and Quadri (2014) found majority of them chosen to have another child after an existing child diagnosed with autism, explicitly for the purpose of having a caretaker for the particular child after the parent's death.

It is also interesting to note that number of associative problems were decreasing information on hostel needs were decreasing; that means the lesser the associative problem the autistic child had the greater willingness of the parents to put the child in to hostel.

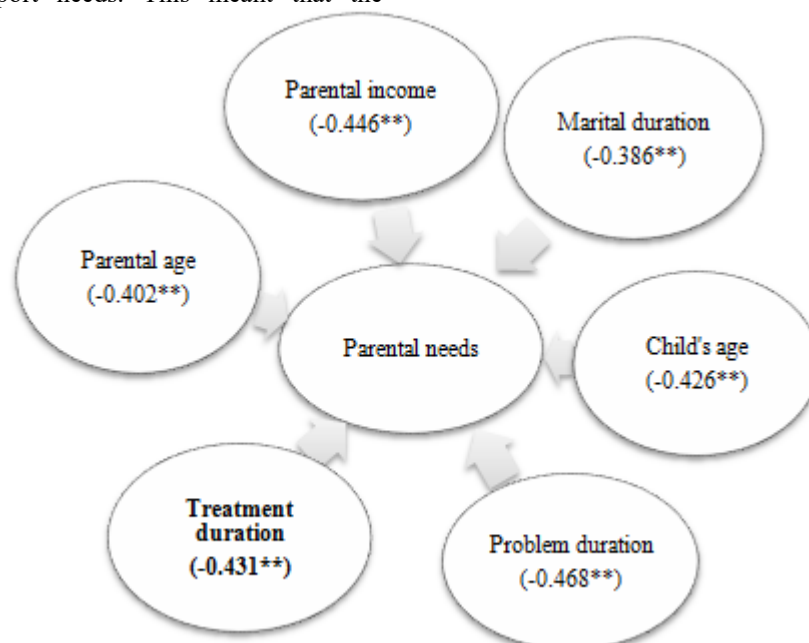


Figure: Relationship between demographic variables and needs

6. Conclusion

The particular study is very much helpful in understanding the parent and child related personal variables and their relationships with the parental felt needs. Keeping the results in view, it can be said that the organizations working for children with autism as well as their families, the service centres should organize parent education programs and provide information about autism, suitable vocations, existing policies and programs. They have to conduct training programs on handling the children, effective parenting, self management, relationship management etc. Government should establish more number of quality respite care service centres to facilitate the parents in terms of child care. Parents of Autistic children must form as associations and groups to support each other. Mass media should also cover the various aspects of children with autism.

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