

Effect of Guidance for Stress Management in Mothers of Physically Challenged Children

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ABSTRACT

A family with a physically challenged child faces social isolation, stigma, self-blame, guilt, financial problems and disruption of household routines and social activities. Mothers especially those of physically challenged children, experience a great deal of stress, which leads to feelings of anxiety, and insecurity in them. Mothers also have needs for looking after their physically challenged child, such as personal safety, development of basic behavioral skills, care giving needs, and autonomy in making choices for decision making, intellectual stimulation, and creative opportunities. In addition, mothers have emotional needs of feelings of security, respect, appreciation and a sense of achievement as well as social needs for affiliation and acceptance. Lack of satisfaction of these needs results in frustration, anxiety, stress, which would further affect the mother's behavior towards the child. Mothers of physically challenged children showed more emotional stress, felt more burnt out, were more self-critical, and tended to reach out for social support more than others, in the process of adaptation. Specific behavior problems associated with the behavioral phenotype of a syndrome also influence the level of maternal stress (Gosch, 2001). Like all parents, parents of children with physically handicap children would have hopes, ambition, and expectations from their child. When these dreams are disrupted, they are disappointed and this increases their level of stress and frustration. Guidance is a kind of specialized service, which is given to individuals to help them solve problems of a crucial nature.

Keywords: *Physically Challenged Children, Guidance, Stress Management*

Chronic conditions of disability, both medical and emotional, make extra demands on parents, resulting in stress (Tew & Laurence, 1975; Breslau et al, 1982; Stein, 1988; Miller et al, 1992). A family with a physically challenged child faces social isolation, stigma, self-blame, guilt, financial problems and disruption of household routines and social activities. Mothers especially those of physically challenged children, experience a great deal of stress, which leads to feelings of anxiety, and insecurity in them. Mothers also have needs for looking after their physically challenged child, such as personal safety, development of basic behavioral skills, care giving needs, and autonomy in making choices for decision making, intellectual stimulation, and creative opportunities. In addition, mothers have emotional needs of feelings of security, respect, appreciation and a sense of

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achievement as well as social needs for affiliation and acceptance. The relation between stress and parenting has attracted the attention of researchers for a long time.

Families and carers of people with disabilities face significant difficulties in their life. Although giving care to the child is part of the responsibility of the parents, the situation becomes entirely different when the child is diagnosed with a disability and may rely on long-term dependence on daily living. It is because parents have to manage their children's health problem as well as the requirements of everyday living. Having a child with developmental or psychological problems is always stressful for their parents who are taking care of them, even when the child is a grown-up person, which would cause a constant incompatibility of parents with their child's disability. These parents, other than bearing financial pressures, are always facing emotional pressures such as feeling ashamed or feeling guilty. Caregiving for a child who is disabled is unswervingly related to the stress levels encountered by the parents who may influence the parental quality of life outcomes.

Objective

The aim was to study the impact of guidance for stress management on the criterion variables, frustration and feeling of burnout, in mothers of physically challenged children.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Forty mothers with physically challenged children were taken from New Delhi, special schools. These forty mothers were randomly divided onto two groups, with one group receiving guidance for stress management (experimental group) and the other being offered no treatment, serving as control group.

Tools

Family stress scale (Shanmugavelayuthan, 1999) - This scale has 24 items and taps four areas of stress: financial, extra-familial and emotional aspects. Test-retest reliability of the scale was 0.85.

Frustration Test (Chauhan and Tiwari, 1972) - The scale consists of 40 items with 10 items covering each of the four modes of frustration: resignation, fixation, regression, and aggression. Items are scored on a 5-point scale. The test-retest reliability for the test is .88. Scores above 30 in each category indicate high frustration potential. Total frustration scores are reported in this paper.

Burnout inventory (Gupta, 2002) - The instrument has 222 statements developed keeping in mind the mothers of physically challenged children. Responses range from never to everyday on a 7 point Likert scale.

Procedure

Group guidance sessions for mothers of physically challenged children were designed and held. The sessions were held three times a week for 2 weeks. Each session lasted for about 45 minutes. Participants were helped to identify their sources of stress and learn different coping methods, including relaxation techniques, problem solving and communication skills utilizing the support network.

RESULTS

Table 1. Mean (Sd) Values on Family Stress, Frustration and Burnout Obtained by Mothers in The Intervention and Control Groups.

Variable	Intervention group(N=30)	Control Group(N=30)	't' value
Family stress	30.95 (3.78)	44.75 (5.88)	8.383*
Frustration	104.55 (10.67)	121.65 (7.73)	5.80*
Burnout	58.95 (4.27)	72.20 (8.58)	6.18*

The results indicate that the guidance intervention significantly reduced the level of family stress, frustration and burn out experienced by mothers of mentally challenged children.

DISCUSSION

This study showed that guidance for stress management for mothers of physically challenged children did indeed significantly reduce their levels of stress, frustration and feelings of burn out. Mukherjee, (1998) emphasized the impact of management techniques for family stress and found that reduction of frustration plays an important role in reducing stress of the mothers of physically challenged children. Sheshadri, Verma and Parshad (1983) in their study showed that the physically retarded child introduced new responsibilities in the family. In turn, this affected the marital harmony between the parents and increased the amount of stress experienced. It was also seen that greater the degree of retardation in the child, the greater was the burden felt and feeling of burn out among the mothers. Pandey and Mishra (1996) discussed the importance of parental counseling to reduce the feeling of anxiety, burn out and frustration. The significance of a positive parent-child relationship in developing the potential of the mentally challenged child is also emphasized.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights that a brief guidance-based intervention, comprising of 6 sessions spread over two weeks, is effective in reducing the level of stress and burn out experienced by the mothers of physically challenged children. This in turn will help in improving the quality of the mother's interaction with the child.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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