

Perceived stress among parents of mentally challenged children: analysis across their educational status

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ABSTRACT : The present study assessed and compared the type and level of stress perceived by the parents of 150 mentally challenged children from 3 RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India) recognized special schools of Delhi across their education level. Sample was randomly drawn in equal proportions from three levels of mental challenge i.e. mild, moderate and severe from both low and middle income groups. The levels of stress perceived by parents were assessed using Family Interview for Stress and Coping in Mental Retardation, Part I developed by NIMHANS. From the present study, it was observed that mothers having low education had more marital problems, inter personal problems and financial implications. It was probably because of having different level of thinking as a result of their low education level; mothers were blamed more by the family for the child's condition and due to the direct association between low education level and financial strain. As mothers having low level of education were found to be more stressed, likewise less educated fathers were also more stressed.

Key words: Disturbed behavior, marital problems, neglect of others, social & financial Stress; social embarrassment

Life is beautiful but not always easy, it has hurdles too, and the biggest challenge is to face them with courage. One should be always ready to face those challenges and hardships of life with equanimity. Similarly, when the parents realize that their child is born with cognitive impairment (mental challenge); they are confronted with many challenges and problems. According to the latest edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)*, an individual with mental retardation must fulfill the three criteria: an IQ below 70, significant limitations in two or more areas of adaptive behavior, i.e. communication, interpersonal skills, self-help skills etc. and evidence that the limitations appears before the age of 18.

Universally, the families exist in all human societies and it is described as a social institution that is responsible for child rearing, child production and emotional as well as economic support for its members (Lamanna and Reidman, 2003). It is the responsibility of parents to look after the child and to fulfill each and every needs and wants of their child. Parental happiness is closely associated with the happiness of their child. But as the child is diagnosed with mental retardation it can cause high level of stress in parents because of the challenges, difficulties and frustrations that they face in everyday life (Upreti and Singh, 2016). The birth of a mentally retarded child in a family is likely to be one of the most traumatic events for the whole family especially parents and finally

results in stress. Stress is an inevitable, normal experience that is felt when an individual is unsure if he/she can meet the demands of her environment (Patnaik, 2014). Boss (2002, 2006) defines *family stress* as pressure or tension on the status quo; it is a disturbance of the family's steady state. According to social systems theory, stress represents a change in the family's steady state and is the response of the family to the demands experienced as a result of a stressor event. The degree of stress ultimately depends on the family's definition of the stressor event as well as the adequacy of the family's resources to meet the demands of the change associated with the stressor event.

Proper home environment plays an important role in the life of children. Nobody can refuse the important role that parents play in developing their child's personality. Education level of parents also has enormous role in creating 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 disability and helpful in coping with stress. In this context, some researchers evaluated that parental educational level is an important predictor of children's behavioral and educational outcomes (Davis-Kean, 2005). Similarly, others found that parent education has also been shown to increase positive parenting skills, such as providing structure for children and supporting child autonomy, and decrease internalizing problems, such as depression and anxiety, as

well as externalizing problems, such as lying (Joussement *et al.*, 2014). So, in-line with above discussion it can be concluded that parents of mentally challenged children go through intense level of stress and parental education may alter it. In order to have better understanding of how education level of parents influence their perceived stress level, the present study was undertaken with the objectives to assess and compare the type and level of perceived stress among parents of mentally challenged children across their education level and to investigate statistical differences in the type and level of perceived stress among parents of mentally challenged children across their education level.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The sample for the study was selected by using a multistage purposive cum random sampling technique. The locale of the present research study, Delhi, was purposively selected as it is one of the nearest region that has appropriate number of RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India) recognized special schools meant especially for mentally retarded (MR) children. Out of the nine RCI recognized institutes for MR children, three institutes namely NIMH (National Institute for Mentally Handicapped), Manovikas and C.B.S Memorial were randomly selected as research base for the present research study. It was observed that from the three institutes, only those belonging to low income group (LIG) and middle income group (MIG) were considered for the present study because the population of MR children from high income group (HIG) was extensively low. Out of the total population of LIG and MIG mentally challenged children, 75 MR children were selected from each social class by randomly drawing 25 from each level of mental challenge. Thus, the sample for the present study comprised of 150 mentally challenged children and their families.

