



Psycho-Social & Health Status of Mothers of Intellectual Aabled

Sejal Macwan

Adhyapak sahayak, Anand institute of Social Work, Sardar Patel University, VVNagar

ABSTRACT

Family is the destination for the love, care, affection, security, shelter & many more for every human organism. When the terms love & care are visualized, the first thing comes in mind is family, especially mother, an incredible creation of almighty without whom there is no existence of universe. The mother-child bond is very extra strong, whether the child is new born, or a toddler, an adolescent, an adult or a kid with special needs. As far as the special child is concerned, only mothers play significant role in caring & training him/her. The irony is that in the journey of caring such child, she is the only being who pays lot for it. The study highlights the psychological, social & health issues faced by the special mothers of special children. Further it briefly discusses the marital & intra family disharmony occurs between the parents of intellectual abled. Family is the destination for the love, care, affection, security, shelter & many more for every human organism. When the terms love & care are visualized, the first thing comes in mind is family, especially mother, an incredible creation of almighty without whom there is no existence of universe. The mother-child bond is very extra strong, whether the child is new born, or a toddler, an adolescent, an adult or a kid with special needs. As far as the special child is concerned, only mothers play significant role in caring & training him/her. The irony is that in the journey of caring such child, she is the only being who pays lot for it. The study highlights the psychological, social & health issues faced by the special mothers of special children. Further it briefly discusses the marital & intra family disharmony occurs between the parents of intellectual abled.

KEYWORDS : Intellectually abled, toddler, intra family disharmony, psycho-social & health issues

INTRODUCTION:

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY/ MENTALLY CHALLENGED:

"I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do the something that I can do."

"It is not enough to give handicapped life; they must be given a life worth living."

Helen Keller

Intellectual Disability/Mentally challenged/ Mental Retardation is a developmental problem manifested during a child's years of development (i.e. 0-18 years old). It is a condition whereby a child's intelligence and adaptability are significantly below the average level of his peer. It is a condition diagnosed before age 18, usually in infancy or prior to birth, that includes below-average general intellectual function, and a lack of the skills necessary for daily living. American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR) defines Mental Retardation as, "An individual is considered to have mental retardation based on the following three criteria: Intellectual functioning level (IQ) is below 70-75; significant limitations exist in two or more adaptive skill areas; and the condition manifests before the age of 18." The levels of Mental Retardation Classified in World Health Report 2001 by World Health Organization (WHO) are:

LEVEL OF RETARDATION	IQ LEVEL
Mild Retardation	50-69
Moderate Retardation	35-49
Severe Retardation	20-34
Profound Retardation	Below 20

SPECIAL CHILDREN & THEIR SPECIAL MOTHERS:

In the Indian society, it is mostly the mothers of the mentally challenged children who bear the burden and stress of upbringing an underprivileged child of mothers caring for mentally challenged children is instrumental in determining the overall development of the child.

Research has revealed that psychiatric morbidities such as depression and anxiety are common among the mothers of mentally challenged children. Studies from different countries on parents of children with special abilities revealed that 35-53% of mothers of children with special abilities have symptoms of depression.

The birth of a special child at home is likely to be one of the most traumatic events experienced in a family. The literature suggests that one challenge faced by these parents is social isolation. Friends and

family members may not understand the special needs of a child with mental retardation (*Friedrich, Greenberg, & Cronin, 1983*) and thus, may not be able to provide the child-care support often available to families with more typical young children. It is often more challenging for families with a special needs child to go out.

A mother shows a series of reactions after knowing that their child is mentally challenged. These include shock, denial, guilt, sorrow, rejection and acceptance. Questions like 'why me?' 'How can it be?' keep arising without answers. Some of them undergo tremendous guilt feelings, experience deep sorrow, have strong under expectations of achievement, may want to escape from reactions and ultimately turn to accept the child).

All these can affect different mothers differently. Their physical and mental health may actually suffer or they perceive it to suffer. Wikler Mentions that tremendous amount of stress chronically affects special mothers' lives.

Mothers of intellectually abled children undergo more stressful experience than mothers of normal children. Jealousy and resentment may develop in siblings if the specially abled child requires most of his parent's attention, leaving short tempers and impatience for the others. Families may experience shock, a sense of denial and guilt, increased sadness, and may not accept the differences of the child. They tend to make an effort to paper up the differences of their children in an attempt to overcome the problem.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The relationship of mothers is the earliest, the longest and the most enduring of all the family relationships and their influence last a lifetime.

Mother relationship assumes a greater meaning and significance in family having a child with any kind of special ability. They are integral members of the family support system. The mother of children with special ability may experience changes in family role, restructuring of the family's functioning and activity, reducing health status, psychological stress, crisis in relation with in-law, crisis with neighbours and other peer group.

