



# PERCEIVED STRESS, ADJUSTMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG PARENTS OF DIFFERENTLY ABLED CHILDREN

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*Abstract:* The main aim of this study is to assess the perceived stress, adjustment and quality of life among parents of differently abled children. For this, comparative-experimental research was designed, with the sample of 100 parents including 50 fathers and 50 mothers. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) by Sheldon Cohen, Global Adjustment Scale (GAS-Adult form) by Dr. Sanjay Vohra, & Quality of Life Scale (QOLS) by John Flanagan was used for data collection. The results showed that there are average levels of perceived stress and average levels of quality of life among parents of differently abled children. Also, they had good levels of social adjustment, average levels of emotional adjustment and occupational adjustment, poor levels of family adjustment and sexual adjustment, and unsatisfactory levels of health adjustment. It was also found that there is no significant difference in the levels of adjustment issues among father and mothers of differently abled children.

*Key words:* parents stress, differently abled children, adjustment, quality of life, perceived stress

## I. INTRODUCTION

For parents, any sort of disability in children carries huge challenges as parents suffer from the issues related with stress. This further creates adjustment problems in various dimensions and also affects the quality of life of the parents. Parents face emotional difficulties and feeling of shame because of the label given to them by the society. The pressure to parenthood created due to a child having any kind of disability, causes dysfunction in the family and between the couple itself. Women usually face higher level of stress due to the fact that they are expected to take care of their complete family and meet the needs of their disabled child. It has been seen that the parents of disabled child face more stress than the parents of non-disabled child. Such parents face anxiety, depression, problem in child parent relationship, attachments issues and other serious problem between the couple and the family.

Parents also face social, marital, family and child adjustment issues. In daily life, the parents and family face adjustment issues, sometimes due to professional reasons and sometimes due to time management issues. The struggle between the social life and family life creates the adjustment issues not only with the spouse but also with their peers and bosses. Adjustment issues further weakens the relationship between their disabled child and normal child, if they have.

Each child with disability has different growth patterns in every stage. It is difficult for parents of a disabled child to know about child's development and growth and the needs on these stages. Even the professionals face the difficulties to pre judge the child's needs and to prepare future plans and programs for such child. Parents and the family face several difficulties to parent the special child, financially and emotionally in both the ways. Because of the daily increase in the child's requirement and needs, the parents do face issues in their job and thus it becomes difficult for them to meet the increased cost for the child's requirement (for

instance cost of psychologist, the daily life equipment, special education, care taker and so on). Therefore, the issues in the adjustments and problem created due to the stress affects the quality of life of the parents.

Thus, the birth of the child having any kind of disability impact the parent's quality of life which in turn increases the stress, tension, couple understanding and families issues. However, the decreases in Quality of life may vary from, parents to parents, for some parents it can be financial and for other's it can be emotional, attachment related and even the social status related.

## I. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mohammad, et al. (2022) conducted a descriptive cross-sectional research focusing on assessing the illness cognition and family adaptation among parents of children with disabilities. A total of 80 parents participated and the results showed that most of the parents had low levels of knowledge of their children's illness and poor ability to understand their children's problems.

Kausar, Bibi & Raza (2021) conducted a research focusing on assessing the role of perceived social support as a link between parent's perceived stress and quality of life. A total of 300 parents participated and the results showed that there was a strong relation between the variables, indicating that there is a need for developing mindfulness and social support among the parents.

Ali, et al. (2021) conducted a research focusing on quality of life among parents of children with disabilities. Parents of children between 2yrs to 18yrs participated and the results showed that there was prevalence of low overall quality of life among the parents. It was also found that there was major differences in physical and environmental factors among parents.

Çolak & Kahrman (2021) conducted a descriptive research focusing on quality of life among parents of children with disabilities. A total of 518 parents participated and the results showed that there was a considerable drop in the quality of life among parents and there was a considerable increase in the family burden.

Fereidouni, et al. (2021) conducted a descriptive research focusing on quality of life and resilience among mothers of children with disabilities. A total of 108 mothers in Iran participated and the results showed that there was a considerable difference in the quality of life of mothers of children with disability and without disability. It was also found that education also had strong relation with quality of life.

Bujnowska, et al. (2021) conducted a research focusing on coping styles and strategies among parents of children with disabilities. A total of 167 parents of children with disabilities participated and the results showed that the parents of children with disabilities mostly used task-acquainted style and strategies in handling their stress, and used less of avoidance-acquainted style.

