

## **Coping strategies of parents for perceived stress resulting from having intellectually disabled child: comparison across educational level of parents**

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of the present investigation was to study the differences in type and level of coping mechanism of parents with intellectually disabled children across their education level. Parents of 150 intellectually disabled children from 3 RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India) recognized special schools of Delhi were selected as a sample for the study. Sample was randomly drawn in equal proportions from three levels of intellectual disability i.e. mild, moderate and severe from both low and middle income groups. The coping strategies of parents were assessed using Family Interview for Stress and Coping in Mental Retardation, Part II developed by NIMHANS. The study revealed that the educational status of parents was seen to influence their coping mechanisms. Mothers with higher education level had better general awareness regarding child's condition, low misconceptions; had expectations from their special need child; showed favourable attitudes towards child & child management and reported favourable rearing practice specific to training. Similarly, fathers with higher educational status also reported better coping strategies in these said domains.

**Key words:** Attitudes, awareness, expectations, low income families, mental challenge, mental retardation, middle income families, rearing practices, social support.

Giving birth to a child is one of the life's most natural and happy experiences for parents. Every parent dreams for a healthy, well formed child. But when the child is born with any intellectual disability, it creates enormous stress among parents. Mental challenge is a word that can be used for intellectual disability. As per *AAIDD (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities) 2010, Intellectual disability* is a disability characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before the age of 18. Intellectual disability among children is not only the problem for them but in a real sense this is a family disease.

Child's disability has a profound impact on whole family, especially parents. Sometimes, the condition of disability may become apparent at the time of birth or sometimes only with the passage of time. When the parents realize that the child is having some form of disability, it creates massive stress in their life. Parents go through intense emotional and psychological stress and may have fewer resources of emotional gratification. They struggle to cope with the financial costs; parents also are confronted with new and unexpected

experiences. Parents with disabled child may have higher levels of stress and lower levels of well being than with the normal children (Rangaswamy and Bhavani, 2008). One cannot eradicate the stress completely, but the best way to lessen the effect of stress is adaptation of coping strategies. "*Coping Strategies*" are conscious efforts to adopt with/solve stressful situation (Glidden and Natcher 2009), they are practical active ways of responding to threatening situations. The coping process involves group of efforts or cognitive and behavioral activities an individual uses to handle stressful situation in order to reduce internal and external demands associated with this situation, in an attempt to re-gain state of psychological equilibrium individual used to live before (Bawalsah, 2016). Each family system is different from other therefore; each family may have different coping strategies. Researches shows that those families which are capable of coping with having a mentally challenged child are able to utilize their internal and external source of support to deal effectively with special needs of their child.

Family's ability to cope with any distress will often depend on their strengths and resources. Education level of parents create favorable environment for the children

that improves their personality. It also make the parents aware regarding the child's situation which eventually helps them in accepting the child's intellectual disability and helpful in coping with stress. In this regard, some researchers found that the personality characteristics of the family members, their educational level influence a family's ability to cope (Bailey and Smith, 2000; Emerson, 2003; Fazil *et al.*, 2004). Likewise, Kumar (2008) stated that, mothers with higher educational status had low psychological stress and high coping strategy scores. While, in other study it was examined that high percentage of non-educated parents might be one of the causes of disability because of their lack of awareness about disability and how to detect it (Mohamed and Abd El-Aziz 2011). In the light of above discussion, it can be stated that education may alter the coping strategies of parents having children with intellectual disability or mental challenge. So, keeping all these points in mind the present study was focused on following objectives to assess and compare the type and level of coping strategies among parents of intellectually disabled children across their education level and to investigate statistical differences in the type and level of coping strategies among parents of intellectually disabled children across their education level.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Delhi, at the RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India) recognized special schools meant exclusively for intellectually disabled (ID)/mentally challenged children. A multistage purposive cum random sampling technique were used to select the sample. Out of the nine RCI recognized institutes, three institutes namely NIMH (National Institute for Mentally Handicapped), Manovikas and C.B.S Memorial were randomly selected for the present study. It was observed that in the selected institutes, the population of ID children from high income group (HIG) was extensively low, therefore, only those belonging to low income group (LIG) and middle income group (MIG) were considered for the present study. Out of the total population of LIG and MIG intellectually disabled children, 75 ID children were selected from each social class by randomly drawing 25 from each level of mental challenge/intellectual disability. Thus, the sample for the present study included 150 intellectually disabled children and their families.