The siblings also play significant role in nurturing a healthy relation in family. It is considered as a pious bondage, the cute fight, artificial anger, commenting on stupidity, etc. make this relation more beautiful. But this is okay when it is a matter of normal siblings, as far as the relation between abled & specially abled is concerned every emotion has distinctive consequences. Children need good care and education

in order to take their places in society. These needs are provided primarily by the family, especially by the mothers. Therefore, it is important to determine the difficulties that a mother encounters during the education and care of a specially abled child. The current study was conducted to determine the difficulties of mothers with mentally challenged children, and the effects of socio-demographic factors on these difficulties. The mothers of such mentally challenged children play a critical role because they face lot of stress from society and as well as in handling these children in practical day-to-day life.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Aim of the research was to study the problems faced by the mothers of mentally challenged children. The objective of the study was to explore the subjective experience of mothers of child with mental retardation & to gain knowledge about the psychological stress of mothers of the mentally challenged child.

Procedure & Sample:

A self-structured interview schedule was designed for this study. Data was collected from 60 mothers of a day care centre named **Mitra Rehabilitation Centre, Mogri, Gujarat**. The research design for the study was exploratory cum descriptive. Sampling technique adopted for the selection of respondents was stratified random sampling method.

RESULTS:

A] Socio-demographic profile: Majority of the respondents belongs to the age group of 31 years and above i.e. 52 (87%). Majority of the respondents belong to the nuclear family i.e. 31 (52%). Half of the respondents belong to larger family (5-8 family members) i.e. 30 (50%). 54 (90%) respondents are home makers. Most of the respondents got married at the age of between 19-21 years i.e. 27 (45%).

The fact revealed from the study regarding family environment is that majority of the respondents' husbands support her and her special child i.e. 57 (95%) but the irony is that most of the respondents' in-laws are not happy with her and her special child i.e. 49 (82%). Majority of the respondents stated that their normal children have not accepted their special child in family i.e. 49 (82%), this talks that the communication between the normal sibling & special child & normal child & parent gets deteriorated.

B] Parental expectations & familiarity about child activities: 29 (48%) of the respondents expect that their special child should be accepted as normal children by the society. Most of the respondents have expectation from the organization that their special child should be independent to his/her life at some extent i.e. 20 (33%). Majority of the respondents have experienced aggressiveness among their special child i.e. 47 (78%).

C] Awareness & Belief about Intellectual Disability among the respondents: Majority of the respondents agreed the statement that mental retardation is not only hereditary but comes after birth or due to complication in delivery or complication at any other stage of life i.e. 40 (67%). Majority of the respondents disagree the statement that mental retardation in children occurs due to the sins of parents i.e. 42 (70%). Majority of the respondents' view that marriage cannot cure mentally retarded person i.e. 55 (92%).

D] Diagnosis & Treatment: Majority of the respondents had taken their children at the hospital for the diagnosis of mental retardation when the special child was below one year of age i.e. 33 (55%). Most of the respondents' mentally challenged children were given medicines when they were taken hospital for the first time.

CONCLUSION

From the study it can be concluded that in a person's life family plays a significant role in a holistic development of a person. Under the roof of a mother a person feels secured. No matter how old a person grows he/she always seeks a lap of mother, hands to carry him/her. As far as the present study is concerned it thoroughly talks about the special mother of the special kid.

During this research journey, it was found that the mother who has a special kid basically belonged to the age group of more than thirty years. As far as their education is concerned, most of them have

studied up to secondary level. The deterioration in joint family system was clearly found, as majority of the respondents belonged to nuclear family. When it was asked about the pre natal period during the birth of special child, the respondents revealed that majority of them had physical & psychological problems like Thyroid, Blood Pressure, Aggressiveness, etc., respectively. Several questions were asked regarding the awareness among the respondents on laws & other matters. It was shocking that not a single respondent was aware about the legislation regarding their special children, it was also brought out that very few respondents are aware about the facilities & benefits given by government to the intellectual disabled. Like other normal kids mothers, these special mothers have also certain dreams for their children, but due to certain intellectual deficit, these people are falling under the category of special one.

As far as the psychological conditions of respondents are concerned, they revealed that, sometimes they are only blamed by their spouses & in-laws & family members for producing a child with special needs as well not accepting the child in family. Due to such attitude of family, she herself sometimes feels negative for herself as well as for her special child. Due to such things the intra family & spousal crisis takes place.

Where there are ordinary & extra ordinary kids in family, the mother is being in a very traumatic situation, where she has to balance between both & has to care for the needs of both kids. Sometimes it happens due to disequilibrium state mother meets with the clashes with the normal kids & special one. The study also talks about the treatment part of the special kids. It is positive finding that the kids were taken to the hospital for the first time at the age of less than two years.

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