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Burnout among Parents of Children with Special Needs: A Study Based on the Mothers' and Children's Background

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the level of parental burnout among mothers of autistic and mentally retarded children based on their children's and mother's backgrounds. The study employs both primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data is gathered from a variety of academic articles. Primary data were gathered from a total of 200 mothers. Along with the ANOVA, means and averages were used. The study's findings indicate that mothers' burnout can be quantified in three ways such as emotional detachment, emotional exhaustion, and personal accomplishment. In terms of emotional distancing burnout among mothers, those with 3–4 children report experiencing greater burnout (mean = 24.04) than those with 1-2 children report feeling less burnout (mean = 23.09). In terms of emotional detachment, children in the age groups 23–32 experience more (mean = 25) burnout, whereas children in the 53–60 age group experience less (mean = 21.89). In the domain of personal accomplishments, mothers with aged 23–32 experience higher burnout (mean = 21.34) than mothers aged 43–52. The findings are crucial in terms of developing interventions to assist mothers in rehabilitating their children.

Keywords

Burnout, Autism, Mental Retardation, Children background, and Mother’s background

Introduction

Life stress is highly connected with poor mental and physical health (Cohen et al., 2007; Slavich et al., 2010). (Cohen et al., 2007; Slavich et al., 2010). Anspaugh, Hamrick, and Rosato (2003) held the opinion that stress occurred in numerous forms and affected people of all ages and walks of life.

Authors, such as Taylor (1999) and Steptoe (1997) revealed various alternative definitions of stress, employed by psychologists, medics, management consultants, among others. In the opinion of Taylor (1999) and Steptoe (1997), stress was made up of several elements including a plethora of connected experiences, pathways, responses and results induced by a range of diverse events or circumstances.

Selye (1956) defines stress as "any external incident or any internal impulse which threaten to break the organism homeostasis is stress". Stress is a situation or feeling experienced when a person feels that demands surpass the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize (Dr. Deepti Bhargava & Hemant Trivedi, 2018).

Stress is described as a person's psychological and physiological response to the impression of a demand or challenge (Hemamalini, Ashok, & Sasikala, 2018). (Hemamalini, Ashok, & Sasikala, 2018). Experiencing more upsetting events in life and finding it difficult to cope with them are also predictors of anxiety, stress, and depression (Zou et al., 2018). (Zou et al., 2018).

Mother of children with special needs can confront exceptional emotional stress, reduction in their social, network, stigma, marital relationship etc. (Pulman and Peterson, 2000). Therefore we study parental stress and burnout of mothers' having children with Autism and Mental Retardation.

According to ICD – 10 (1993) "Autism is defined by the presence of abnormal and impaired development that is manifest before the age of three years, and by the characteristic type of abnormal functioning in all three areas of reciprocal social interaction, pattern of communication and restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interest and activities."

Definition of Mental Retardation: American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disability (AAIDD – 2010) defined "Intellectual disability characterized by considerable limitation both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as experienced in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive abilities. This impairment begins before the age of 18."

Classification of Mental Retardation According to ICD – 10 (1993):

- Mild Mental retardation (IQ 50 – IQ 69)
- Moderate Mental retardation (IQ 35 – IQ 49)
- Severe Mental Retardation (IQ 20 IQ 34) (IQ 20 IQ 34)
- Profound Mental Retardation (IQ below 20) (IQ below 20)

Raising a child with handicap is a big task, particularly for parents (Kirenko, Gindrich, 2020). (Kirenko, Gindrich, P.A., 2020). The families whose members are people with intellectual impairments and developmental disorders may encounter a stigma, which may have a negative impact on coping and social support, causing social isolation (Mitter, Ali, & Scior, 2019). (Mitter, Ali, & Scior, 2019).

Women's involvement in parental duty is crucial and pivotal. They bear considerable duty and burden to take care of their children with special needs. Freud (1949) saw maternal behavior and the nature of the mother child tie as being physiologically grounded, and he placed responsibility for the child's eventual personality development on the mother. Gender disparities in stress associated to gender roles and poverty, and gender differences in coping and social support are related to health (O'Leary & Helgeson, 1997).

Stress has a major impact upon people beings' mood, sense of well-being, behavior, and health. Handicap intensity, gender, age, education, family income and kind of impairment are effective on the stress experienced by the parents (Bengar, 2003). (Bengar, 2003). Peterson and Albers (2001) felt that depression of parents having exceptional children is higher than others therefore it promotes inefficient Kid-Mother relationship and impairment of child linguistic development. Adel Hickey (1999) believes that marital adaption and satisfaction are affected by disabled child.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. After the introduction of the problem in section 1, the section 2 offers the objective of the study. In the 3rd section we explained the research methodology adopted in this research paper. Final section deals with the results discussion and conclusion.