The Directors of the selected institutes were contacted, to obtain all the details related to the enrolled

ID children and their families. The required samples were selected and afterwards, first common meeting was organized. Assurance was given to the families that the information provided by them will be kept confidential and utilized only for the research purpose. Parents were then interviewed and observations made by the researcher. A semi-structured performa was used to collect the details including child variables and parent variables. Family Interview for Stress and Coping in Mental Retardation (FISC-MR) Part-II (Girimaji 1999), was used to study the coping strategies of parents. For analysis parametric statistical methods such as frequency, percentage and one way ANOVA were applied.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data presented in the Table 1(a) clearly represents that more percentage of the mothers of mildly challenged children who were educated upto primary (86.66%) had slightly inadequate general awareness. Majority of mothers of moderately challenged children who were educated upto high school & intermediate level (75.00%) had adequate general awareness. It has been seen that more proportion of mothers of severely challenged children (66.66%) who were educated upto primary were observed to have slightly inadequate level of general awareness. The data presented in the Table 2(a) clearly represents that more percentage of the fathers of mildly challenged children who were illiterate (100.00%) had slightly inadequate general awareness. Majority of illiterate fathers of moderately challenged children (100.00%) had highly inadequate general awareness. It has been seen that more proportion of fathers of severely challenged children who were educated upto high school-intermediate and upto UG- PG (86.95% and 86.66%) were observed to have largely adequate level of general awareness.

On the misconceptions component, it was found that majority of mothers of mildly challenged children who were educated upto primary level (80.00%) reported the presence of misconceptions. Graduate & post graduate mothers of moderately challenged children were more in percentage (87.50%), who had no misconceptions. Majority of illiterate mothers of severely challenged children (81.81%), were found with misconceptions regarding child's situation. On the other side, it was found that among fathers of mildly challenged children who were educated upto high school & intermediate (73.07%), misconception was almost absent and among all the illiterate fathers, misconception was present.



**Table 1(b): Mean differences in the coping strategies of the mothers with intellectually disabled children across their level of education**

	Mildly Challenged Children (n <sub>1</sub> =50)			Moderately Challenged Children (n <sub>2</sub> =50)			Severely Challenged Children (n <sub>3</sub> =50)		
	Illiterate (n <sub>1a</sub> =22)	High school and inter (n <sub>1c</sub> =10)	U.G & P.G (n <sub>1d</sub> =3)	Illiterate (n <sub>2a</sub> =18)	High school and inter (n <sub>2c</sub> =12)	U.G & P.G (n <sub>2d</sub> =8)	Illiterate (n <sub>3a</sub> =22)	High school and inter (n <sub>3c</sub> =10)	U.G & P.G (n <sub>3d</sub> =6)
General awareness	26.33 <sup>a</sup>	19.60 <sup>b</sup>	17.88 <sup>b</sup>	24.13 <sup>a</sup>	17.26 <sup>b</sup>	18.50 <sup>b</sup>	25.23 <sup>a</sup>	18.60 <sup>b</sup>	16.38 <sup>b</sup>
Misconceptions	6.33 <sup>a</sup>	3.80 <sup>b</sup>	4.00 <sup>b</sup>	5.13 <sup>a</sup>	3.77 <sup>b</sup>	3.21 <sup>b</sup>	7.33 <sup>a</sup>	4.80 <sup>b</sup>	4.00 <sup>b</sup>
Expectations from child	27.33 <sup>a</sup>	19.73 <sup>b</sup>	18.55 <sup>b</sup>	23.00 <sup>a</sup>	18.21 <sup>b</sup>	16.30 <sup>b</sup>	29.33 <sup>a</sup>	20.73 <sup>b</sup>	16.55 <sup>b</sup>
Attitudes towards child	37.33 <sup>a</sup>	37.47 <sup>a</sup>	34.73 <sup>b</sup>	38.77 <sup>a</sup>	37.65 <sup>b</sup>	37.16 <sup>b</sup>	39.33 <sup>a</sup>	38.57 <sup>a</sup>	36.76 <sup>b</sup>
Attitudes towards child management	43.33 <sup>a</sup>	37.50 <sup>b</sup>	37.46 <sup>b</sup>	39.50 <sup>a</sup>	34.74 <sup>b</sup>	33.30 <sup>b</sup>	45.43 <sup>a</sup>	37.40 <sup>b</sup>	37.42 <sup>b</sup>
General Rearing Practices	24.33	23.00	23.53	25.00	23.58	23.10	27.23	26.46	26.53
Rearing Practices Specific to training	16.67 <sup>a</sup>	15.67 <sup>a</sup>	13.68 <sup>b</sup>	15.50 <sup>a</sup>	13.11 <sup>b</sup>	12.00 <sup>b</sup>	17.67 <sup>a</sup>	15.67 <sup>a</sup>	13.18 <sup>b</sup>
Social Support	10.33	12.00	9.77	10.75	10.10	9.98	10.85	9.93	9.8.7