## II. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The review of literature shows that rearing children with disabilities may lead to impaired family functioning, high levels of stress, and reduced socialization. High levels of stress may also lead to reduced family communication and interpersonal relationships. The results of this study would help parents and caregivers of children with disabilities to implement adaptive coping strategies in order to improve their QoL and reduce distress. The results would also help medical, psychological and educational professionals to introduce family-based interventions as an urgent need for parents and all family members to help empower raising a child with a disability.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Aim:

The aim of this research is to study the levels of perceived stress, adjustment issues and quality of life among parents of differently abled children.

#### 3.2 Objectives:

- To study the relationship between perceived stress and adjustment among father and mother as parents of differently abled children
- To study the relationship between perceived stress and quality of life among father and mother as parents of differently abled children
- To study the difference in the levels of perceived stress among parents of differently abled children
- To study the difference in the perceived quality of life among parents of differently abled children.
- To study the difference in the levels of adjustment among parents of differently abled children.

#### 3.3 Hypotheses:

- There is significant relationship between perceived stress and quality of life among father and mother as parents of differently abled children.
- There is significant relationship between perceived stress and adjustment among father and mother as parents of differently abled children.
- There is no difference in the levels of perceived stress among parents of differently abled children.
- There is no difference in the perceived quality of life among parents of differently abled children.
- There is no difference in the levels of adjustment among parents of differently abled children.

#### 3.4 Population & Sample details:

Parents between the age group of 28yrs. to 60yrs., who have completed senior secondary education were considered. The total sample included 100 parents, with equal number of fathers and mothers (50 participants in each group). The method of purposive sampling was applied for selecting the sample from the population.

#### 3.5 Research Design:

In this study, comparative experimental design was used.

#### 3.6 Variables:

- Independent variable: Perceived Stress
- Dependent variable: Adjustment issues & Quality of Life

#### 3.7 Tools used in the study:

3.7.1 The perceived stress scale by Sheldon et al. was used to assess the levels of stress among parents. The scale is well known to assess the how people stressful people perceive their lives to be. The reliability of the test was measured at 0.78 and a high face validity and content validity. High scores on the scale represent higher levels of stress.

3.7.2 global adjustment scale (adult form) by Sanjay Vohra was used to assess the levels of adjustment among parents. The scale is well known to assess the people regarding their feelings about their family, health, social environment, emotions, occupation and sexual behaviour. The scale has high reliability and validity. The total score for each adjustment area is found by adding the scores obtained for each statement under that area. The raw scores are then converted to sten scores on the basis of norms table to give a final adjustment score.

3.7.3 The Quality-of-Life Scale (QOLS) developed by John Flanagan was used to assess the perception of quality of life among parents. The scale is well known to assess various dimensions of one's life giving an overall score of perceived quality of life. The scale has high reliability and validity. Higher scores are indicative of higher perception of quality of life.

### 3.8 Statistical Techniques:

Mean, Standard deviation, t-test and coefficient of correlation test was applied to analyze the data. Microsoft Excel and SPSS 20 was used to do all the statistical calculations.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 4.1: Consolidated scores on Perceived Stress scale (PSS).

		N	Mean	SD	Analysis	Sig. (2 tailed)	Result
Perceived Stress Scale	Fathers	50	20.92	7.84	Average Stress	0.30	Non-significant
	Mothers	50	22.58	8.01	Average Stress		
	Total Sample	100	21.75	7.92	Average Stress		

Table 4.1 displayed the parents of differently abled children (total sample) were found to have average levels of perceived stress (*mean score of 21.75 with S.D. of 7.92*). The group of fathers had average levels of perceived stress (*mean score of 20.92 with S.D. of 7.84*), and the group of mothers also had average levels of perceived stress (*mean score of 22.58 with S.D. of 8.01*). The t-test was conducted at the 0.01 level of significance between the two groups and a t-value of 0.30 was obtained which indicates that both the groups are not significantly different from each other. This confirms the third hypothesis which states that there is no difference in the levels of perceived stress among parents of differently abled children.