Objective of the Study

To study the burnout and stress levels of the mothers having children with the autism and mental retardation based on the mothers and children background.

Data and Methodology

The present study utilized both primary and secondary data to analyse the aforementioned objectives. The secondary data collected from several research papers, working papers and books published both at national and international publications. The primary data collected from the mothers of children having the problem of autism and mental retardation in twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, Telangana state, India. The sample size is 200 mothers. This sample includes 100 members of mothers represents the children with autism problem and rest of them represents the mental retardation problem. The data collected from the public and private institutions located in the Hyderabad and Secunderabad and which are working on the special needs children. The institutions are National Institute for Mentally Handicapped (NIMH), Care 4 Autism, Thakur Hari Prasad Institute, and Sweekar & Upaakar in Hyderabad and Secunderabad.The simple statistical tools like simple percentages, simple ratios, and one sample tests were utilized in this study.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Mothers' burnout based on children's IQ levels and number of children.

Descriptive Statistics					
	Type of Disability	Number of Children	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Emotional Distancing	Mental Retardation	1-2	23.0909	5.74727	77
		3-4	24.0435	6.07886	23
		Total	23.3100	5.80786	100
	Autism	1-2	25.7349	5.55260	83
		3-4	25.7647	4.68414	17
		Total	25.7400	5.39289	100
	Total	1-2	24.4625	5.78318	160
		3-4	24.7750	5.53074	40
		Total	24.5250	5.72128	200
Emotional Exhaustion	Mental Retardation	1-2	19.9740	5.97577	77
		3-4	19.0870	7.44014	23
		Total	19.7700	6.31313	100
	Autism	1-2	22.3614	4.18353	83
		3-4	21.3529	5.13494	17
		Total	22.1900	4.34775	100
	Total	1-2	21.2125	5.24661	160
		3-4	20.0500	6.58261	40
		Total	20.9800	5.54104	200
Personal Accomplishment	Mental Retardation	1-2	20.3377	6.70744	77
		3-4	19.0870	7.74546	23
		Total	20.0500	6.93895	100
	Autism	1-2	21.6627	3.83907	83
		3-4	22.0000	5.22015	17
		Total	21.7200	4.07773	100
	Total	1-2	21.0250	5.43567	160
		3-4	20.3250	6.86645	40
		Total	20.8850	5.73815	200

Source: Authors estimation.

Table 1 shows the details of the mothers' stress burnout and stress levels based on the children's background. The summary statistics are shown in the same table. Mothers' burnout is measured in three ways. such as emotional detachment, emotional tiredness, and personal accomplishment. With regard to the emotional distancing burnout among mothers, those who have 3-4 children are feeling more burnout (mean = 24.04) than those with 1-2 children (mean = 23.09). On the other hand, for women who have ASD children, the average levels of burnout are practically comparable (mean = 25.7) for both 1-2 children and 3–4 children.

Likewise, the emotional exhaustion category of burnout is higher (mean = 19.97) among mothers having 1-2 mentally retarded children and it is lower (mean = 19.08) among mothers with 3-4 mentally retarded children. As it relates to this burnout among mothers of children with autism, those mothers who have 1-2 children have higher burnout (mean = 22.3614) than the mothers of 3-4 autistic children (mean = 21.3).

With regard to the personal accomplishment of the mothers, the total burnout among the mothers with 1-2 children experienced greater burnout (mean = 21.0250) than the 3-4 children in the family. Overall, the average burnout level that mothers of autistic children have experienced is higher than that of mothers of children with mental retardation. The table also supplied the standard deviations of all the categories of the burnout levels of the mothers for the three kinds of burnout discussed in this study. It is observed that the standard deviation values for both mental retardation and autistic children's mothers have been reported at 4 to 7.