Further, the directors of the selected institutions were contacted, who provided all the necessary details related to the enrolled MR children and their families. The required samples were drawn and afterwards, first common meeting with the families of MR children was organized by the researcher. Assurance was given to those families that the information provided by them will be kept confidential and utilized only for the research purpose. The parents were interviewed on the place of their choice-institute or their home and observations made by the researcher. Self-designed general questionnaire was used to study the socio-demographic and socio-economic profile of respondents. The type and level of stress perceived by parents were assessed using Family Interview for Stress and Coping in Mental

Retardation (Section-I) developed by NIMHANS. The scale entails detailed assessment of the stress in families with mentally challenged children. The data collected was classified and tabulated as per the objectives of the research study in order to arrive at relevant and meaningful inferences. Data was analyzed by taking levels of mental retardation as control. The data was analyzed using statistical techniques like frequency, percentage and one way ANOVA.

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 graduate and post graduate i.e. 66.66% showed high level of stress under the subscale extra inputs for care. Mothers of moderately challenged children who were educated upto primary level were comparatively more in proportion (58.33%) as compare to others and were found very highly stressed. It has been seen that all the mothers of severely challenged children who were educated upto primary, high school & intermediate and U.G-P.G level were observed to be highly stressed. On the other side {Table 1(b)}, in majority, all the illiterate fathers of mildly challenged children had moderate level of stress. Fathers of moderately challenged children who were educated upto high school & intermediate (81.81%) and U.G-P.G level (66.66%) were found at moderate level. Fathers of severely challenged children who were studied upto high school, Intermediate and U.G, P.G level were found more in proportion (65.21% and 66.66%) under high level of stress.

On the component of decreased leisure time and activity, it was found that all the mothers of mildly challenged children who were graduate and post graduate, their leisure time found to be affected definitely. All the mothers with education upto primary and U.G-P.G level also reported that their leisure time definitely affected due to the child's condition. Besides this, all the mothers of severely challenged children whose education level were upto high school, intermediate and U.G-P.G level, reported that their leisure time was totally affected. The other picture revealed that fathers of mildly challenged children who were illiterate (66.6%), their time were definitely affected. It was observed that majority of fathers of moderately challenged children who were illiterate and who were educated upto high school & intermediate (90.90%), their leisure time and activity were found to be affected definitely. Time and activities of all the fathers of severely challenged children who were illiterate, educated upto primary, high school & intermediate were totally affected.

| Areas of Perceived Stress | Subscales | Levels of Stress | Mildly Challenged Children (n ₁ =50) | | | Moderately Challenged Children (n ₂ =50) | | | Severely Challenged Children (n ₃ =50) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|------|-------|------|-------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|
| | | | Illiterate (n _{1a} =22) | Primary (n _{1b} =15) | High school and Inter (n _{1c} =10) | UG and PG (n _{2a} =18) | Primary (n _{2b} =12) | High school and Inter (n _{2c} =12) | UG and PG (n _{3a} =8) | Primary (n _{3b} =12) | High school and Inter (n _{3c} =10) | UG and PG (n _{3d} =6) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Social Stress | Other inter-personal problems | Nil | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | | | | | | |
| | | Mild | 12 | 54.54 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | | | | | | |
| | | Moderate | 5 | 22.27 | 9 | 60.00 | 8 | 80.00 | 3 | 100.00 | 13 | 72.30 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 17 | 77.27 | 0 | 0.00 | | | | |
| | | Severe | 5 | 22.70 | 6 | 40.00 | 2 | 20.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 5 | 27.80 | 12 | 100.0 | 4 | 50.00 | 5 | 22.72 | 0 | 0.00 | | | | |
| | | Very high | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 50.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 12 | 100.00 | | | | |
| | | Effect on siblings and other family worries | Nil | 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 | | | |
| | | Mild | 8 | 36.36 | 8 | 53.33 | 5 | 50.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 16.66 | 2 | 16.66 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | | |
| | | Moderate | 14 | 63.63 | 5 | 33.33 | 5 | 50.00 | 3 | 100.00 | 15 | 83.34 | 9 | 75.00 | 6 | 75.00 | 18 | 81.81 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | | |
| | | Severe | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 13.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 16.67 | 1 | 8.33 | 2 | 25.00 | 2 | 9.09 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | | |
| | | Very high | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 9.09 | 12 | 100.00 | 10 | 100.00 | | |
| | | Altered social life | Nil | 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 | |
| | | Mild | 10 | 45.40 | 4 | 26.67 | 6 | 60.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | | Moderate | 12 | 54.54 | 7 | 46.67 | 4 | 4.00 | 3 | 100.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | | Severe | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 26.67 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 12 | 66.66 | 12 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | | Very high | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 6 | 33.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 8 | 100.0 | 22 | 100.00 | 12 | 100.00 | 10 | 100.00 | 6 | 100.00 |
| Financial Implications | Social embarrassment | Nil | 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 |
| | | Mild | 0 | 0.00 | 5 | 33.33 | 5 | 50.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | | Moderate | 15 | 68.18 | 8 | 53.33 | 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 |
| | | Severe | 7 | 31.88 | 2 | 13.33 | 1 | 10.00 | 3 | 100.00 | 10 | 55.55 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | | Very high | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 8 | 44.44 | 12 | 100.0 | 8 | 100.0 | 22 | 100.00 | 12 | 100.00 | 10 | 100.00 | 6 | 100.00 |
| | | Nil | 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 |
| | | Mild | 8 | 36.36 | 8 | 53.33 | 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 |
| | | Moderate | 7 | 31.81 | 4 | 26.67 | 7 | 70.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | | Severe | 7 | 31.81 | 3 | 20.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 100.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 9 | 75.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | | Very High | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 18 | 100.0 | 3 | 25.00 | 12 | 100.0 | 22 | 100.00 | 12 | 100.00 | 10 | 100.00 | 6 | 100.00 |

