

How to Cite:

Vijila, S., & Sreelatha, S. (2022). Stress coping ability of parents of mentally challenged children. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S10), 899–903.

<https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS10.13729>

Stress coping ability of parents of mentally challenged children

S. Vijila

PhD scholar, N.V.K.S.D. College of Education (Autonomous), Attoor, Kanniyakumari District, Tamil Nadu, India

Dr. S. Sreelatha*

Principialpal, N.V.K.S.D College of Education (Autonomous), Attoor, Kanniyakumari District, Tamil Nadu, India

*Corresponding author

Abstract--In this study, an attempt has been made to study the stress coping ability of parents of mentally challenged children. Data was collected from a sample of 200 parents of mentally challenged children studying in various special schools in Kanniyakumari district. Normative survey method was used. The results showed that moderate levels of stress coping ability of parents of mentally challenged children. Also, significant gender, and locality, wise difference are noted in the stress coping ability of parents of mentally challenged children.

Keywords--parents, mentally challenged children, stress coping ability.

Need and Significance of the study

Parents of children with disabilities experience high levels of stress, which would force them to adopt various strategies to cope up with stress in their daily life. Many studies examined the primary role of coping strategies used by parents to handle these stresses, and the type of disability and related restrictions and limitations in child and family life, parents' characteristics, and cultural differences may interfere with their preference of strategies they used to cope. Lopes, et al, (2008), Dillon,(2014) described that stress experienced by parents of challenged children had unique types of stresses, and they are facing challenges daily due to the inability to act or do any effort to handle developmental and behavioral challenges in their children.

Parents who experience higher levels of stress respond differently with their children, and they react differently to their child's problematic behavior (Hayes &

Watson 2013). In the process of reducing stress, those parents might use certain coping strategies knowingly or unknowingly. Stress coping ability level of parents of mentally challenged children has received research attention.

Parents of disabled children have continuous changes in their lifestyle and arrangements to face constant changes with child's growth. This need would be doubled for parents of children with mentally challenged children. Increasing demands of raising mentally challenged children with all the expected developmental and functional deficiencies, put families and parents in particular in confrontation with resultant stresses, (Woodman, & Hauser, (2013). The negative psychological effects of having a mentally challenged child emerged in the results of many studies such as (Picci, et al., 2015; Woodman, & Hauser, 2013; Wang, Michaels, & Day, 2011, Dukmak, 2009) which all indicated low self-esteem, and high levels of stress. Low mental health and depression is noted in families of mentally challenged children, especially when compared to families of normal children, (Lopes, et al., (2008), Mount & Dillon, (2014). Parents of mentally challenged children experience mental conflicts and they have to face different challenges in their life. They feel like they are unable to handle or control the developmental tasks and behavior of their children. The investigator being the care taker of a home for mentally challenged children, daily experiences the stress of parents. Hence, the investigator made an attempt to study the stress coping ability of parents of mentally challenged children.

Objectives

- To study the level of the stress coping ability of parents of mentally challenged children (Total sample and sub samples.)
- To find out whether there is any significant difference in the stress coping ability of parents of mentally challenged children with regard to the background variables Gender, and Locality

Hypotheses

- There exists no significant difference in the mean scores of stress coping ability of fathers and mothers of mentally challenged children.
- There exists no significant difference in the mean scores of stress coping ability of rural and urban parents of mentally challenged children.

Methodology

The investigator adopted normative survey method for the study. Data was collected from a sample of 200 parents of mentally challenged children studying in different special schools of kanniyakumeri district in TamilNadu state using random sampling technique. Stress Coping Ability scale (Sreelatha 2018) was used to collect data. For illiterate parents, interview was conducted. Stress Coping scale includes 35 statements in the eight dimensions namely Confronted coping, Distancing, Self-controlling, Seeking social support, Accepting Responsibility, Escape –Avoidance, Planful problem solving ,and Positive Reappraisal. Validity and reliability of the tool were established. Percentage, t test and ANOVA were used for the analysis of the data.

Results and Discussion

Percentage wise Distribution of Parents of Mentally Challenged Children under Different Levels of Stress Coping Ability.

Table 1
Different levels of Stress Coping Ability of Parents of Mentally Challenged Children

Category	Count	percent
Low	36	18.00
Moderate	119	59.50
High	45	22.50

From table 1 it is clear that nearly 60% of parents of mentally challenged children possess moderate level of stress coping ability (59.50% moderate, 18.00% low and 22.50%high) .This result is in agreement with the findings of John and Gandhimathi (2020). Gender wise Comparison of Stress Coping Ability of Parents of Mentally Challenged Children.

Table 2
Gender wise of differences in the Stress Coping Ability of Parents of Mentally Challenged Children

Category	Mean value	SD	N	t	P
Male	95.24	8.02	144		
Female	91.88	7.93	56	2.682**	0.008

Note ** indicates significant difference at 0.01 level.