Note: 1. Means with different superscripts are significant at p<0.05

2. Higher the score, lower the coping

Graduate & post graduate fathers of moderately challenged children were found more in percentage (86.66%), who also reported almost the absence of misconception. Likewise, majority of fathers of severely challenged children who were educated upto high school- intermediate and upto UG- PG level also showed almost absence of misconceptions.

Under the component expectations from child all the mothers of mildly challenged children who were graduate & post graduate had moderately inappropriate expectations. 75.00 percent mothers of moderately challenged children who had education level of high school & intermediate were more in proportion, whose expectations from the child were found to be moderately inappropriate. It was very much disappointing to note that all the mothers of severely challenged children who were educated upto primary level and high school-intermediate level had highly inappropriate expectations from the child. Table 2(a) shows that majority of fathers of mildly challenged children who were educated upto primary level (81.81%) had mildly appropriate expectations. 81.81percent fathers of moderately challenged children who had education level of high school & intermediate were maximum in proportion among all and had mildly appropriate expectations from the child. It was very much disappointing to note that all the fathers who were educated upto primary and UG- PG level had highly inappropriate expectations from the child, while 78.26 percent high school & intermediate qualified fathers had moderately inappropriate expectations.

In the component of attitudes towards child all the mothers of mildly challenged children who were educated upto U.G & P.G were having most favourable attitudes towards child. However, mothers of moderately challenged children who had education level of high school & intermediate (83.33%) and of primary level (83.33%) were observed to be proportionally more and also had most favourable and favourable attitudes respectively. Among mothers of severely challenged children, illiterate mothers (86.36%) and who had education level of primary (83.33%) were found to have unfavourable and favourable attitudes. The other story reveals that 80.76 percent and 80.00 percent of fathers of mildly challenged children who were educated upto high school & intermediate and U.G & P.G qualified were having favourable and most favourable attitudes towards child. However, in majority, fathers of moderately challenged children who had education level upto UG &

PG level (80.00%) were observed to have most favourable attitudes. Among fathers of severely challenged children, fathers who were educated upto high school & intermediate (82.60%) were found to have most favourable attitudes.

