

Problem Behaviours and Parental Stress among Children with Mild Intellectual Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

There is phenomenal rate of increasing level of stress. Parents who raise their children with neurodevelopmental disorders experience higher stress levels than the parents of children without these disorders. Problem behaviors of intellectually disabled patients acts as a serious barrier to the personal development and to the others in the environment. At the same time these interferes with their parents lives. The present study investigates the relationship between parental stress and behavioral problems of children with mild intellectual disability. 32 parents of children with mild intellectual disability were assessed by Parental Stress Scale (PSS) and Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL). Parental stress was high among fathers than mothers; also, there was significant difference between the stress levels of parents on the basis of gender of their children. Stress among parents of boy child was high than among girl child. Further there was no correlation between behavioral problems and parental stress. This study holds implication in development of psychological interventions by providing a platform for parents to deal with the behavioral problem of their children.

Keywords: *Problem Behavior, Intellectual Development Disorder (ID) and Parental Stress*

Intellectual development disorder (IDD) earlier Mental Retardation is a generalized neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by significantly impaired intellectual and adaptive functioning. It is a developmental disability that first appears in children under the age of 18. It is defined as an intellectual functioning level (as measured by standard tests for intelligence quotient) that is below average and significant limitations in daily living skills (adaptive functioning).

There are both negative and positive impacts which children with disabilities have on their parents. Parents of ID children have both negative and positive emotions towards their children, such as “sorrow, and joy”, ‘pessimism and optimism’ Kearney and Griffin (1990). Living with disabled children has adverse effects on the family as well parents, siblings and extended family members. The positive effect includes increasing awareness among family members also it encourages connections to community and religion groups as well.

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On the negative side, the account of time and financial costs are at par, there are physical and emotional demands, in order to raise a child with disabilities in the family. However, it is said and understood that effects of ID children on parents as well as family totally depends on the type of condition and level of severity of the disorder and the availability of resources with the family.

Parents face problems regarding finding a proper care for their child, also it affects the decision of parents. The level of stress could also have an impact on their relationships; they also have low self-esteem, which may also divert their minds from other family functioning. Intellectually disabled children also affect parents to allocate their time and resources for their children's health. In family settings where there are other siblings of disabled child affects their mental health and tend to be ignored by their parents. The resources and time are devoted to the IDD child in the family. There may be development of low self-esteem among normal children in the family.

In some families where children with developmental disability are born, it is viewed as an unfortunate event. The birth of disabled child in a family triggers a wide range of emotional responses in parents and across family systems. Also, it is evident that mothers of disabled children suffer or undergoes more stress level than fathers because they are occupied with other household activities as well as they take care of their family members and also their other normal children, mothers also tend to over think about their child's disabled condition as they are to stay all time at house and their level of stress tend to increase at fast pace. While fathers of disabled children undergo lower stress because they tend to socialize outside, as compared to mothers of disabled as per previous researches.

Parental stress is a normal behavior which every parent undergoes during their parenting experience. Parental stress is a behavior which arises in parents when parenting demands exceed the expected and actual resources available to parents that permits them to succeed in their parenting role. Parenting stress also affects the parent-child relationship in negative aspects.

Beyond these above stated frameworks, various literatures says that parental age, gender, psychopathology symptoms, child rearing issues, children's emotional disorders and many other factors contributes to or is influenced by the level of parenting stress in the caregiver.

Having a child with some disability has a significant impact on parents physical as well as psychological health. Rearing a child with disability in India has become more difficult task for parents nowadays. It has been said that parenting stress and adaptation accordingly depends on the type of disability a child is going through. However, many researches have reported that there exists a relationship between parenting stress and a medical diagnosis. There are various causes or sources of parental stress like limited resources, including food, medication, daily life skills of a disabled child tend to create higher level of stress among parents of disabled children. Also in addition these parents use a strategy for coping with stress which includes "faith in god", self-determination, and also perception of the situation. So it could be concluded that rearing a child with disability in a family is not an easy task to face the reality, the other family members also undergoes same level of stress as the parents of disabled child do. So, in today's scenario, various psychological interventions have increased their pace to spread awareness among parents and other family members of disabled children with the aim of how to cope up with the stress, and also various counseling sessions are now in process running to help people cope up with their stress.

METHODOLOGY

Aim: To study the relationship between parental stress and behavioral problems of mild intellectually disabled children.

Objectives:

- To study the relationship between parental stress and behavioral problems of children with mild intellectual disability.
- To study the difference in stress between mothers and fathers of children with mild intellectual disability.

Hypotheses

- H.1. There will be significant relationship between parental stress and behavioral problems of children with mild intellectual disability.
- H.2. There will be a significant difference in parental stress between mothers and fathers of children with mild intellectual disability.

Sample

A total of 32 parents of children with mild intellectual disability participated in the current study from Delhi NCR. The patients in the age range of 6-12 years.