Results in table 2 shows that, the calculated t value ($t=2.682$, $p < 0.01$) is significant at 0.01 level. Hence the null hypothesis 'there exists no significant difference in the mean scores of stress coping ability of fathers and mothers of mentally challenged children' is rejected. It shows that there existed significant difference in the stress coping ability of fathers and mothers of mentally challenged children. This result is in agreement with the findings of Mubarak, et al., (2014)., Kumar, (2008), Irum and Mahwish (2015)., Bawalsah ., (2016), which also indicates gender differences in the stress coping ability of parents of mentally challenged children. These differences may be attributable to many reasons such as difference in sample, tools, statistical techniques etc. Mean values shows that stress coping ability of fathers of mentally challenged children is higher than that of mothers. Locality wise Comparison of Stress Coping Ability of Parents of Mentally Challenged Children.

Table 3
Locality wise differences in the Stress Coping Ability of Parents of Mentally Challenged Children

Category	Mean	SD	N	t	P
Rural	93.08	8.34	118		
Urban	96.06	7.49	82	2.641**	0.009

Note ** indicates significant difference at 0.01 level.

Results in table 3 shows that the calculated t value ($t=2.641$; $P < 0.01$) is significant at 0.01 level. Hence the null hypothesis there exists no significant difference in the mean scores of stress coping ability of parents of mentally challenged children belonging to rural and urban area is rejected. It shows that there existed significant difference in the stress coping ability of rural and urban parents of mentally challenged children. Mean values showed that urban parents are having higher stress coping ability compared to rural parents of mentally challenged children.

Discussion and Conclusions

Stress coping ability is considered as one of the inevitable part of everyone's life. The result of the present study revealed that nearly 60% of parents of mentally challenged children had moderate level of stress coping ability. So their stress coping ability should be improved. For that health professionals and counselors can provide strategies to improve the mental health of parents. Also social support interms of informational, instrumental and emotional can be given to these parents, which inturn may improve the stress coping ability of parents of mentally challenged children. The results revealed that mothers of mentally challenged children have low stress coping ability compared to fathers and rural parents possess low stress coping ability then urban parents. So family counseling programmers can be arranged for them.

References

- Bawalsah ,J., A.(2016).Stress and Coping Strategies in Parents of Children with Physical, Mental, and Hearing Disabilities in Jordan. *International Journal of Education*, 8(1), 1 <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ije.v8i1.8811>
- Dillon, D. (2014). Parents' experiences of living with an adolescent diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. *Educational & Child Psychology*, 31(4), 72-81. <http://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/3551>
- Dukmak, S. (2009). Parent adaptation to and parenting satisfaction with children with intellectual disability in the United Arab Emirates. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, 34(4), 324-328. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3109/13668250903286190>
- Hayes, S. A., & Watson, S.L. (2013). The impact of parenting stress: A meta-analysis of studies comparing the experience of parenting stress in parents of children with and without autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*, 43(3), 629-642. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10803-012-1604-y>.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10803-010-1099-3>
- Irum, H., & Mahwish, Z. (2015).Relationship between Psychological Well-Being and Coping Strategies among Parents with Down syndrome children. Department of Applied Psychology NUML Islamabad Pakistan, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 5(1) 7. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10803-012-1604-y>.
- John, J., & Gandhimathi, M. (2020). Stress and coping among the mothers of mentally challenged children in selected special schools. *International Journal of Advance Research in Nursing*, (3), 2184-188. <https://doi.org/10.33545/nursing.2020.v3.i2.C.121>

- Kumar, (2008). Psychological stress and coping strategies of the parents of mentally challenged children. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 34(2), 19-4247.
<http://www.jiaap.org.in/BackVolumeJuly2008.aspx>
- Lopes, V., Clifford, T., Minnes, P., & Ouellette-Kuntz, H. (2008). Parental stress and coping in families of children with and without developmental delays. *Journal on Developmental Disabilities*, 14(2), 99-104.
- Mubarak, S., A., and Lisa, A.P. (2014) .Sources of Stress among Parents of Children with Intellectual Disabilities: A Preliminary Investigation in Saudi Arabia, *Journal of Special Education Apprenticeship*, (3) 1.
<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/josea/vol3/iss1/3>
- Picci, R. L., Oliva, F., Trivelli, F., Carezana, C., Zuffranieri, M., Ostacoli, L., Furlan, P. M., & Lala, R. (2015). Emotional Burden and Coping Strategies of Parents of Children with Rare Diseases. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 24, 514–522. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10826-013-9864-5>
- Thakuri, B.S. (2014) .Stress and Coping Mechanism among the Parents of Intellectual Disable Children. *Journal of Advanced Academic Research*, 1(11), 2362-1311. www.phdcentre.edu.np.
- Wang, P., Michaels, C. A., & Day, M. S. (2011). Stresses and Coping Strategies of Chinese Families with Children with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities. *Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders*, (41), 783–795.
- Woodman, A. C., & Hauser, C. P. (2013). The role of coping strategies in predicting change in parenting efficacy and depressive symptoms among mothers of adolescents with developmental disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 57(6), 513-530. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2788.2012.01555.x>