Under attitudes towards child management all the U.G & P.G qualified mothers of mildly challenged children had moderately unfavourable attitudes. All the mothers of moderately challenged children who were illiterate and educated upto primary level were having most unfavourable attitudes. Whereas, when mothers of severely challenged were analysed in this component it was noticed that all the mothers who qualified upto primary, high school & intermediate level reported moderately unfavourable attitudes. In case of fathers, majority of fathers of mildly challenged children who were educated upto high school & intermediate (80.76%) and were illiterate (100.00%) had moderately unfavourable attitudes towards child management. All the fathers of moderately challenged children who were illiterate and educated upto primary level were having moderately unfavourable attitudes. Whereas, when fathers of severely challenged children were analysed in this component it was noticed that all the primary level qualified fathers were found to be at most unfavourable level while, fathers who were educated upto high school & intermediate (86.95%) had favourable attitudes towards child management.

On the component of general rearing practices, all the highly educated mothers (U.G & P.G) who had mildly challenged children reported most favourable rearing practices, while 68.18 percent illiterate mothers had somewhat unfavourable general rearing practices. Majority of mothers of moderately challenged children who were illiterate (77.78%) and studied upto primary level (75.00%) had somewhat favourable general rearing practices. It was noticed that all the illiterate mothers of severely challenged children reported most unfavourable general rearing practices. Among fathers, majority of highly educated fathers (U.G & P.G) who had mildly challenged children (80.00%) had most favourable rearing practices, while 93.33 percent fathers who had moderately challenged children also had most favourable general rearing practices. All the fathers of severely challenged children who were educated upto high school & intermediate also fall in the same level.

In the rearing practice specific to training most of the

illiterate mothers of mildly challenged children (90.90%) were under most unfavourable level while, 80.00 percent high school & intermediate qualified mothers were found at somewhat unfavourable level. All the mothers of moderately challenged children who were illiterate and educated upto primary level had most unfavourable and somewhat unfavourable rearing practices specific to training. Table also represents all the mothers who had severely challenged children and were educated upto primary level had most unfavourable rearing practices specific to training, while illiterate mothers (95.45%) were found to have somewhat unfavourable rearing practice specific to training. However, in case of fathers, all the illiterate fathers of mildly challenged children were under somewhat unfavourable level. While, 81.81 percent primary qualified fathers were also found at somewhat unfavourable level. All the fathers of moderately challenged children who were educated upto U.G & P.G had somewhat favourable rearing practices specific to training. Table also represents 86.66 percent fathers who had severely challenged children and were educated upto U.G & P.G had somewhat unfavourable rearing practices.

On social support majority of mothers who had mildly challenged children and were educated upto primary level (80.00%) got somewhat inadequate social support, while 66.66 percent mothers who had education upto U.G & P.G level were found to have best social support. Whereas, all the mothers of moderately challenged children who were graduate & postgraduate and 75.00 percent mothers who had education upto primary were getting somewhat inadequate social support. While, all the high school & intermediate qualified mothers of severely challenged children were also at somewhat inadequate level of social support. On social support, majority of fathers (84.61%) who had mildly challenged children and were educated upto high school & intermediate had adequate social support, while all the fathers of moderately challenged children who were illiterate and educated upto high school & intermediate level (90.90%) were also found to have adequate social support. Whereas, all the fathers of severely challenged children who were graduate & postgraduate got no support and 86.95 percent fathers who had education level upto high school & intermediate were getting somewhat inadequate social support.

In the component global rating of family adaptation all the highly qualified mothers (U.G & P.G) of mildly challenged children were found adequately adapted.

Table 2(a): Frequency and percentage distribution of the fathers of intellectually disabled children on the type &amp; level of coping strategies across their level of education