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Male and Female diagnosed patients with Mild Intellectual Disability were included.
2. Patients in the age range of 6-12 years were included.
3. Patients without any comorbidity were included.
4. Parents without any physical and mental disorder were included.

Exclusion criteria:

1. Patients with profound, Severe and Moderate Intellectual disability were excluded from the study.
2. Male and Female patients below 6 years and above 12 years were excluded.
3. Patients with seizure disorders, on medication and those with other comorbidities like ASD, ADHD were excluded.
4. Those patients already receiving Behaviour Modification/therapy were also excluded from this study.

Tools

The following psychological tools were used in the present study.

Parental Stress Scale: The parental stress scale is an assessment tool designed to measure the level of stress. Parents experience as a result of having children (Berry & Jones, 1995). The parental stress scale consists of 18 items that describe the parent-child relationship and the parent's feelings regarding it. Parents respond by indicating the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statement. A Likert-type scale is used, with 1 indicating a strong disagreement and 5 indicating a strong agreement. Both negative and positive items are included, which allows the instrument to assess stress by weighing the negative impact of parenting against benefits it may provide. For example, a positive item is "I feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of being a parent" (Berry & Jones, 1995). The parental stress scale was described as "appropriate for both mothers and fathers and for parents of children with and without clinical problems, and it is brief and easy to administer and score". (Berry & Jones, 1995)

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Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL): The Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) is comprised of 118 items designed to record, in a standardized format, behavioral problems and competencies of children aged 4 through 18, as reported by their parents or other primary caregivers. The CBCL allows for the calculation of raw scores and t-scores, normed separately for girls and boys, in 8 different domains: withdrawn, Somatic Complaints, Anxious/Depressed, Social Problems, Thought Problems, Attention Problems, Delinquent Behavior and Aggressive Behavior. The domain of Sex Problems (items 5, 59, 60, 73, 96 and 110) is not scored for this age group of children (12+ years), although the items responses are available.

Procedure

After the selection of the tools, the questionnaires were given to the parents of children with mild intellectual disability. Instructions were given manually to all the parents. Once the Data has been collected, the raw scores were computed of each participant for each variable and its sub-scales were calculated. From the raw scores mean and standard deviation was computed which further used in calculating the correlation between the test and t-value for the significance of the hypothesis for each variable. Further interpretation and analysis of data was done.

RESULT ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The aim of the present research is to see the relationship between the parental stress and behavioral problems of children with mild intellectual disability. The objectives were to study the relationship between parental stress and behavioral problems of children with mild intellectual disability and to study the difference in parental stress between mothers and fathers of children with mild intellectual disability.

Table-1 Showing correlation between parental stress and CBCL

Variables	Parental Stress-Mothers	Parental Stress- Fathers
Internal	0.084	-0.087
External	0.100	0.049
Others	-0.0323	-0.016
Total	-0.089	-0.039
Parental Stress- Mothers	1	0.023
Parental Stress- Fathers	0.023	1

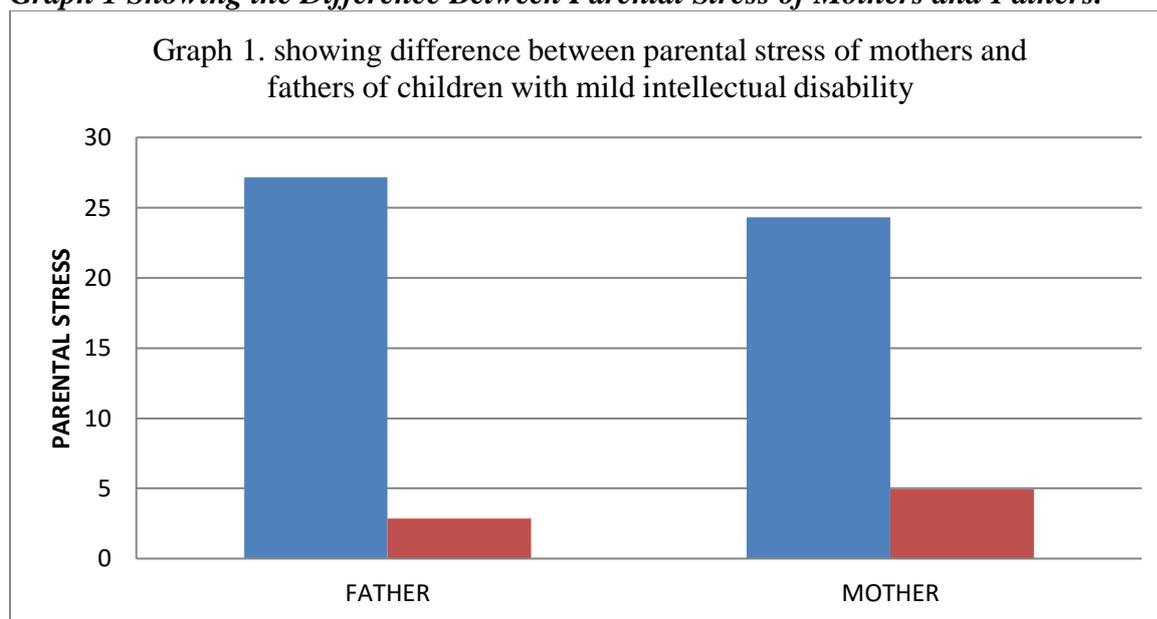
In the following table Pearson Correlation was administered between parental stress and variables of CBCL included- External, Internal, Others behavioral scores, and total scores. No significant correlation was found between any of variables.