Table 4.2: Consolidated scores on Quality of Life scale (QoL)

		N	Mean	SD	Analysis	Sig. (2 tailed)	Result
Quality of Life Scale	Fathers	50	48.42	18.69	Average QoL	0.28	Non-significant
	Mothers	50	44.36	18.92	Average QoL		
	Total Sample	100	46.39	18.82	Average QoL		

Table 4.2 displayed the parents of differently abled children (total sample) were found to have average perceptions of quality of life (*mean score of 46.39 with S.D. of 18.82*). The group of fathers had average perceptions of quality of life (*mean score of 48.42 with S.D. of 18.69*), and the group of mothers also had average perceptions of quality of life (*mean score of 44.36 with S.D. of 18.92*). The t-test was conducted at the 0.01 level of significance between the two groups and a t-value of 0.28 was obtained which indicates that both the groups are not significantly different from each other. This confirms the fourth hypothesis which states that there is no difference in the levels of perceived quality of life among parents of differently abled children.

Table 4.3: Consolidated scores on Global Adjustment Scale (GAS)

		Fathers			Mothers			Total Sample			Sig. (2 tailed)	Result
		Mean	SD	SS	Mean	SD	SS	Mean	SD	SS		
Global Adjustment	Emotional	21.48	4.32	6	22.32	3.67	5	21.90	4.01	6	0.30	N.S.
	Family	27.7	4.86	9	27.46	4.45	8	27.58	4.64	8	0.80	N.S.
	Health	25.05	3.33	10	26.43	3.53	10	25.74	3.48	10	0.05	N.S.
	Occupational	24.3	3.22	6	25.22	3.34	6	24.76	3.29	6	0.16	N.S.
	Sexual	21.74	3.06	6	22.22	2.59	7	21.98	2.83	7	0.40	N.S.
	Social	21.93	3.11	4	23.23	2.59	5	22.58	2.92	4	0.03	N.S.

\* Non-Significant (N.S.)

Table 4.3 displayed the parents of differently abled children (total sample) were found to have good levels of social adjustment (*mean of 22.58, S.D of 2.92, Sten score of 4*). Average levels of emotional adjustment (*mean of 21.90, S.D of 4.01, Sten score of 6*) and occupational adjustment (*mean of 24.76, S.D of 3.29, Sten score of 6*). Poor levels of family adjustment (*mean of 27.58, S.D of 4.64, Sten score of 8*) and sexual adjustment (*mean of 21.98, S.D of 2.83, Sten score of 7*). And unsatisfactory levels of health adjustment (*mean of 25.74, S.D of 3.48, Sten score of 10*). These scores indicate that the parents of differently abled children need support from mental health professionals to improve their health adjustment, sexual adjustment and family adjustment.

The group of fathers had good levels of social adjustment (*mean of 21.93, S.D of 3.11, Sten score of 4*). Average levels of emotional adjustment (*mean of 21.48, S.D of 4.32, Sten score of 6*), occupational adjustment (*mean of 24.30, S.D of 3.22, Sten score of 6*) and sexual adjustment (*mean of 21.74, S.D of 3.06, Sten score of 6*). And unsatisfactory levels of family adjustment (*mean of 27.70, S.D of 4.86, Sten score of 9*) and health adjustment (*mean of 25.05, S.D of 3.33, Sten score of 10*). These scores indicate that the fathers of differently abled children need to improve their family adjustment and health adjustment. On the other hand, the group of mothers have average levels of emotional adjustment (*mean of 22.32, S.D of 3.67, Sten score of 5*), occupational adjustment (*mean of 25.22, S.D of 3.34, Sten score of 6*), and social adjustment (*mean of 23.23, S.D of 2.59, Sten score of 5*). Poor levels of sexual adjustment (*mean of 22.22, S.D of 2.59, Sten score of 7*) and family adjustment (*mean of 27.46, S.D of 4.45, Sten score of 8*). And unsatisfactory levels of health adjustment (*mean of 26.43, S.D of 3.53, Sten score of 10*). These scores indicate that the mothers of differently abled children need to improve their health adjustment, family adjustment and sexual adjustment.

The t-test was conducted at the 0.01 level of significance between the two groups on various dimensions of Global adjustment scale and a t-value of 0.30 was obtained on emotional adjustment, a t-value of 0.80 was obtained on family adjustment, a t-value of 0.05 was obtained on health adjustment, a t-value of 0.16 was obtained on occupational adjustment, a t-value of 0.40 was obtained on sexual adjustment, and a t-value of 0.03 was obtained on social adjustment. All these scores indicate that both the groups are not significantly different from each other.