Subscales of Coping	Levels of Coping						Fathers of mildly challenged children (n <sub>1</sub> =50)						Fathers of moderately challenged children (n <sub>2</sub> =50)						Fathers of severely challenged children (n <sub>3</sub> =50)						
	Illiterate (n <sub>1a</sub> =3)		Primary (n <sub>1b</sub> =11)		High school and Inter (n <sub>1c</sub> =26)		UG and PG (n <sub>1d</sub> =10)		Illiterate (n <sub>2a</sub> =3)		Primary (n <sub>2b</sub> =10)		High school and Inter (n <sub>2c</sub> =22)		UG and PG (n <sub>2d</sub> =15)		Illiterate (n <sub>3a</sub> =1)		Primary (n <sub>3b</sub> =11)		High school and Inter (n <sub>3c</sub> =23)		UG and PG (n <sub>3d</sub> =15)		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
General awareness	Largely Adequate	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5	50.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	18.18	10	66.66	0	0.00	0	0.00	20	86.95	13	86.66
	Adequate	0	0.00	6	54.54	18	69.23	5	50.00	0	0.00	14	63.63	5	33.33	5	33.33	0	0.00	6	54.54	3	13.04	2	13.33
	Slightly inadequate	3	100.00	5	45.45	8	30.76	0	0.00	0	0.00	5	50.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	5	45.45	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Highly inadequate	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	100.00	5	50.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	100	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	No Misconceptions	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Expectations from child	Almost Absent	0	0.00	3	27.27	19	73.07	7	70.00	0	0.00	3	30.00	17	77.27	13	86.66	0	0.00	4	36.36	22	95.65	14	93.33
	Present	3	100.00	8	72.72	7	26.92	3	30.00	2	66.66	7	70.00	5	22.72	2	13.33	0	0.00	7	63.63	1	4.34	1	6.66
	Present to a large extent	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	33.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	100	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Largely appropriate	0	0.00	2	18.18	12	46.15	3	30.00	0	0.00	4	60.00	0	0.00	4	26.66	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Mildly appropriate	2	66.66	9	81.81	14	53.84	6	60.00	0	0.00	18	81.81	10	66.66	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Attitudes towards child	Moderately inappropriate	1	33.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	10.00	3	100.00	0	0.00	4	18.18	1	6.66	0	0.00	0	0.00	18	78.26	0	0.00
	Highly inappropriate	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	100	11	100.00	5	21.73	15	100.00
	Inappropriate	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Most favourable	0	0.00	6	54.54	0	0.00	8	80.00	2	66.67	3	30.00	10	45.45	12	80.00	0	0.00	5	45.45	19	82.60	8	53.33
	Favourable	3	100.00	2	18.18	21	80.76	2	20.00	1	33.33	6	60.00	12	54.54	3	20.00	0	0.00	6	54.54	4	17.39	4	26.66
Attitudes towards child management	Unfavourable	0	0.00	3	27.27	5	19.23	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	10.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	20.00
	Most unfavourable	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	100	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Most favourable	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	40.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Favourable	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	15.38	3	30.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	19	86.30	13	86.66	0	0.00	0	0.00	20	86.95	2	13.33
	Moderately unfavourable	3	100.00	6	54.54	21	80.76	3	30.00	3	100.00	10	100.00	3	13.63	2	13.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	13.04	13	86.66
General Rearing Practices	Most unfavourable	0	0.00	5	45.45	1	3.84	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	100	11	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Most favourable	0	0.00	3	27.27	18	69.23	8	80.00	0	0.00	3	30.00	17	77.27	14	93.33	0	0.00	3	27.27	0	0.00	9	60.00
	Somewhat favourable	2	66.66	6	54.54	8	30.76	2	20.00	0	0.00	4	40.00	5	22.72	1	6.66	0	0.00	8	72.72	23	100.00	6	40.00
	Somewhat unfavourable	1	33.33	2	18.18	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	66.66	3	30.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Unfavourable	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	33.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	100	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Rearing Practice Specific to training	Most favourable	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	20.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	40.00	19	86.36	15	100.00
	Most favourable	0	0.00	0	0.00	21	80.76	7	70.00	0	0.00	4	40.00	19	86.36	15	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	17	73.91	2	13.33
	Somewhat favourable	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Somewhat unfavourable	3	100.00	9	81.81	5	19.23	1	10.00	2	66.66	6	60.00	3	13.63	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	6	26.08	13	86.66
	Unfavourable	0	0.00	2	18.18	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	33.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	100	11	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Social Support	Best social support	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	30.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Adequate	2	66.60	8	72.72	22	84.61	7	70.00	3	100.00	4	40.00	20	90.90	12	80.00	0	0.00	8	72.72	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Somewhat adequately	1	33.33	3	27.27	4	15.38	0	0.00	0	0.00	4	40.00	2	9.09	3	20.00	0	0.00	3	27.27	20	86.95	0	0.00
	No support	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	100	0	0.00	3	13.04	15	100.00
	Extremely well adapted	0	0.00	0	0.00	19	73.07	3	30.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Global Rating of Family Adaptation	Adequately adapted	3	100.00	11	100.00	5	19.23	3	30.00	0	0.00	8	80.00	0	0.00	15	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Inadequately	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	7.69	4	40.00	3	100.00	2	20.00	21	95.45	0	0.00	0	0.00	9	81.81	0	0.00	12	80.00
	Extremely well	0	0.00	0	0.00	19	73.07	3	30.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Very poor coping /adaptation	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	4.54	0	0.00	1	100	2	18.18	23	100.00	3	20.00