Table-2 Showing t-test between parental stress of Male and Female

Sl. No.	Variables	N	Mean	SD	t-Value
1	Parental stress-Mothers	32	27.16	2.86	2.811*
2	Parental stress- Fathers	32	24.31	4.95	

There were significant difference between parental stress of fathers and mothers, The mean value of parental stress of mothers (m=27.16) was higher than parental stress in fathers (m=24.310). (t=2.811, p<0.05), it also shows that mothers of children with intellectual disability of mild level has more stress than the fathers.

Graph 1 Showing the Difference Between Parental Stress of Mothers and Fathers.



DISCUSSION

This research was conducted to explore the relationship between parental stress and behavioral problems of children with mild intellectual disability and whether there exists a significant difference between the parental stress of children with mild intellectual disability. Behavior of an intellectual disabled persons is impaired due to several reasons: due to presence of an extra chromosome, its complications vary from pregnancy issues and its complications during birth (such as Down syndrome and Fragile X syndrome). The behavior of intellectually disabled children have adverse effects on their parents, which ruins their personal life, like it hampers husband-wife relationships, limits the availability of resources, affects their physical as well as psychological health, also affects upbringing of the sibling child, and many more. These results in parental stress which affects many areas of parent’s personal lives.

Table-1. shows the correlation values between parental stress and problem behaviours on child behavior checklist. There was no significant correlation found between any of variables. This has been validated by a study where possible reasons apart from behavioral issues leading to parental stress could be overall pathology of children. Those diagnosed with mild intellectual disability in which diagnosis is made if an individual has impairment in intellectual functioning as well as limitation in two or more adaptive skills. Also, another reason might be as the severity level tends to increase it tends to increase behavioral issues in children with intellectual disability which will have impact on the stress level of parents and their living. Therefore, our current findings of the research lacked the above stated. There is positive relationship between parental stress and impaired behavior of their children (Ashley & Woodman et al., 2014).

Table 2 shows significant difference was found in parental stress between mothers and fathers of children with mild intellectual disability. Previous studies validate that the level of maternal stress is higher in comparison to fraternal stress. It was found that there was significant difference in parental stress between mothers & fathers of children with mild intellectual disability. A number of investigators depicted that mothers of children with intellectual disability had a higher level of stress (Beckman, Burden, and Lawton 1992). The

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main findings of the study revealed that there was a significant difference between the levels of stress among parents of mild intellectual disability depicting high stress in mothers than in fathers. The possible reasons of high parental stress are related to failure of child to meet parents' expectations and to satisfy parents in their parenting role. As in most published researches, the burden of caring for a child with disability was primarily more in mothers (Heller et al, 1997).

Previous studies have indicated that higher stress among parents of children with intellectual disability was failure of children to meet parents' expectations and to satisfy the parents in their parenting roles. Parents who are engaged in more prestigious occupations had more stress than parents in less prestigious occupations, additionally receiving little support from their extended families in taking care of their child was also found to be the major concern behind the parental stress. Additionally, previous studies also lagged behind differences between the sample participants on the basis of their demographic details such as gender, age group, domicile, etc., and focused on children with ID and parental stress and their coping strategies.

Poor impulse control and do react in an aggressive manner which deteriorates with their personal development as well as social growth. The impact of such behaviors is experienced by their parents in the form of severe stress.

As per the results of our study which indicates more parental stress serves for the basis of suggestions for the parents to overcome their parental stress.

- Exploring more about the problem and the cause, i.e.; learning everything about intellectual disabilities through various sources, so that personal attention can be given to their children, Parents should encourage their child to engage or to do new things in life on daily basis. Encouraging can help your child live independently, learn new skills, feel motivated and could perform tasks easily.
- Always stay involved in your child's life. Staying involved makes the parent-child relationship build stronger. Keeping a daily record of child's progress.
- Joining community or a parent group of guardians of intellectually disabled children keeps parents aware about new skills to be taught to their children and also awareness is encouraged.

Regular visits to a mental health professional help parents to become more aware about the future consequences of behaviors of their children. And it could also encourage development of effective intervention strategies for the child.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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