In another component more proportions of mothers of mildly challenged children educated upto U.G-P.G level (66.66%) were found neglecting other family members "somewhat". It was also seen that mothers with moderately challenged children who were studied upto primary level and high school- intermediate level, reported that they were definitely neglecting other family members. Perhaps, all the mothers of severely challenged children except who were illiterate were found totally neglecting other family members. Under the same component all the illiterate fathers of mildly challenged children who were educated upto primary (45.45%) were found to "somewhat" neglecting other members of family. Fathers of moderately challenged children who were educated upto high school & intermediate were more in proportion (81.81%) under "somewhat" level. Majority of fathers of severely challenged who were educated upto U.G & P.G (86.67%) were found definitely neglecting other family members.

In the component of disturbed behaviour all the mothers of mildly challenged children who were educated upto U.G-P.G level perceived moderate level of stress due to the disturbed behavior of the child. While, all the mothers of moderately challenged children who were illiterate, who had education level of U.G and P.G were found to perceived very high level of stress. It was noticed among severely challenged children that their mothers except who were illiterate, reported very high level of stress. On the other side, majority of fathers of mildly and moderately challenged children who were educated upto high school & intermediate (73.07%, 77.27% respectively) found moderately stressed. Whereas, majority of fathers of severely challenged children who were educated upto U.G & P.G (93.33%) were found to be severely stressed.

It can be seen from the table that all the mothers of mildly challenged who were educated upto U.G & P.G and 72.73% of illiterate mothers were found moderately distressed. Whereas, majority of high school & intermediate qualified mothers (75.00%) of moderately challenged children were found at severe level of personal distress. It was also seen that all the mothers of severely challenged children except who were illiterate were very severely distressed. However, all the fathers of mildly challenged children who were illiterate and those who were educated upto high school & intermediate (76.92%), reported moderate and mild level of personal distress. While, fathers who had moderately challenge and studied upto primary level (70.00%), were proportionally more under moderate level of distress. Whereas, majority of all the fathers of severely challenged children who were educated upto U.G & P.G

were more in percentage as compare to others under severe level of distress.

In the marital problems subscale, among all the mothers, majority of illiterate mothers of mildly (77.27%) and moderately challenged children (77.77%) were at moderate level of stress due to marital problems. While, all the mothers of severely challenged children except who were illiterate were found at very high level. Under the same component, majority of fathers of mildly challenged children who were educated upto primary (90.90%) were mildly stressed. While fathers who had moderately challenged children and were educated upto graduation and post graduation (80.00%) found to be moderately stressed. In case of severely challenged children, mostly their fathers were moderately stressed. Fathers who were educated upto high school & intermediate were more in percentage (91.30%).

