



# Stress among the Parents with Intellectually Disabled Children

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## Abstract

**Background:** Parents with intellectually disabled children have a great responsibility that may be stressful. The psychological well-being of the parents may affect the quality of care given to intellectually disabled children.

**Objective.** The objective of the study was to determine the level of stress in parents with intellectually disabled children. **Setting.** The study conducted at special Schools in Malappuram district, Kerala. **Design** descriptive study. **Method.** The study conducted among 100 parents who are bring their intellectually disabled children in special school. The researcher were administered social demographic questionnaire and the Kindler's Personal Stress Assessment Inventory to those that met the inclusion criteria. **Results.** Forty-nine percent (49%) of the parents having medium, forty (40%) have high and eleven (11%) have low level of stress. The level of stress and their socio- demographic characteristics significantly correlated. **Conclusion.** Majority of the parents with intellectually disabled children were experiencing physical and psychological symptoms in their life.

**Index Terms** – Intellectual Disability, Parents with Intellectually Disabled children, Stress

## INTRODUCTION

Parenting is a mechanism that encourages and supports the physical, mental, social, financial and intellectual growth of children from childhood to adulthood. Parents with any type of disabled children have traditionally been considered as prime candidates for emotional disorders. (Cummings et al., 1966). Chronic conditions of disability, both medical and emotional, make extra demand on the parents, resulting in stress (Tew & Laurence, 1975; Breslau et al., 1982). An intellectually disabled child in a family is usually a serious stress factor for the parents. It often requires a reorientation and reevaluation of family goals, responsibilities and relationships. In India, the majority of persons with intellectual disability have traditionally been cared for by their families. In today's modern society, this home-based care has resulted in many adverse consequences. Factors such as changes in the social system (e.g. breaking up of joint families) and the economic system (e.g. unemployment, inflation, etc.) have contributed to the stress those parents with intellectually disabled children experience. Various characteristics of children with intellectual disability have been found to affect the levels of stress that their parent's experience. The severity of the child's intellectual disability is a strong predictor of parental stress (e.g., Honig & Winger, 1997; Huang, 1997; Majumdar et al., 2005; Minnes, 1988).

Parents with intellectually disabled children are aware of and sensitive to the reactions of neighbours, friends, strangers, these adverse reactions may affect the stress experienced by these families (Boss, 1988). The study examined the correlation between parent socio-demographics, and family environment on parental stress. Parental age, marital status, and education level can also impact perceived stress in relation to raising a child with intellectual disability. Parents who are very old or very young may be at a higher risk of experiencing stress (Oh, Rubin, & Mouw, 1994).

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Feizi et al., (2014)** studied on parenting stress among mothers of children with different physical, mental, and psychological problems. The aim of this study is to compare the stress in mothers of children with different disabilities to each other, considering their demographic background. The result was the stress score of mothers of children with psychological disorders was lower than the other two groups.

**Islam et al., (2013)** the present comparative cross-sectional study tried to compare difference of mental and physical stress between the parents of children with mental retardation and the parents of children with no mental retardation. The study revealed that the parents of children with mental retardation shared significantly greater stress score than the parents of children with no mental retardation. Mental stress score was significantly higher among Parents of Children with Mental Retardation than the parents of children with non-retardation while physical stress score was insignificantly higher among parents of children with non-retardation.

**Roach et al., (1999)** Parents of children with Down syndrome perceived more caregiving difficulties, child-related stress (distractibility, demandingness, unacceptability), and parent-related stress (incompetence, depression, health problems, role-restriction) than did parents of typically developing children. For the combined groups of parents, mothers' stress was associated with children's caregiving difficulties, fathers' stress with children's group status (Down syndrome, typically developing). Mothers who reported more responsibility for childcare perceived more difficulties with health, role restriction, and spousal support. Fathers who reported more responsibility for childcare perceived fewer difficulties with attachment and parental competence. Partner stress was associated both with mothers' and with fathers' stress.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following are the main research issues implied in the problem:

- To find out the level of stress among the parents with intellectually disabled children.
- To compare the relationship of the stress among the parents with intellectually disabled children with their socio-demographic variables.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

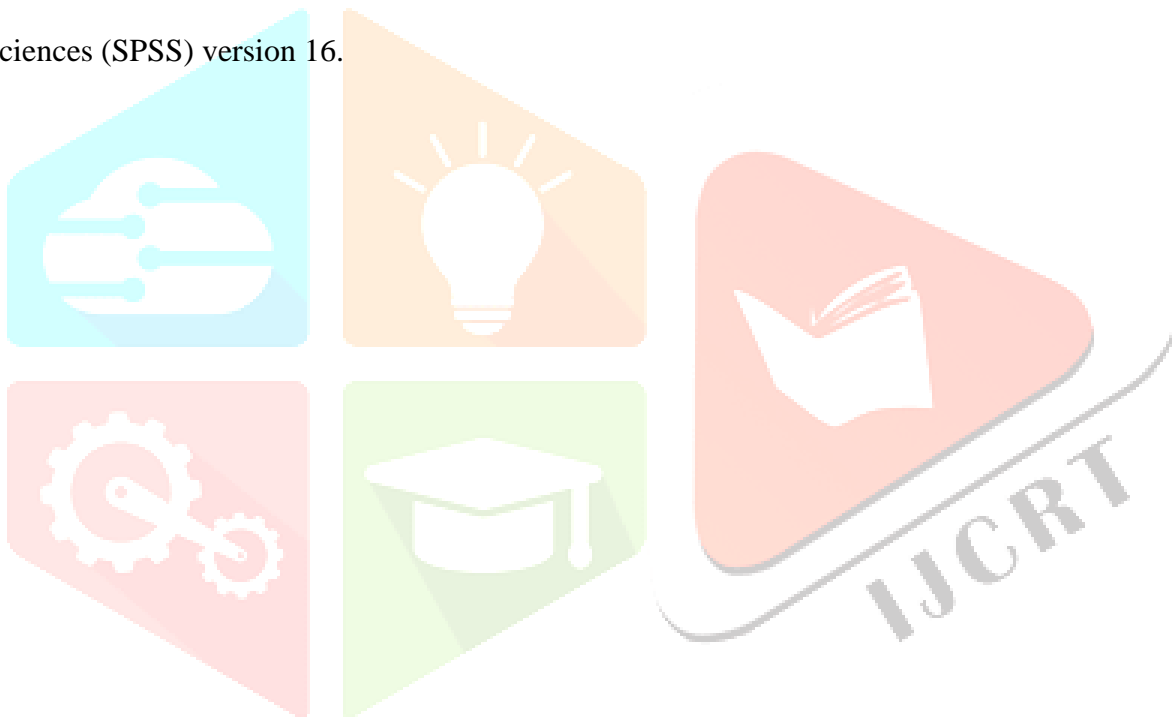
The descriptive study was conducted among the selected parents with intellectually disabled children in Malappuram district in Kerala, India. All the parents who are bringing their intellectually disabled children in two special school were requested to participate in the study. Hundred parents who voluntarily showed willingness fulfilled the inclusion criteria, which included parent's age between 25 and 65 years, informed consent, and

