

COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE DEGREE OF PARENTAL STRESS BETWEEN MENTALLY RETARDED AND NORMAL CHILDREN

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Aim: This study aims to compare the extent of mental stress between mentally retarded and normal children's parents.

Method: The study had a post-event survey design (causal- comparative one). The sample size including 120 parents with mentally retarded children and 120 parents with normal kids was selected through clustering multi-stage sampling method. Questionnaire on Resources and Stress (QRS) developed by Friedrich et al was used to examine the degree of parental stress. Accordingly, by applying statistical t-tests for independent samples and Pearson correlation coefficient, the research data were analyzed.

Findings: Results from this study showed that a significant difference was found at stress level between parents with mentally retarded children and those with healthy kids. In fact, the degree of mental stress amongst parents with mentally retarded children was turned out to be much more than that of in parents with normal children ($P < 0.01$). No significant difference was observed between mothers and fathers having children with mental retardation in terms of mental stress. That is, both fathers and mothers with mentally retarded kids suffered from the same degree of mental stress. Despite the fact that parents' stress had nothing to do with child's gender, it significantly increased with mentally retarded child's age ($P = 0.01$). On the other hand, the more the age of the mentally disabled child was, the more the stress of parents would be. Also, the relationship of parents' literacy level with degree of stress was significantly different ($P < 0.01$).