Under other interpersonal problems all the mothers of mildly challenged children who were educated upto U.G & P.G level and 80.00% of high school & intermediate qualified mothers were proportionally more at moderate level. All the mothers of moderately challenged children who were educated upto primary level and high school-intermediate level were found to be more at severe level as compared to others. It was observed that all the mothers of severely challenged children except who were illiterate had very high interpersonal problems hence, highly stressed. Unlike mothers, more percentage of fathers of mildly (100.00%) and moderately challenged children (66.66%) who were illiterate observed at moderate level. It was noted that, in majority all the fathers who were educated upto U.G & P.G level reported moderate level of interpersonal problems.

On the component effect on siblings and other family worries most of the mothers were at moderate level, out of which all the U.G & P.G qualified mothers (100.00%) were at moderate level, while others were less in percentage. Among mothers of moderately challenged children, percentages of illiterate mothers were more (83.34%) at moderate level. Besides this, all the mothers of severely challenged children except illiterate mothers were found to be at very high level. On this same component, nearly equal percentage of fathers of mildly challenged children who were illiterate and educated upto high school-intermediate level (66.66% and 65.38%) were found to be moderately stressed. While, illiterate fathers of moderately challenged children were more in percentage (66.66%) at moderate level of stress. Majority of fathers of severely challenged children who were studied upto high school and intermediate level were more severely stressed.

It was noted that the social life of all the U.G & P.G qualified mothers were altered moderately. All the mothers of moderately challenged children who were educated upto high school-intermediate and graduation-postgraduation were at very high level. Along with this, all the mothers of severely challenged children also found under very high level. A glance on perceived level of stress in altered social life represents that maximum percentage fathers of mildly challenged children who were illiterate (66.66%) were mildly stressed. While, most of the fathers of moderately challenged children were at moderate level, out which more percentage were of illiterate fathers (100.00%). Whereas, all the fathers of severely challenged children who were illiterate, educated upto high school, intermediate, graduation and post graduation level were very severely stressed.

On social embarrassment subscale it has been seen that all the mothers of mildly challenged children who were educated upto U.G & P.G level were found at severe level. Except illiterate mothers, all the mothers of moderately challenged children from various educational backgrounds were observed at very high level. While, all the mothers of severely challenged mothers irrespective of their education level were also found at very high level. The other picture revealed that all the illiterate fathers of mildly challenged children were at mild level and fathers educated upto high school & intermediate were proportionally more (76.92%) at moderate level. Whereas, all the fathers of moderately challenged children who had education upto high school & intermediate were found to be very highly stressed. Among fathers of severely challenged children no impact of education level was found.

In the subscale financial implication, all the highly qualified mothers (U.G & P.G) of mildly challenged children were found at severe level. Except those mothers who were educated upto primary level all the mothers of moderately challenged children from different educational background were found at very high level. Whereas, all the mothers of severely challenged mothers irrespective of their educational status were found at very high level of financial strain. Besides this, majority of fathers of mildly challenged children who were educated upto high school & intermediate (88.46%) were at moderate level of financial stress. It was seen that most of the fathers of moderately challenged children were severely stressed, out of which proportion of illiterate fathers were more (100.00%). All the fathers of severely challenged children were found to be highly stressed in this component.

Table 2 (a) clearly shows that significant differences were found on the components like marital problems,

other interpersonal problems and financial implications. It was noticed that mothers having low education had more marital problems, inter personal problems and financial implications. More educated the mother lesser will be the conflicts between the couple. It might be because of having same level of thinking, so, while taking any decision regarding the welfare of the child both (husband-wife) were involved equally and also had better understanding & proper communication regarding any issue related to their child. It was noticed that mothers having no or low education were blamed more by the family for the child's condition; more disagreements and non cooperation was also found prevalent among them. Therefore, it leads to more interpersonal problems. Education also plays a role in income. Median earnings increase with each level of education. Better education level is associated with better economic outcomes. Durban *et al.* (2012) stated that less educated mothers have been found to have fewer strategies in raising children with cognitive delay. Due to utilizing fewer strategies mothers become unable to fulfill the needs and demands of the child, hence this deprived condition raises the stress level of mothers. In this context, Gupta and Jain (2002) also found that parents with less education, from low income group and rural areas have more problems with their spastic mentally handicapped children.