Table 4.4: Correlation scores between Perceived Stress &amp; Quality of Life

Variables	Fathers	Mothers	Total Sample
Perceived Stress & Quality of Life	-0.502	-0.581	-0.548

Table 4.4 displayed the correlation between perceived stress & quality of life, for the group of fathers was  $r = -0.502$ , for the group of mothers was  $r = -0.581$  and for the total sample (combined) was  $r = -0.548$ . All



these scores indicate a strong negative correlation between the variables. This indicates that those parents who had higher levels of perceived stress, had poorer perceptions of their quality of life, and vice-versa.

Table 4.5: Correlation scores between Perceived Stress & dimensions of Global adjustment scale.

Variables	Fathers	Mothers	Total Sample
Perceived Stress & Emotional Adjustment	0.471	0.660	0.561
Perceived Stress & Family Adjustment	0.714	0.414	0.562
Perceived Stress & Health Adjustment	0.540	0.708	0.632
Perceived Stress & Occupational Adjustment	0.495	0.660	0.585
Perceived Stress & Sexual Adjustment	0.555	0.587	0.571
Perceived Stress & Social Adjustment	0.510	0.659	0.581

Table 4.5 displayed the correlation between perceived stress & emotional adjustment for the total sample (combined) was found to be  $r = 0.561$ , for the group of fathers was  $r = 0.471$  and for the group of mothers was  $r = 0.660$ . The correlation between perceived stress & family adjustment for the total sample (combined) was found to be  $r = 0.562$ , for the group of fathers was  $r = 0.741$  and for the group of mothers was  $r = 0.414$ . The correlation between perceived stress & health adjustment for the total sample (combined) was found to be  $r = 0.632$ , for the group of fathers was  $r = 0.540$  and for the group of mothers was  $r = 0.708$ . The correlation between perceived stress & occupational adjustment for the total sample (combined) was found to be  $r = 0.585$ , for the group of fathers was  $r = 0.495$  and for the group of mothers was  $r = 0.660$ . The correlation between perceived stress & sexual adjustment for the total sample (combined) was found to be  $r = 0.571$ , for the group of fathers was  $r = 0.555$  and for the group of mothers was  $r = 0.587$ . The correlation between perceived stress & social adjustment for the total sample (combined) was found to be  $r = 0.581$ , for the group of fathers was  $r = 0.510$  and for the group of mothers was  $r = 0.659$ . All these scores indicate a positive correlation between the perceived stress & various dimensions of Global adjustment scale. This implies that those parents who had higher levels of perceived stress also had higher levels of emotional adjustment, family adjustment, health adjustment, occupational adjustment, sexual adjustment as well as social adjustment issues.

Parents who care for differently abled children require to contribute much of their time and attention to their children. Their whole life is molded to suit the needs and interest of their children. As these children need special attention day and night, many parents reports that they feel stressed and burned-out. As parents are required to make adjustment in their personal as well as social life to suit the needs of their children, especially the mothers of such children, the parents often report feelings of sadness, fear and guilt, greatly impacting their quality of life. Thus, this study proposes to assess the Perceived Stress, Adjustment and Quality of Life among parents of differently abled children and, make a comparison amongst mothers and fathers on these variables.

In order to collect important demographic information about the sample like, age, gender, and educational qualification, demographic information sheet was used. The levels of perceived stress were assessed using Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) by Sheldon Cohen, the levels of adjustment were assessed using Global Adjustment Scale (GAS-Adult form) by Dr. Sanjay Vohra, and, the perception of quality of life was assessed using Quality of Life Scale (QOLS) by John Flanagan. The statistical analysis was done using IBM SPSS version 20.

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It was also found that, there are average levels of perceived stress among parents of differently abled children (total sample) as well as among both fathers and mothers. There are average levels of quality of life among parents of differently abled children (total sample) as well as among both fathers and mothers. Also, parents of differently abled children have good levels of social adjustment, average levels of emotional adjustment and occupational adjustment, poor levels of family adjustment and sexual adjustment, and unsatisfactory levels of health adjustment. It was also found that there is no significant difference in the levels of adjustment issues among father and mothers of differently abled children.

Suggestion for further researches: Since this study only focuses on the overall scores obtained in the research, further studies must be conducted with the various sub-factors related to perceived stress, quality of life and adjustment issues. This will really help understand the true relation between the two variables and will help in having a deeper understanding of the mental health of the parents of the differently abled children.

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