



Coping Ability Of Parents With Mentally Challenged Children In Relation To Stress

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Abstract

The present research was designed 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 Ambala district. Descriptive 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

Introduction

Parents' concerns about their children's care and upbringing are constant. When raising children, parents adjust their lifestyle and make the necessary accommodations. Parental stress and exhaustion are likely to increase as a result of their children's emotional, physical, and behavioural issues, which may have an effect on the parents' lives and behaviour. As a result, parents must inevitably experience parental stress when overcoming these obstacles.

High levels of stress are experienced by parents of disabled children, which forces them to develop a variety of coping mechanisms to manage stress in their day-to-day lives. Numerous studies looked at the main function of coping mechanisms employed by parents to manage these stresses, as well as the kind of disability and the associated constraints and limitations in the lives of children and families, the traits of the parents, and cultural differences that may affect their choice of coping mechanisms.. According to Lopes et al. (2008) and Dillon (2014), parents of children with special needs face certain kinds of stress and struggle every day

because they are unable to intervene or make any kind of attempt to address the behavioural and developmental issues that arise in their kids.

Parents who experience higher levels of stress respond differently with their children, and they react differently to their child's problematic behaviour (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 adjust their lifestyle and arrangements on a daily basis to accommodate their child's evolving needs. Parents of children with mentally challenged children would require twice as much assistance. Families and parents in particular must deal with the stress that comes with raising mentally challenged children who have all of the usual developmental and functional impairments (Woodman & Hauser, 2013). Numerous research, including Dukmak (2009), have shown that raising a mentally challenged child has detrimental psychological repercussions. These studies also show that raising a mentally challenged child causes high levels of stress and low self-esteem. Families with intellectually challenged children have been found to have lower mental health and depression rates than families with typical children (Lopes, et al., 2008). Parents of children with mental disabilities deal with mental health issues and other life obstacles. They believe that their children's behaviour and developmental tasks are beyond their control or ability to manage. 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
- 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 descriptive survey method for the study. Data was collected from a sample of 200 parents of mentally challenged children studying in different special schools of Ambala district in Haryana state using random sampling technique.

Tool used

1. Stress Coping Ability scale (Sreelatha 2018) was used to collect data.
2. For illiterate parents, interview method was conducted.

Statistical techniques used

To test the hypothesis, Percentage, t test and ANOVA were used for the analysis of data

Analysis & Interpretation

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).

H1: There exists no significant difference in the mean scores of stress coping ability of fathers and mothers 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	2.682**	0.008
Female	91.88	7.93	56		

Note ** indicates significant difference at 0.01 level.

The 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 Kumar, (2008), 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.

H2: There exists no significant difference in the mean scores of stress coping ability of rural and urban parents of mentally challenged children

Table- 3

Locality wise Comparison of Stress Coping Ability of Parents of Mentally Challenged Children

Category	Mean value	SD	N	T	P
Rural	93.08	8.34	118	2.641**	0.009
urban	96.06	7.49	82		

Note ** indicates significant difference at 0.01 level.

The 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 nearby 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 counsellors can provide strategies to improve the mental health of parents. Also social support interns of informational, instrumental and emotional can be given to these parents, which intern 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 counselling programmers can be arranged for them.

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