**Table 2(b): Mean differences in the coping strategies of the fathers with intellectually disabled children across their level of education**

	Fathers of mildly challenged children (n <sub>1</sub> =50)			Fathers of moderately challenged children (n <sub>2</sub> =50)			Fathers of severely challenged children (n <sub>3</sub> =50)					
	Illiterate (n <sub>1a</sub> =3)	Primary (n <sub>1b</sub> =11)	High school and inter (n <sub>1c</sub> =26)	U.G & P.G (n <sub>2a</sub> =10)	Illiterate (n <sub>2a</sub> =3)	Primary (n <sub>2b</sub> =10)	High school and inter (n <sub>2c</sub> =22)	U.G & P.G (n <sub>3a</sub> =15)	Illiterate (n <sub>3a</sub> =1)	Primary (n <sub>3b</sub> =11)	High school and inter (n <sub>3c</sub> =23)	U.G & P.G (n <sub>3d</sub> =15)
General awareness	22.34	25.60 <sup>a</sup>	17.33 <sup>b</sup>	18.45 <sup>b</sup>	24.14	26.6 <sup>ab</sup>	21.45 <sup>b</sup>	20.83 <sup>b</sup>	24.00	22.44 <sup>a</sup>	21.36 <sup>c</sup>	16.00 <sup>c</sup>
Misconceptions	5.30	5.00 <sup>a</sup>	4.87 <sup>b</sup>	3.46 <sup>b</sup>	6.31	6.24 <sup>a</sup>	4.27 <sup>b</sup>	4.16 <sup>b</sup>	5.00	5.13 <sup>a</sup>	4.36 <sup>b</sup>	3.11 <sup>b</sup>
Expectations from child	21.11	20.50 <sup>b</sup>	14.23 <sup>b</sup>	13.00 <sup>b</sup>	21.81	20.5 <sup>ab</sup>	14.63 <sup>b</sup>	13.10 <sup>b</sup>	21.00	23.00 <sup>a</sup>	19.00 <sup>b</sup>	12.00 <sup>c</sup>
Attitudes towards child	23.67	27.35 <sup>a</sup>	24.36 <sup>b</sup>	25.66 <sup>b</sup>	24.27	28.3 <sup>ab</sup>	25.26 <sup>b</sup>	24.46 <sup>b</sup>	28.00	27.45 <sup>a</sup>	26.11 <sup>b</sup>	24.00 <sup>c</sup>
Attitudes towards child management	43.33	42.90 <sup>a</sup>	36.45 <sup>b</sup>	35.61 <sup>b</sup>	44.33	43.28 <sup>a</sup>	36.45 <sup>b</sup>	35.64 <sup>b</sup>	45.00	41.33 <sup>a</sup>	38.55 <sup>b</sup>	35.13 <sup>c</sup>
General Rearing Practices	28.33	29.73.	28.42	28.13	28.53	29.18	28.52	28.73	28.00	28.30	29.45	29.42
Rearing Practices Specific to training	16.10	16.64 <sup>a</sup>	14.19 <sup>b</sup>	12.67 <sup>b</sup>	16.50	16.77 <sup>a</sup>	14.19 <sup>b</sup>	12.23 <sup>b</sup>	18.00	16.87 <sup>a</sup>	13.09	12.00 <sup>b</sup>
Social Support	11.10	10.26	10.72	10.51	11.56	10.46	10.32	10.52	10.00	10.18	10.17	10.38

Note: 1. Means with different superscripts are significant at p<0.05.