The other side of the research study revealed the impact of educational status of father on perceived level of stress. A close analysis of the table 2(b) clearly reveals that only three components had significant relation with the educational status of father viz. marital problems, interpersonal problems and financial implications. As mother's having low level of education were found to be more stressed, likewise less educated fathers were also more stressed. The reason behind significant differences in marital problems might be more marital conflicts in fathers having low educational status. Education broadens the thinking, vision and also helps in acquiring knowledge. Among highly educated fathers marital conflicts were comparatively low because of more support from their counterparts & family, proper communication and better understanding. It was noted that fathers having low level of education without knowing any biological fact blamed mothers for the child's condition and because of non cooperativeness and quarrels among family members on child related issues and disagreements, interpersonal problems were more profound. As explained earlier that low level of education resulted in low socioeconomic status of family. Therefore, like mothers, fathers of mentally challenged children also perceived more financial stress. Findings of

Table 1 (b): Frequency and percentage distribution of the fathers of mentally challenged children on the type & level of perceived stress across their level of education

| Areas of Perceived Stress | Subscales | Levels of Stress | Fathers of mildly challenged children (n ₁ =50) | | | | Fathers of moderately challenged children (n ₂ =50) | | | | Fathers of severely challenged children (n ₃ =50) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|--|-------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| | | | Illiterate (n _{1a} =3) | Primary (n _{1b} =11) | High school and Inter (n _{1c} =26) | UG and PG (n _{1d} =10) | Illiterate (n _{2a} =3) | Primary (n _{2b} =10) | High school and Inter (n _{2c} =22) | UG and PG (n _{2d} =15) | Illiterate (n _{3a} =1) | Primary (n _{3b} =11) | High school and Inter (n _{3c} =23) | UG and PG (n _{3d} =15) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Daily Care | Extra inputs for care | Nil | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Low | 0 | 0.00 | 12 | 46.15 | 5 | 50.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | High | Moderate | 3 | 100.0 | 6 | 54.54 | 8 | 30.76 | 5 | 50.00 | 1 | 33.33 | 3 | 30.00 | 18 | 81.81 | 10 | 66.66 | 0 | 0.00 | | | | | | | | |
| | | Very high | 0 | 0.00 | 5 | 45.45 | 6 | 23.07 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 66.67 | 6 | 60.00 | 4 | 18.18 | 5 | 33.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 5 | 45.45 | 15 | 65.21 | 10 | 66.66 | | |
| | Decreased leisure time and activity | Nil | 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 | | |
| | | Minimal | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 18.82 | 5 | 19.23 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 20.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | Somewhat | Definitely | 1 | 33.30 | 4 | 36.36 | 14 | 53.84 | 6 | 60.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 20.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 13.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | | Totally | 2 | 66.60 | 5 | 45.45 | 7 | 26.92 | 4 | 40.00 | 3 | 100.0 | 6 | 60.00 | 20 | 90.90 | 8 | 53.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | Neglect of others | Nil | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 9.09 | 5 | 33.33 | 1 | 100.0 | 11 | 100.0 | 23 | 100.0 | 10 | 66.66 |
| | | Minimal | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 27.27 | 13 | 50.00 | 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 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Somewhat | Definitely | 3 | 100.0 | 5 | 45.45 | 9 | 34.61 | 4 | 40.00 | 2 | 66.66 | 0 | 0.00 | 18 | 81.81 | 4 | 26.66 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | |
| | Totally | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 27.27 | 4 | 15.38 | 2 | 20.00 | 1 | 33.33 | 8 | 80.00 | 4 | 18.18 | 8 | 53.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 9 | 81.81 | 18 | 78.26 | 13 | 86.67 | | | |
| Disturbed behavior | Nil | 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 | 0 | 0.00 | |
| | Mild | 0 | 0.00 | 5 | 45.45 | 0 | 0.00 | 6 | 60.00 | 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 | |
| Moderate | Severe | 2 | 66.67 | 4 | 36.36 | 19 | 73.07 | 4 | 40.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 7 | 70.00 | 17 | 77.27 | 6 | 40.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | |
| | Very high | 1 | 33.33 | 2 | 18.18 | 7 | 26.92 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 100 | 2 | 20.00 | 5 | 22.72 | 7 | 46.66 | 0 | 0.00 | 8 | 72.72 | 17 | 73.91 | 14 | 93.33 | | | |
| Family Emotional Stress | Personal distress | Nil | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 10.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 13.33 | 1 | 100.0 | 3 | 27.27 | 6 | 26.08 | 1 | 6.67 | | |
| | | Mild | 0 | 0.00 | 8 | 72.72 | 20 | 76.92 | 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 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Severe | Moderate | 3 | 100.0 | 3 | 27.27 | 6 | 23.07 | 7 | 70.00 | 2 | 66.66 | 7 | 70.00 | 13 | 59.09 | 8 | 53.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 7 | 63.63 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | |
| | Very severe | 0 | 1.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 33.33 | 3 | 30.00 | 9 | 40.90 | 6 | 40.00 | 1 | 100.0 | 4 | 36.36 | 20 | 86.95 | 15 | 100.0 | | | |
| Marital problems | Nil | Very severe | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 6.66 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 13.04 | 0 | 0.00 | | |
| | | Mild | 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 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Moderate | Severe | Mild | 0 | 0.00 | 10 | 90.90 | 7 | 26.92 | 7 | 70.00 | 1 | 33.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 10 | 45.45 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | | Definitely | 2 | 66.66 | 1 | 9.09 | 16 | 61.53 | 3 | 30.00 | 2 | 66.66 | 8 | 80.00 | 12 | 54.54 | 11 | 73.33 | 1 | 100.0 | 8 | 72.72 | 21 | 91.30 | 12 | 80.00 | | |
| Very high | Severe | Definitely | 1 | 33.30 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 11.53 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 20.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 20.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 18.18 | 2 | 8.70 | 3 | 20.00 | | |
| | | Totally | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 6.67 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 9.09 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | | |

