

Daily Hassles and Psychological Well-Being among the Parents of Autism Spectrum Disorder Children in Kolkata

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Abstract

Introduction: Higher parenting stress worldwide is seen more among the parents of children with intellectual disability [1]. Children affected with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) experiences a range of difficulties related to the social, emotional and behavioral domains that present the parents with significant concerns which may lead to the mental health problems of the parents [2].

Aim of the Study: The present study aims to:

1. To assess the daily hassles among the parents of autism spectrum disorder.
2. To determine the level of psychological well-being among the parents of autism spectrum disorder.

Subjects and Methods: The subjects are parents of ASD (n = 25) and normal children (n = 25) and were given self-administered questionnaire based upon Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale [RPWS] and Parenting daily hassles scale [PDHS]. Data was analysed in SPSS 20.

Results and Discussion: The study shows significant differences in Parental Stress among both groups of parents. There was no strong difference seen between the groups of parents. Though many studies stated relationship between psychological well-being and parental care. The findings also suggests a significant correlation between psychological well-being and parental stress.

Conclusion: The study findings suggest significant difference between the daily hassles felt by the parents of two groups. These hassles further affect their psychological well-being. Parents with ASD affected children needs to attend training and workshops to cope up with the parental stress and to improve their Psychological well-being.

Keywords: Daily Hassles; Psychological Well-Being; Autism Spectrum Disorder; Parenting Stress

Introduction

Parenting stress worldwide is more among the parents of children with intellectual disability [3].

Families of children with autism spectrum disorder are at more risk [4].

Parents with ASD children face challenges which cannot be denied [5]. Parents of children with autism (ASD) experience greater risks to their health and psycho-social adjustment than parents of typically developing children [6] and parents also report high level of stress [7]. These parents are at the risk for experiencing depression also [8].

Individuals with an autism spectrum disorder display two core characteristics: qualitative impairments in social interaction and communication and also repetitive and shows stereotyped and repetitive behavior [9]. Which can range from moderate to severe and may also manifest itself through a variety of other symptoms. Many individuals on the this spectrum have cognitive impairments that puts them below the set cutoff for intellectual disability [10].

There is a set prognosis for children with autism, which leads the professionals to predict the range of symptoms of impairment he/she will show at adulthood [11]. Children with such ASD may suffer from various other difficulties such as the behavioral or the emotional which may lead to further deterioration of the mental health of the parents [12].

Before we help the parents to manage stress, we need to understand which behaviors of a child contributes to parenting stress. One can be the strategies of coping used by the parents to manage the stress related to their child's behavior. If the strategies are ineffective or maladaptive it may lead to self-blame which might contribute to increased parental stress [13]. Another possible way is the effects of child behavior problems on parental fatigue levels. Marital satisfaction can also decrease [14]. It is very natural for these parents to feel pessimistic when thinking about the long term problems that their child with this problems may face in future [15].

Methodology

The study was conducted on the parents of children with the neurodevelopmental disorder Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and compared for psychological well-being and daily hassles with the parents of normal children.

A self-administered questionnaire was distributed. Data were collected from 50 parents who were randomly selected. These parents were the residents of Kolkata, India (25 = ASD and 25 = Neuro-typical) the age range for the children was between 5 to 14 years. They were either father or mother of Autistic child or those parents whose children were not affected.

Factorial design 2x2 were used in which psychological well-being and daily hassles were measured in ASD parents and parents of normal children. The Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale [RPWS] [16,17] was used to measure the psychological wellbeing. For determining the daily hassles of the parents, Parenting Daily Hassles Scale [PDHS] [18] was used which aims at assessing the frequency and intensity of the 20 experiences that can be a "hassle" for the parents. After scoring each answer the data was analyzed with the help of SPSS-20.

Results and Discussion

Parents mental health could strongly get influenced by disabled child with Autism which includes a range of behavioral problems relating particularly to social behaviors [19]. Autistic disorder is one of the developmental disorders which is characterized by delay in the development of social, communication and other related skills, various mannerisms relating to motor activities which resists to change, and preoccupations [19] studies suggests that such characteristics of the child's disorder cause stress in parents [20]. And with the severity of the child's symptoms, the parental stress also increases. Many studies on the adaptation of a child with autism have focused on stress, one such relevant study was done by Stoner [21] in 2005.

The precise meaning of stress is not always clear, for this few interpretations have been given to research on parental adaptation [22]. Stress is often used to refer to the emotional responses of parents to the demands of their role. Other researchers focuses on the demands brought about by the child's temperament and behaviors. Another approach focuses on parental mental health and psychological functioning that provides more useful data because it is possible that these families may face increased demands brought about by the child's disorder. So we can say that parental responsibilities, demands brought about by the child and its psychological outcomes are interrelated. It should be noted that, in the present study, majority of the parents did not fall in the clinical range while measuring psychological functioning. As Singer [23] pointed out that mild levels of depression can also effect the individual and also their families. This study shows both significant and non-significant difference between this two groups of parents under study.

