

ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION AMONG PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH MENTAL RETARDATION

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Background: Studies have shown an association between parental anxiety and depression, and caretaking of children with developmental cognitive delays. There is little data in developing countries, such as Pakistan, concerning the impact of raising children with Mental Retardation, upon the quality of parent functioning and risk for psychopathology.

Objective: To evaluate for anxiety and depression among parents of children with Mental Retardation (MR).

Methods: This was a prospective study conducted at a tertiary care hospital in Pakistan. Participants were 198 parents (99 fathers/99 mothers) of 100 children with the diagnosis of MR. The parents were assessed for anxiety and depression using DSM IV criteria. Informed consent was obtained. The study was approved by the Institutional Research Committee.

Results: Significantly high proportion (p -value=0.024) of mothers (89%) had anxiety, depression or both anxiety and depression together as compared to fathers (77%). Among mothers, 35% met criteria for anxiety, 40% for depression and 13% for both anxiety and depression. Among fathers 42% had anxiety, 31% depression and 3% both anxiety and depression. There was a significant association (P value=0.027) between gender of parent and individual psychiatric diagnosis of anxiety, depression and anxiety and depression together. A significant association (p value=< 0.043) was also found between mother's anxiety, depression or both and degree of mental retardation of their children.

Conclusions:

1. Parents of children with MR are at higher risk for anxiety, depression or both, needing mental health assessment.
2. There was correlation between mother's anxiety, depression or both and level of MR among children.