

Stress Levels between Mothers of Children Attending Normal School and Special School in Erode, Tamilnadu

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Abstract

The present study was undertaken to observe the stress levels between mothers of children attending Normal school and Special school in Erode, Tamilnadu. The present study was a cross-sectional (comparative) study. The present study was conducted in and around Erode district, TamilNadu. 120 mothers were taken for the study, out of which 60 were mother of intellectually disabled children diagnosed with ID based on Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM5) criteria and 60 was mother of normal children. A total of 60 mothers of intellectually disabled children were selected through convenient sampling method. Stress inventory questionnaire was used to assess the stress levels. The major findings of this study are that mothers of children with intellectual disability experience stress. However, all the subjects experience higher level of Emotional, Cognitive, Behavioral stress than Physiological stress. Generalizations from this study are cautioned, due to the small volume of data and convenient selections of schools. Considering all that has mentioned above it has been shown that mothers of children with intellectual disability experience different levels of stress. Some relevant therapeutic interventions for these mothers and through methods of stress management interventions could be adapted to prevent many of these mothers' problems with their children. Special educations and early interventional measures should be more extensive in India and it should be available to educate and support mothers of intellectual disability children. The results of this study show that most of the mothers in our sample population must be referred to specialists for professional consultation on stress management.

Key words: Stress, Mothers, special schools

Introduction

Every child is special gift and blessing to their parents. But some children have special needs that challenge parents especially the mother to find ways to best prepare these children for their future and to handle any problem that may arise. The parents of children with special needs definitely face more difficulties than parents of normal children, which in turn affect their emotional well-being. Families of intellectually disabled children probably vary in their behaviour, social attitude

and family relationships as compared to families who do not have disabled children. Understanding the emotional reaction and attitude of the parents as well as family members of intellectually disabled children are of great importance in the management. Children with intellectually disabled generally require more care, attention and direct supervision than children without disabilities.

Research demonstrates that these higher care giving demands are associated with poor psychological and physical health states for parents and other family members.¹ It is worrying fact that children of special needs are not given the attention they deserve. Despite modern human right attitudes, the idea that a disabled child is the result of the anger of God, or ancestors, the embodiment of sin in the family or the sin in itself, is widely prevalent. Endless research shows that parents

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of disabled children feel guilty and sometimes take the blame for the impairment on themselves. Inevitably, the stigma and guilt result in isolation or segregation of the disabled child. In developing countries; the mother of the disabled child is abandoned by the husband forces the mother into either abandoning the child herself or becoming a beggar.² Society plays an important role in the upbringing of their child. Some parents feel ashamed of their child and consider them as burden. Others consider it as their duty to take care of their children. Uplifting the parent's social and psychological well-being would help the parents to deal effectively with their children having problem.³ The present study was undertaken to observe the stress levels between mothers of children attending Normal school and Special school in Erode, Tamilnadu.

Materials and Method

Study design: The present study was a cross-sectional (comparative) study

Study setting: The present study was conducted in and around Erode district, Tamil Nadu.

Study participants: 120 mothers were taken for the study, out of which 60 were mother of intellectually disabled children diagnosed with ID based on Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM5) criteria and 60 was mother of normal children. A total of 60 mothers of intellectually disabled children were selected through convenient sampling method from those who referred to psychiatric clinics for children, specialists' offices, and also advisory centres of department of education and training centers—rehabilitation and organization for exceptional children of Erode district. The following inclusion and exclusion criteria was used in recruiting the participants.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria: Inclusion criteria were having a aged between 6 and 18 years old child, having just one child with intellectually disabled, the presence of both parents in the family, employment of the father and not facing any serious financial crisis, not having any other member in the family suffering from chronic physical-mental problems, not having the child admitted to a boarding school, not having serious marital

conflicts during the past month, and no record of the death of a loved one during the past 3 months; also they should have been consent to participate in the study and in the case of mothers' unwillingness to cooperate for completing the questionnaires and giving full answers they would have been excluded from the study.

Outcome measures

Stress inventory: The questionnaire was standardized questionnaire. It consists of 30 items, under 4 parts namely, Physiological, Emotional, Cognitive and Behavioral. There are two possible responses to each item namely, 'Yes' or 'No'. The mothers were asked to tick any one, which applied to them the most. There was no time limit. But the mothers were asked to respond as quickly as possible. Scoring Key and Norms were provided by the authors. The validity of S.I. is 0.80 and the reliability by test retest method is 0.95.⁴

Data analysis: Data were analysed using SPSS software version 11.5 (SPSS Inc). Quantitative data were expressed as mean (standard deviation) and qualitative as number (percent). Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for comparing the stress score among between mothers of children attending Normal school and Special School in Erode with respect to each of the dependent variables. $P < 0.05$ was considered as statistically significant level.