The study findings in table 1 shows significant differences between Parental Stress, and Intensity of daily hassles faced by the parents of ASD and normal children. Greater intensity of problems brought about by children with autism compared to normal children shows the

higher levels of parenting stress in parents of the children with autism [24]. Furthermore studies [25] reported lower competence level of the parents of autistic children when compared with parents of normal children, though both the groups of this study reported disruption in planning, and stress related to parenting and family. Another study done by Maryam Kousha, and Mahnaz Fallahi in 2018 [26] showed that parents of ASD children demonstrated more symptoms of stress and low satisfaction with their role as parents. They also stated that having a child with special needs in the family may effect the psychological functioning of a family and also effect the mental health of the family members, their dynamism and also their purposefulness. Although the study failed to report any significant difference. No significant result was found on current study too in the daily hassles scale [PDHS] between the parents of ASD and Normal children (Table 2) but studies like the one done by Forough Riahi, *et al.* [27] shows in 2012, that mothers of children diagnosed with Autism had comparatively lower mental health and experience more anxiety and problems of insomnia than those mothers whose children are not autistic. Although we controlled for socioeconomic differences where appropriate. The study results may have occurred due to the lower socioeconomic backgrounds of the parents of both the study groups. As in other studies it has been stated that the lower socioeconomic background affects the psychological wellbeing more [28].

Dimensions	Group	Sample Size (N)	Mean	S.D	t-value
Challenging behavior	Normal	25	17.28	4.18	
	ASD	25	15.48	3.98	1.55
Parental stress	Normal	25	17.92	3.88	
	ASD	25	14.92	3.70	2.79**

Table 1: Mean, S.D and t values on the daily hassles among the parent of Normal and Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) children.

***Significant at the 0.01 level.*

Dimensions	Group	Sample Size (N)	Mean	S.D	t-value
Autonomy	Normal	25	28.72	5.00	0.99
	ASD	25	30.21	5.21	
Environmental mastery	Normal	25	28.60	4.22	1.59
	ASD	25	26.72	4.10	
Personal Growth	Normal	25	26.20	5.09	1.33
	ASD	25	28.16	5.29	
Personal Relations	Normal	25	26.96	6.57	
	ASD	25	30.04	6.80	1.62
Purpose In Life	Normal	25	27.40	5.23	
	ASD	25	28.60	5.24	0.81
Self Acceptance	Normal	25	28.64	5.80	
	ASD	25	25.92	5.61	1.68

Table 2: Mean, S.D, t values of psychological well-being among the parents of ASD and Normal children.

**Significant at the 0.05 level. **Significant at the 0.01 level.*

Table 3 of this study shows significant relationship between the daily hassles and psychological wellbeing of the parents of ASD and Normal children. The domain of autonomy and environmental mastery of the psychological wellbeing showed significant correlation with the parental stress. This confirms that the parents of children with ASD carry a huge care giving burden, in the form of objective difficul-

ties, subjective distress etc. Whereas we cannot deny that the daily hassles experienced by the parents of normal children is often ignored. Similar findings has been found by Berckman and Seeman., *et al.* [29] in 2001. Authors believe that social situations in which a person lives has a close relation with the psychological well-being of a person. People having extended relations with the others have higher psychological wellbeing compared to the isolated people. So, it can be concluded based on this study, that the psychological wellbeing of the parents of Normal children should also be taken into consideration and must be provided with interventions if necessary.

Dimensions	AUT¥	ENVM¥	PG¥	PR¥	PIL¥	SA¥	PWB¥
Challenging behavior	-0.287**	0.088*	-0.049	-0.214	-0.0223	-0.022	-0.177
Parental stress	-0.285*	0.131	-0.199	-0.099	-0.223	0.028	-0.150

Table 3: Correlation between daily hassles and psychological wellbeing.

*: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

**: Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Conclusion

The study has focused on the daily hassles and psychological wellbeing among the parents of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and compared with the same in parents of Neuro-typical (Normal) children. Study was extended to report the daily hassles and psychological well-being of the parents of ASD based on the descriptive statistics. It was found out that there is considerable difference between the daily hassles felt by the parents of ASD, which also effects there psychological wellbeing whereas, the psychological wellbeing of the control group of normal children’s parents were better when compared. Coping related to the task was the predictor of parental daily hassles in the parents of ASD children to some extent.

The results of the present study supports the earlier findings on this topic. They also specifies interesting relationship between the styles of coping of the parents and their stress. For these reasons, it is important to understand the causes of parenting daily stress better so that appropriate interventions can be planned and implemented. The majority of parents needs various supports in order to cope with the demands of caring for a child with ASD which may include information, social support, community services, and also some kind of financial support and the type of support needed may be determined based on the child’s problem, parental and the also considering the situational variables including the child’s behavioral, motor complications, role of parents, the socioeconomic background of the parents and most importantly their attitude towards child rearing. Receiving validation from others would help increase the confidence of the parent so that they can cope better with daily hassles and accept the child’s behaviors.

Participating in workshops in which parent caregivers are suggested to practice various stress management techniques and problem-solving techniques, which may gradually have a positive impact on parents’ mental health and well-being [30]. Approaches which does not assume that individuals will suffer lifelong problems related to their mental illnesses and in which the individuals are encouraged to rely on their own mental strengths to overcome obstacles can be useful.

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