diagnosis of intellectual disability having been done before the child attained the age of 18 years. The participants were assured of confidentiality. Participation was voluntary, and other ethical considerations were fulfilled.

The enrolled participants were subjected to a sociodemographic questionnaire to collect data on the age, sex, religion, community, education status, occupation, monthly income, Type of family, and area of residence. The Kindler’s Personal Stress Assessment Inventory was administered to collect data on the risk of stress.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected was entered in an Excel spreadsheet, cleaned, and analysed using the statistics package for social sciences (SPSS) version 16.



## Social demographic correlates of stress

Variable	Category	Frequency	Per cent	Sig value
<b>Age of parents and stress</b>	25 – 35 Years	22	22	.173
	36 - 45 Years	27	27	
	46 - 55 Years	28	28	
	56 - 65 Years	23	23	
<b>Gender of parents and stress</b>	Male	45	45	.472
	Female	55	55	
<b>Religion of parents and stress</b>	Hindu	43	43	.506
	Muslim	46	46	
	Christian	11	11	
<b>Community of parents and stress</b>	General	29	29	.415
	OBC	56	56	
	SC/ST	15	15	
<b>Educational Qualification of parents and stress</b>	Below 10 <sup>th</sup> Std	27	27	.090
	10 <sup>th</sup> Std	22	22	
	+2 Std	21	21	
	UG Degree	12	12	
	PG Degree	12	12	
	Other	6	6	
<b>Occupation of parents and stress</b>	Government	18	18	.643
	Private	50	50	
	Business	15	15	
	Agriculture	17	17	
<b>Monthly Income of parents and stress</b>	Below Rs.10000	17	17	.492
	Rs.10001 - Rs.20000	44	44	
	Rs.20001 and above	39	39	

<b>Type of family of parents and stress</b>	Joint family	34	34	.801
	Nuclear family	66	66	
<b>Area of residence of parents and stress</b>	Rural	58	58	
	Urban	42	42	.841

## RESULTS

Majority (28%) of parents were aged between 46 years and 55 years of age. Among the parents 55% being female. The location of the study belongs to Malabar region kerala, so majority of the parents are belongs to Muslims religion. Community of the respondent's shows that 56% of the respondents are belongs to OBC. In regarding the educational qualification, majority of the parents (27%) studied below 10<sup>th</sup>; STD. Private job is the source of income for the 50% of the parents. Majority (44%) of the parents have monthly income is in between 10000-20000 per month. Most of the (66%) parents are living in the nuclear families. Majority (52%) of the Parents are living in rural area. The majority of caregivers (49%) were at risk of having medium level of stress as per result table showing percentages of likely high, medium, and low levels of stress. Sociodemographic factors that were not significantly associated with the stress among the parents with intellectually disabled children included age, religion, community, educational qualification, occupation, monthly income, type of family, and area of residence.

## DISCUSSION

In the current study, Forty-nine percent (49%) of the parents having medium, forty (40%) have high and eleven (11%) have low level of stress as derived from Kindler's Personal Stress Assessment Inventory score. This finding is consistent like many studies have shown that parents of children with ID report experiencing greater stress than parents of children without disabilities (Gupta & Kaur, 2010; Olsson & Hwang, 2001; Sanders & Morgan, 1997; Simmerman, Blacher, & Baker, 2001).. All the parents had not previously been diagnosed higher levels of stress. Various factors may contribute to vulnerability of the parents to stress, and of importance is financial lack as the

parents is unable to engage in income generating activity. In addition, social isolation, loss of previously close friendships, and stigma associated with taking care of intellectually disabled person may further predispose the stress among parents. The sociodemographic characteristic of the parents shows that there was a statistically not significant association between the levels of stress with various socio-economic factors.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. This study was researched in a single locality and, hence, it would be difficult to ascertain if the level stress of the parents would be the same or different from other areas.
2. The study conducted among the hundred parents with intellectually disabled child.
3. The parents with other types of disability is not included

### CONCLUSION

Kindler's Personal Stress Assessment Inventory scores indicated that most of parents of children with intellectual disability had experiencing high, medium or low level of stress. The current study shows that parents of persons with intellectual disability are likely to be feel stress throughout their life. There is therefore need to avail a support system to prevent or reduce the risk of physical and psychological stress and associated issues in the caregivers of intellectually disabled children.

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