Results

Table 1 compares the level of stress between mothers of children attending Normal school and Special school. Most of the mothers of children attending Normal school are 71.6% having low level of stress score, 16.7% of them are having moderate level of stress score, 11.7% of them are having moderate level of score and none of them are having very high level of stress score. Whereas mothers of children attending special school are none of them having low level of stress score, 16.7% of them are having moderate level of stress score, 71.6% of them are having higher level of score and 11.7% are having very high level of stress score. Table 2 shows the comparison of Mothers of children attending Normal school and Mothers of children attending Special school stress score.

Table 1: Comparison of level of stress score

Level of Stress score	MOTHER'S of children attending Special school		MOTHER'S of children attending Normal school		Chi square test
	n	%	n	%	
Low	0	0.0%	43	71.6%	$\chi^2=17.85$ P=0.001*** DF=2 not significant
Moderate	10	16.7%	10	16.7%	
High	43	71.6%	7	11.7%	
Very High	7	11.7%	0	0.0%	
Total	60	100.0%	60	100.0%	

(NS= not significant S=significant DF= Degrees of Freedom) (NOT SIGNIFICANT P> 0.05 * significant at P≤0.05 ** highly significant at P≤0.01 *** very high significant at P≤0.001)

Table 2: Comparison of mean stress score

Stress domains	group				Mean difference	Student's independent t-test
	Mothers of children attending Normal school		Mothers of children attending Special school			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
PHYSIOLOGICAL	3.45	1.43	3.80	1.46	0.35	t=1.32 P=0.18 not significant
EMOTIONAL	3.52	1.43	5.28	1.66	1.77	t=6.24 P=0.001*** significant
COGNITIVE	3.03	1.06	3.75	1.08	0.72	t=3.67 P=0.001*** significant
BEHAVIORAL	3.47	1.55	5.32	1.65	1.85	t=6.33 P=0.001*** significant
Total	13.47	4.24	18.15	3.65	4.68	t=6.48 P=0.001*** significant

(NOT SIGNIFICANT P> 0.05 AT * significant at P≤0.05 ** highly significant at P≤0.01 *** very high significant at P≤0.001)

Discussion

The present study compared the level of stress among mother of children attending Normal school and Special school stress and also to investigate the potential effects of variables such as age, mother's education and income in the Erode society on these differences, our research data results revealed that None of the mothers of children attending Special school are having low level of stress score, 16.7% of them are having moderate level of stress score, 71.6 % of them are having high level of score and 11.7 % of them are having very high level of stress score. Statistically there is a significant difference between mothers of children attending Normal school Vs Special school, it was confirmed using chi square test very high significant ($P=0.001$). This confirms hypothesis I. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Rangaswamy and Bhavani⁵ Parents with disabled child may have higher levels of stress and lower levels of wellbeing than with the normal children. Similar studies have also revealed that Lopez et al⁶ also reported that parents of children with developmental delays experienced greater stress than children without delay. Floyd and Galladjar⁷ also observed that parents of children with intellectual disability often experienced considerable stress resulting from worries and demand related to their children. Similarly, Baker et al⁸ found that parenting stress was higher for parents of pre-schoolers with delays than for parents of pre-schoolers without delays.

Stress is found to be an important problem commonly found in parents of children with special needs. Being apprehensive clearly explains stress, anxiety and its repercussions are perceived in no less degree in mothers of children with special needs. A chain reaction to this is seen in their quality of life. It is the need of the hour to make a study on these mothers of children with special needs to manage their stress and anxiety about their children and to enhance their quality of life. Parenting stress can be defined as excess anxiety and tension specifically related to the role of a parent and to parent-child interactions.⁹ Parent's psychological well-being is considered to be very important in parent – child relationship because it is very important key to the success of a meaningful family relationship. The major findings of this study are that mothers of children with intellectual disability experience stress. However, all the subjects experience higher level of Emotional, Cognitive, Behavioral stress than Physiological stress. Generalizations from this study are cautioned, due to

the small volume of data and convenient selections of schools.

Conclusion

Considering all that has mentioned above it has been shown that mothers of children with intellectual disability experience different levels of stress. Some relevant therapeutic interventions for these mothers and through methods of stress management interventions could be adapted to prevent many of these mothers' problems with their children. Special educations and early interventional measures should be more extensive in India and it should be available to educate and support mothers of intellectual disability children. The results of this study show that most of the mothers in our sample population must be referred to specialists for professional consultation on stress management

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval: The study protocol was approved by institutional human ethical committee. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee.

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