

Challenges Faced by the Parents of Mentally Challenged Children in India

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Abstract : Family is an important social institution devoted to the growth of a child, and parents are the important agents of socialization. Mentally challenged children are those who are affected by intellectual disability, which is manifested by limitation in intellectual functioning and adoptive behavior. Intellectual disability affects about 3-4 percentage of the general population. Intellectual disability is caused by genetic condition, problems during pregnancy, problems during childbirth, or illness. Mental retardation is the world's most complex and challenging issue. The stigmatization of disability results in social and economic marginalization. Parents of the mentally challenged children will have a very high level of parenting stress, which is significantly more than the stress perceived by the parents of the children without disability. The prevalence of severe mental disorder called Schizophrenia is among 1.1 percent of the total population in India. On the other hand, 11 to 12 percent is the overall lifetime occurrence rate of mental disorders. While the government has a separate program for mental health, the segment is marred by lack of adequate doctors and infrastructure. Mentally retarded children have certain limitations in mental functioning and skills, which makes them slow learners in speaking, walking, and taking care of their personal needs such as dressing and eating. Accepting a child with mental handicap becomes difficult for parents and to the whole family, as they have to face many problems, including those of management, finance, deprivation of rest, and leisure. Also, the problems faced by the parents can be seen in different areas like - educational, psychological, social, emotional, financial and family related issues. The study brought out various difficulties and problems faced by the parents as well as family members. The findings revealed that the mental retardation is not only a medico-psychological problem but also a socio-cultural problem. The study results, however, indicate that the quality of life of the family having children with mental retardation can be improved to a greater extent by building up a child-friendly ambience at home. The main aim of the present study is to assess the problems faced by the parents of mentally challenged children, with the help of personal interview data collected from the parents of mentally challenged children, residing in Shimoga District of Karnataka State, India. These individuals were selected using stratified random sampling method. Organizing effective intervention programs for parents, family, society, and educational institutions towards reduction of family stress, augmenting the family's strengths, increasing child's competence and enhancing the positive attitudes and values of the society will go a long way for the peaceful existence of the mentally challenged children.

Keywords : mentally challenged children, intellectual disability, special children, social infrastructure, differently abled, psychological stress, marginalization

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