Table 2: Summaries of 2x2x2 Factorial ANOVAs Performed on Scores of Measures of Parental burnout based on children background.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	Emotional Distancing	311.327[a]	3	103.776	3.279	.022
	Emotional Exhaustion	321.107[b]	3	107.036	3.624	.014
	Personal Accomplishment	168.754[c]	3	56.251	1.727	.163
Intercept	Emotional Distancing	76400.989	1	76400.989	2414.265	.000
	Emotional Exhaustion	53808.100	1	53808.100	1821.857	.000
	Personal Accomplishment	54214.365	1	54214.365	1664.580	.000
A7 (child disability)	Emotional Distancing	149.646	1	149.646	4.729	.031
	Emotional Exhaustion	170.054	1	170.054	5.758	.017
	Personal Accomplishment	141.050	1	141.050	4.331	.039
C1.1 (Number of children)	Emotional Distancing	7.578	1	7.578	.239	.625
	Emotional Exhaustion	28.218	1	28.218	.955	.330
	Personal Accomplishment	6.551	1	6.551	.201	.654
A7 * C1.1	Emotional Distancing	6.687	1	6.687	.211	.646
	Emotional Exhaustion	.116	1	.116	.004	.950
	Personal Accomplishment	19.805	1	19.805	.608	.436
Error	Emotional Distancing	6202.548	196	31.646		
	Emotional Exhaustion	5788.813	196	29.535		
	Personal Accomplishment	6383.601	196	32.569		
Total	Emotional Distancing	126809.000	200			
	Emotional Exhaustion	94142.000	200			
	Personal Accomplishment	93789.000	200			
Corrected Total	Emotional Distancing	6513.875	199			
	Emotional Exhaustion	6109.920	199			
	Personal Accomplishment	6552.355	199			
a. R Squared = .048 (Adjusted R Squared = .033)						
b. R Squared = .053 (Adjusted R Squared = .038)						
c. R Squared = .026 (Adjusted R Squared = .011)						

Source: Authors estimation.

Table 2 summarizes the 3x2x2 Factorial ANOVA results for data on burnout among mothers of children with autism and mental disability. The results are extremely positive when seen through the lens of hypothesis testing. Thus, summaries of 2x2x2 factorial ANOVAs on the scores of research variables have been presented.

This was also done to test the hypothesis that "child type (A) and child count (B) will have significant and interactive impacts on parental burnout." The above table summarizes the major impacts of child's type of disability (A) and child count (B), as well as their interacting effects, on respondents' parental burnout scores.

As shown in Table 2, the adjusted model is acceptable, as emotional distancing and emotional tiredness variables were determined to be statistically significant, but not personal accomplishment. In terms of the primary effects, the child's type of disability has a considerable effect on all dimensions of parental burnout.

However, parental burnout was not significantly affected by the number of children in the family. Surprisingly, when two-way interaction effects were considered, the interaction term (child's type of disability and child count) had no significant effect on parental stress.

Table 3: Burnout of mothers by mothers back ground.

Descriptive Statistics					
	Type of Disability	Mothers' Age	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Emotional Distancing	Mental Retardation	23-32	25.0000	5.94673	23
		43-52	23.3265	5.88213	49
		53-60	21.8929	5.37028	28
		Total	23.3100	5.80786	100
	Autism	23-32	26.4800	4.26341	25
		43-52	26.9455	5.45832	55
		53-60	21.5000	4.47802	20
		Total	25.7400	5.39289	100
	Total	23-32	25.7708	5.13743	48
		43-52	25.2404	5.91935	104
		53-60	21.7292	4.97115	48
		Total	24.5250	5.72128	200
Emotional Exhaustion	Mental Retardation	23-32	20.5652	7.09562	23
		43-52	19.3469	6.37231	49
		53-60	19.8571	5.66153	28
		Total	19.7700	6.31313	100
	Autism	23-32	22.9200	4.28097	25
		43-52	22.4182	3.90958	55
		53-60	20.6500	5.34371	20
		Total	22.1900	4.34775	100
	Total	23-32	21.7917	5.85992	48
		43-52	20.9712	5.41386	104
		53-60	20.1875	5.48753	48
		Total	20.9800	5.54104	200
Personal Accomplishment	Mental Retardation	23-32	21.3478	6.78641	23
		43-52	19.1020	7.46728	49
		53-60	20.6429	6.03824	28
		Total	20.0500	6.93895	100
	Autism	23-32	21.5600	3.09677	25
		43-52	21.5273	4.47981	55
		53-60	22.4500	4.09717	20
		Total	21.7200	4.07773	100
	Total	23-32	21.4583	5.14454	48
		43-52	20.3846	6.16332	104
		53-60	21.3958	5.34248	48
		Total	20.8850	5.73815	200

Source: Authors estimation.

With regard to emotional distancing, among mothers with mental retardation, mothers belonging to age groups 23–32 feel more (mean = 25) burnout and it is low (mean = 21.89) among mothers who are in the 53–60 age group. On the other hand, among the mothers with autistic children, higher (mean = 26.48) burnout is shown in the 23–32years age group and it is low (mean = 21.50) in the 53–60 years age group of mothers.

Similarly, under emotional exhaustion, mothers belonging to age groups 23–32 feel more (mean = 20.96) burnout and it is low (mean = 19.34) among mothers who are in the age group 43–52. On the other hand, among the mothers with autistic children, higher (mean = 22.92) burnout is shown in the 23–32 years age group and it is low (mean = 20.65) in the 53–60 years age group of mothers.