| Areas of Perceived Stress | Subscales | Levels of Stress | Fathers of mildly challenged children (n ₁ =50) | | | | Fathers of moderately challenged children (n ₂ =50) | | | | Fathers of severely challenged children (n ₃ =50) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|
| | | | Illiterate (n _{1a} =3) | Primary school (n _{1b} =11) | High school and Inter (n _{1c} =26) | UG and PG (n _{1d} =10) | Illiterate (n _{2a} =3) | Primary school (n _{2b} =10) | High school and Inter (n _{2c} =22) | UG and PG (n _{2d} =15) | Illiterate (n _{3a} =1) | Primary school (n _{3b} =11) | High school and Inter (n _{3c} =23) | UG and PG (n _{3d} =15) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Social Stress | Other inter-sonal problems | Nil | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Mild | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 27.27 | 14 | 53.84 | 4 | 40.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 7 | 31.81 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | | | | | | | | |
| | | Moderate | 3 | 100.00 | 5 | 45.45 | 12 | 46.15 | 5 | 50.00 | 2 | 66.66 | 4 | 40.00 | 8 | 36.36 | 5 | 33.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 36.36 | 7 | 30.43 | 15 | 100.0 | | |
| | | Severe | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 27.23 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 10.00 | 1 | 33.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 7 | 31.81 | 8 | 53.33 | 1 | 100.0 | 7 | 63.63 | 15 | 65.21 | 0 | 0.00 | | |
| | | Very severe | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 13.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 4.37 | 0 | 0.00 | | |
| | | Effect on siblings and other family worries | Nil | 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 | |
| | | Mild | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 18.18 | 6 | 23.07 | 8 | 80.00 | 1 | 33.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | | Moderate | 2 | 66.66 | 4 | 36.36 | 17 | 65.38 | 2 | 20.00 | 2 | 66.66 | 5 | 50.00 | 6 | 27.27 | 7 | 46.66 | 0 | 0.00 | 8 | 72.72 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | | Severe | 1 | 33.33 | 5 | 45.45 | 3 | 11.53 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 5 | 50.00 | 14 | 63.63 | 4 | 26.66 | 1 | 100.0 | 2 | 18.18 | 21 | 91.30 | 12 | 80.00 | | |
| | | Very high | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 9.09 | 4 | 26.66 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 9.09 | 2 | 8.65 | 3 | 20.00 | | |
| | | Altered social life | Nil | 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 | |
| | | Mild | 2 | 66.66 | 3 | 27.20 | 0 | 0.00 | 5 | 50.00 | 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 |
| | | Moderate | 1 | 33.33 | 6 | 54.54 | 12 | 46.15 | 3 | 30.00 | 3 | 100.0 | 9 | 90.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 8 | 53.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | | Severe | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 18.18 | 14 | 53.84 | 2 | 20.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 10.00 | 12 | 54.54 | 4 | 26.66 | 0 | 0.00 | 9 | 81.81 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | | Very high | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 10 | 45.45 | 3 | 20.00 | 1 | 100.0 | 2 | 18.18 | 23 | 100.0 | 15 | 100.0 | | |
| | Social embarrassment | Nil | 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 | | |
| | Mild | 3 | 100.0 | 7 | 63.63 | 3 | 11.53 | 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 | 0 | 0.00 | |
| | Moderate | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 27.27 | 20 | 76.92 | 7 | 70.00 | 1 | 33.33 | 3 | 30.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 20.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | |
| | Severe | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 9.09 | 3 | 11.53 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 66.66 | 7 | 70.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 9 | 60.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | |
| Financial Implications | | Very high | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 22 | 100.0 | 3 | 20.00 | 1 | 100.0 | 11 | 100.0 | 23 | 100.0 | 15 | 100.0 | | |
| | | Nil | 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 | | |
| | | Mild | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 27.23 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 20.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | | |
| | | Moderate | 1 | 33.33 | 2 | 18.18 | 23 | 88.46 | 5 | 50.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 40.00 | 2 | 9.09 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| | | Severe | 2 | 66.66 | 6 | 54.54 | 3 | 11.53 | 3 | 30.00 | 3 | 100.0 | 4 | 40.00 | 16 | 72.72 | 12 | 80.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | | |
| | Very High | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 20.00 | 4 | 18.18 | 3 | 20.00 | 1 | 100.0 | 11 | 100.0 | 23 | 100.0 | 15 | 100.0 | | | |