2. Number of illiterate fathers were too low for comparison, therefore not included while testing for significance.

3. Higher the score, lower the coping.

86.36 percent illiterate mothers were also adequately adapted. While, majority of mothers of moderately challenged children were found inadequately adapted, among them graduate & post graduate mothers were more in proportion (100.00%). It was also noticed that all the illiterate mothers with severely challenged children and educated only upto primary had very poor coping, while 90.00 percent mothers who were educated upto primary level were found to be inadequately adapted. In the same component, all the illiterate and primary level qualified fathers of mildly challenged children were found adequately adapted. While, all the illiterate fathers of moderately challenged children were found inadequately adapted. Whereas, all the graduate & post graduate qualified fathers were found to be adequately adapted. It was also noticed that all the fathers of severely challenged children who were educated upto high school & intermediate were found to have very poor coping.

Mean scores of mothers on coping strategies for stress across their educational level is presented in Table 1(b). The educational status of mothers was seen to influence the coping mechanisms except in the general rearing practices and social support domains. Mothers with higher education level reported better awareness about the child's problem, less misconceptions about child's disability; better expectations, attitudes towards child rearing practices & child management and also had better rearing practices specific to training.

Education elevates the awareness and knowledge level. It wipes out the wrong beliefs from our minds. Therefore, mothers who were more exposed to education were adequately aware regarding the child's problem and also had low or no misconceptions regarding the child's intellectual disability. It was worth noting that highly educated mothers had positive attitudes and expectations towards child, it probably because education sounds the attitudes and brings positivity. Mothers with higher education were more exposed to new teaching techniques and styles that promote their child's development, therefore reported better child rearing practices. The present finding is in accordance with that of Kumar (2008) who also stated that, mothers with higher educational status had low psychological stress and high coping strategy scores.

The other side of the study depicted the impact of educational status of fathers on coping strategies. A close perusal of the Table 2(b) clearly reveals that except

general rearing practices and social support, highly educated fathers had better general awareness regarding child's condition, low misconceptions; had expectations from their special need child; showed favourable attitudes towards child & child management and reported favourable rearing practice specific to training.

The reason for significant differences on above mentioned components of coping strategies was fathers' higher education level. It was observed that fathers who were more educated or had high level of education were more aware regarding the child's problem. Education paves the path to disillusionment. It wipes out the wrong beliefs from our minds, so fathers who were more educated had less misconception associated with disability. Education also boosts up the positive attitudes & expectations among people. Therefore, due to this reason, highly educated fathers were found to have positive expectations and attitudes towards child with mental challenge. Fathers with higher level of educational attainment helped mothers in introducing different teaching styles that promote children's development & provide cognitively stimulating learning environment at home. Therefore, reported better rearing practices specific to training as well. Some researchers also found that the personality characteristics of the family members, their educational level influence a family's ability to cope (Bailey and Smith, 2000; Emerson, 2003; Fazil *et al.*, 2004).

## CONCLUSION

Findings of the present study indicates that education level of both mothers and fathers influence their ability to cope up with the demand and challenges in bringing up the child with intellectual disability. Highly educated mothers and fathers had better general awareness regarding child's condition, low misconceptions; had expectations from their special need child; showed favourable attitudes towards child & child management and reported favourable rearing practice specific to training. Parent education programs may prove helpful to strengthen the coping strategies. This will increase their awareness regarding child's situation and inculcates positive parenting skills. Healthy parenting practices also provide connections to other parents and helpful in community building. Hence, helpful in strengthening parents' coping strategies.

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