In the personal accomplishment category, among the mothers with mental retardation, mothers belonging to the age group 23–32 feel more (mean = 21.34) burnout and it is low (mean = 19.10) among the mothers who are in the 43–52 age group. On the other hand, among the mothers with autistic children, higher (mean = 22.45) burnout is shown in the 53–60 age group and it is low (mean = 21.52) in the 43–52 age group of mothers.

Table 4: Results of ANOVA based on mother's background.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	Emotional Distancing	870.345[a]	5	174.069	5.984	.000
	Emotional Exhaustion	379.965[b]	5	75.993	2.573	.028
	Personal Accomplishment	245.400[c]	5	49.080	1.510	.188
Intercept	Emotional Distancing	101389.782	1	101389.782	3485.339	.000
	Emotional Exhaustion	76112.964	1	76112.964	2576.969	.000
	Personal Accomplishment	77172.784	1	77172.784	2373.811	.000
A7 (Child disability)	Emotional Distancing	106.588	1	106.588	3.664	.057
	Emotional Exhaustion	186.130	1	186.130	6.302	.013
	Personal Accomplishment	95.071	1	95.071	2.924	.089
B1.1 (Mothers	Emotional Distancing	482.252	2	241.126	8.289	.000

age)	Emotional Exhaustion	53.196	2	26.598	.901	.408
	Personal Accomplishment	69.638	2	34.819	1.071	.345
A7 * B1.1	Emotional Distancing	136.727	2	68.364	2.350	.098
	Emotional Exhaustion	41.762	2	20.881	.707	.494
	Personal Accomplishment	40.181	2	20.091	.618	.540
Error	Emotional Distancing	5643.530	194	29.090		
	Emotional Exhaustion	5729.955	194	29.536		
	Personal Accomplishment	6306.955	194	32.510		
Total	Emotional Distancing	126809.000	200			
	Emotional Exhaustion	94142.000	200			
	Personal Accomplishment	93789.000	200			
Corrected Total	Emotional Distancing	6513.875	199			
	Emotional Exhaustion	6109.920	199			
	Personal Accomplishment	6552.355	199			
a. R Squared = .134 (Adjusted R Squared = .111)						
b. R Squared = .062 (Adjusted R Squared = .038)						
c. R Squared = .037 (Adjusted R Squared = .013)						

Source: Authors estimation.

Table 34 describes the results of the 3x2x2 Factorial ANOVAs for the data connected to the burnout of mothers with autism and mental retardation children. The results are very positive in the light of hypothesis testing. Thus, an attempt has been made to offer the summaries of 2x2x2 factorial ANOVAs done on the scores of measures of study variables. This was also done to test the hypothesis that "kind of child (A) and mother's age (B) will have main and interaction effects on parental burnout." The above table displays the primary effects of the type of disability (A) and mother's age (B) and their interacting effects on parental burnout scores collected by the respondents. It is obvious from table 2 that the adjusted model is acceptable since the emotional distancing and emotional tiredness variables were found to be statistically significant but not the personal accomplishment variable. With regard to the major effects, the type of disability of the child has a substantial effect on all the dimensions of parental burnout. However, mothers' age is statistically significant for emotional distancing variables but not for the rest of them. They did not have significant main effects on parental burnout. Surprisingly, with regard to 2-way interaction effects, the interaction term (Child's type of disability and mother's age) likewise had no significant effect on parental stress.

Conclusion and suggestions

Parental burnout was originally identified in the early 1980s and is defined as "a type of burnout characterized by a sense of being physically and emotionally overburdened by one's parental responsibilities." We explored burnout levels among mothers of intellectually disabled and autistic children in this article using primary data from 200 mothers of children with autism and mental retardation in the Indian state of Telangana. The study discovered that the type of disability experienced by children and the number of children is statistically significant, as are the interaction and main effects on parents' burnout, as well as the relationship between child disability and mother's age. Eliminating the stress experienced by mothers when parenting children with autism and intellectual disabilities does not appear to be a realistic goal. Rather than that, aiding families in overcoming new and persistent hurdles should priorities increasing parental coping and resilience. Parents must seek treatment from family-centered supportive services that include counselling in order to reduce their stress levels through the use of appropriate coping skills and other resources. Brief interventions that incorporate stress management, information about specific behavioral impairments, and behavior management principles within a framework of components (information about autism, strategies for teaching new skills, improving social interaction and communication, service availability, and family and community responses to autism) have been shown to be effective in reducing parental stress and improving family life. Additionally, a growing body of evidence indicates that mindfulness-based therapies may be beneficial in reducing parenting stress in mothers' of children with autism and intellectual disabilities.

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