Table 2(a): Mean differences in the stress perceived by the mothers of mentally challenged children across their level of education

| Subscales of Stress | Mothers of mildly challenged children (n ₁ =50) | | | Mothers of moderately challenged children (n ₂ =50) | | | Mothers of severely challenged children (n ₃ =50) | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| | Illiterate (n _{1a} =22) | Primary (n _{1b} =15) | High school and Inter (n _{1c} =10) | Illiterate (n _{2a} =18) | Primary (n _{2b} =12) | High school and Inter (n _{2c} =12) | Illiterate (n _{3a} =22) | Primary (n _{3b} =12) | High school and Inter (n _{3c} =10) | UG and PG (n _{3d} =6) |
| Extra inputs for care | 12.53 | 12.04 | 12.27 | 12.00 | 10.28 | 10.83 | 12.43 | 12.14 | 12.07 | 12.00 |
| Decreased leisure time and activity | 7.42 | 8.18 | 7.31 | 8.00 | 8.72 | 8.00 | 7.22 | 7.18 | 7.61 | 8.00 |
| Neglect of others | 3.78 | 4.54 | 4.72 | 4.00 | 6.88 | 6.08 | 3.28 | 4.34 | 4.52 | 4.00 |
| Disturbed behaviour | 2.89 | 3.06 | 3.54 | 3.04 | 6.88 | 6.00 | 2.89 | 3.16 | 2.54 | 3.04 |
| Personal distress | 8.67 | 8.76 | 9.09 | 9.00 | 8.33 | 8.16 | 7.67 | 7.76 | 8.09 | 8.00 |
| Marital problems | 4.86 ^a | 3.16 ^a | 1.55 ^b | 1.06 ^c | 4.55 ^a | 4.20 ^a | 3.86 ^a | 3.55 ^a | 2.86 ^b | 2.36 ^b |
| Other interpersonal problems | 3.87 ^a | 2.18 ^b | 2.54 ^b | 1.33 ^c | 6.00 ^a | 6.80 ^a | 2.34 ^a | 2.08 ^a | 1.74 ^b | 1.23 ^b |
| Effect on siblings and other family worries | 3.50 | 4.11 | 3.81 | 3.18 | 6.67 | 5.64 | 3.50 | 3.11 | 3.81 | 3.18 |
| Altered social life | 7.87 | 7.00 | 8.45 | 8.00 | 8.33 | 7.14 | 7.87 | 7.00 | 8.45 | 8.00 |
| Social embarrassment | 3.10 | 3.63 | 3.45 | 4.00 | 3.44 | 2.57 | 3.10 | 3.63 | 3.45 | 4.00 |
| Financial implications | 6.40 ^a | 5.54 ^{ab} | 5.11 ^b | 4.80 ^c | 9.44 ^a | 9.17 ^a | 5.40 ^a | 5.54 ^a | 4.80 ^b | 4.11 ^b |

Note: Means with different superscripts differ significantly at p<0.05

Table 2(b): Mean differences in the stress perceived by the fathers of mentally challenged children across their level of education

| Subscales of Stress | Fathers of mildly challenged children (n ₁ =50) | | | Fathers of moderately challenged children (n ₂ =50) | | | Fathers of severely challenged children (n ₃ =50) | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| | Illiterate (n _{1a} =3) | Primary (n _{1b} =11) | High school and Inter (n _{1c} =26) | Illiterate (n _{2a} =3) | Primary (n _{2b} =10) | High school and Inter (n _{2c} =22) | Illiterate (n _{3a} =1) | Primary (n _{3b} =11) | High school and Inter (n _{3c} =23) | UG & PG (n _{3d} =15) |
| Extra inputs for care | 4.00 | 4.09 | 4.80 | 5.70 | 5.90 | 5.80 | 7.00 | 6.27 | 6.97 | 6.34 |
| Decreased leisure time and activity | 3.00 | 3.09 | 3.34 | 4.21 | 3.56 | 3.67 | 8.00 | 8.00 | 7.34 | 7.00 |
| Neglect of others | 2.00 | 2.18 | 2.53 | 2.50 | 2.18 | 2.46 | 2.00 | 1.12 | 1.45 | 2.27 |
| Disturbed behaviour | 0.90 | 0.85 | 1.02 | 0.67 | 0.85 | 0.88 | 1.00 | 2.32 | 2.72 | 2.81 |
| Personal distress | 3.30 | 3.12 | 3.30 | 2.98 | 3.65 | 3.04 | 8.00 | 9.68 | 9.59 | 8.14 |
| Marital problems | 4.00 | 3.08a | 2.77b | 1.66c | 3.76a | 2.34b | 4.00 | 3.67a | 2.22b | 1.32c |
| Other interpersonal problems | 3.25 | 3.13a | 2.10b | 1.90b | 4.10a | 2.12b | 7.00 | 6.09a | 5.77b | 4.10c |
| Effect on siblings and other family worries | 2.37 | 2.22 | 2.34 | 2.19 | 2.66 | 2.35 | 3.00 | 3.75 | 4.09 | 3.12 |
| Altered social life | 5.00 | 4.73 | 5.16 | 4.34 | 5.05 | 5.11 | 3.00 | 3.45 | 3.90 | 3.14 |
| Social embarrassment | 0.03 | 0.46 | 1.60 | 1.46 | 0.76 | 1.78 | 6.00 | 7.45 | 7.09 | 6.18 |
| Financial implications | 6.27 | 5.38a | 4.7b | 3.74c | 6.58a | 5.74b | 6.00 | 6.35a | 5.39b | 4.89c |

Note: 1. Means with different superscripts differ significantly at 0.05 level of significance

2. Number of illiterate father were too less to compare, therefore not included while testing for significance

the present study are in-line with the findings of Kumar (2008), who investigated that educated parents are able to provide appropriate and timely treatment for various problems of the child. Educated parents also aware about the importance of attending seminars and workshops, in order to enhance their coping strategies and to deal with the problems of the child successfully. Also, the educated parents are more exposed to the prevailing facilities that will improve their child's condition and also enhance the strategies that they can adopt to cope effectively with the psychological stress and they have frequent contacts with the experts and professionals. This all enables the educated parents less stressed.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study has been to determine whether parental education makes any difference in the type and level of perceived stress among parents of mentally challenged children. The results have shown that education level of parents cause a meaningful difference in their stress level under three components i.e. marital problems, interpersonal problems and financial implications. The predominant reason for the difference were found to be different level of thinking of parents resulted from difference in education level; blaming of mother by the family for the child's condition, because of lack of awareness and; due to the association between lower level of education and financial strain. One cannot eradicate the problem completely but if parents of both genders put efforts to increase their education level so as to become more aware regarding the child's situation, it may leads to no disputes in family and also lessens the marital conflicts. Special schools may recruit qualified counselors for providing guidance and counseling sessions to the parents.

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