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## Depression and Anxiety among Parents of Children with Disabilities: A Case Study from Indian Society & Developing World

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### Abstract-

This research set intended to examine parental depression and anxiety levels across different types of impairments among children in Indian culture and the developing globe, as well as to identify any correlations between the two. There were 80 parents in the sample, with 58.12% being women and 41.875% being dads. The children in the sample ranged in age from 4 to 18, and all of them had one or more disabilities. In order to choose the sample, a purposeful sampling strategy was used. There were 42 items on the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale, DASS (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1998).

John Pearson Anxiety and depression were shown to be related using product moment correlation. To compare parents whose children had various impairments, an independent sample t-test was used. The study's findings revealed a strong positive association between depression and anxiety ( $r = .833$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Parents of impaired males were found to have significantly lower scores on the depression subscale of the Disability Assessment Scale (DASS) compared to parents of disabled girls ( $t(158) = 2.301$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Key word:** Anxiety, Depression, Disabilities, Parents

### Introduction-

Having a baby who is flawless, healthy, and typical is what every parent dreams about. Disabled youngsters are completely out of their minds and expectations. However, when faced with such a predicament, individuals often a protracted array of mental health issues, including bereavement, anger, sadness, guilt, rejection, powerlessness, denial, shame, anxiety, and despair.<sup>22</sup> Fourteen and twenty-four researchers in a study on the experiences of children with intellectual disabilities

discovered six recurring motifs involving emotional responses i.e., embracing the difficulty of caring for a disability kid, worrying about the child's future, experiencing a range of negative emotions, dealing with health problems associated to moms, and fighting for the well-being of oneself and one's child while dealing with unsuitable assistance from family and society. Based on the norms and standards set by their family or society, all parents have high expectations for their children. Any parent's heart swells with pride as they see their kid make steady, positive strides forward in life.

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Parents feel both a sense of pride and concern when they see their kid do something new. Unfortunately, there are times when a youngster may not measure up to or even diverge from the experimental standard. Every child's unique traits impact their family, which might lead to difficulties. When a kid is impaired, the family experiences an even greater amount of stress and strain as the child grows from infancy into maturity. Parents should have the necessary skills to handle such emergencies 22

The loss of even one dream may have a profound effect on a person's character and the world around them. The birth of a handicapped child disrupts a parent's numerous aspirations and causes them to go through a period of profound mourning that impacts the parent's physical and mental well-being as well as their priorities, values, beliefs, and daily routines.

It is very uncommon for parents to have a range of emotional and psychological issues when one of their children is impaired. According to 9, "society considers parenting as a positive thing, but it views the birth of a disabled child negatively," which is the reason why parents experience melancholy, worry, and stress. Family members experience stress due to society's attitude. Negative emotions like shame, guilt, blame, and worry may put a strain on marriages.

Disabled people make up 2.68 percent of India's population. According to the 1998 National Census Report,... The lack of clarity in the disability classifications suggests that the national census report's estimate is inaccurate.

There is no categorization for 43.33 percent of them (Mohsin, 2009). As cited by Shahzadi (2012), the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that around 10% of the overall population in developing nations is affected by a disability.

It is crucial to identify parents with poor

mental health and psychological difficulties early on so that they may be effectively targeted to change their thinking and living habits.

The purpose of this research was to aware the educated society, government and non-government agencies that work positively for the counseling, therapy, or rehabilitation of people having disabled children.

Parents with children having intellectual disability faced more psychological problems as compare to parents of normal children. Mothers suffered in psychological problems more than fathers <sup>1</sup> **Choudhary et al**, (2011) identified that there was no relationship with the type of mental retardation with the sibling's effects. Parents have many emotional disturbances and suffer in worries (mentally disturbance) due to having a mental retardation child.

**Chovatiya et al**, (2011) revealed that 70 % mothers were suffering with mild to moderate level of depression and it affected on their QOL.

**Sousa & Singhvi** (2013) identified that 71% mothers of children with cerebral palsy were depressed. The reported contributing factors of depression were poor spousal support, low education, unemployment and increasing age.

**Al-Eithan et al** proved that that mothers of disabled children in India showed higher scores of anxiety, depression, and total HADS. **Dogan**, (2012) conducted a comparative study

to assess the psychological problems in terms of stress, depression and anxiety among parents of children with and without hearing loss. Sample was n=230 parents with children of hearing loss and n=230 without hearing loss. The results of this study revealed that parents of children with hearing loss, especially mothers are at greater risk to develop psychiatric/psychological problems (depression, stress and trait anxiety).

**Gupta & Kaur, (2014)** concluded that parents of children having (ID) experienced higher stress. However, all the participants experienced higher level of mental stress than physical one.

**Qittner, et al. (2014)** evaluated stress among parents of young deaf and hearing children. Sample was 181 deaf children and 92 with normal hearing. The major findings of this study revealed that child's hearing problems, language delays due to deafness and behavioral problems increase stress among parents than the parents of normal children.

**Gallagher et al, (2013)** proved that Parental stress is associated with developmental disabilities of children and poor sleep quality among parents of these children.

**Hill & Rose (2011)** found that on the Regression analysis predicted 61% stress among parents. This stress was found on the variables of cognition of parents. It indicated the value of cognition in experiencing stress by mothers of adult children having intellectual disability.

### **Methodology**

**Participants** - Sample was comprised of 80 parents among which 58.12% were mothers and 41.875% were fathers having one or more disabled children with the age range of 4-18 years. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample.

**Instrumentation** - In the current study data was collected through Demographic Information Form and "Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale" (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1998).

**Demographic Information Sheet:** Demographic information Sheet was used to collect information about age of parents, educational background, gender of parents, no of children, no of disabled children, type of disability, gender of disabled child, age of disabled child, class of disabled child, SES.

**Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale**

**(DASS):** "DASS is a self report inventory developed by Lovibond & Lovibond.(1998). It has 42 items and three sub scales of depression, anxiety and stress. Each scale consists of 14 items, each reflecting a negative emotional symptoms. Each of these is rated on a four-point Likert scale of severity of the participant's experiences over the previous week with the intention of emphasizing states over traits.

### **Hypotheses**

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, following hypotheses are designed.

1. There would be a positive relationship between the depression and anxiety among parents of children with disabilities.
2. Parents of children with mental retardation would have more depression and anxiety as compare to parents of children with physical disability.
3. The depression and anxiety would be higher among the parents of mental retarded children as compare to the parents of children with visual disability.
4. Mothers of children with disabilities would have higher level of depression as compare to fathers of children with disabilities.

### **Procedure**

Firstly permission was granted from principals of different special education centers and rehabilitation centers in sriganganagar, Rajasthan. Special education and rehabilitation centers were visited on monthly basis when school administration held meeting with

parents. The participants were instructed to make sure not to leave any item of the administered scale unmarked.

The demographic sheet was attached to gather data about variables such as age, gender, education and socio economic status, no of children, no of disabled children, type of disability, gender of disabled child, age of disabled child, Class

of disabled child.

After collecting informed consent and demographic information, the only scale i.e. Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale (DASS) with 42 items was presented to the participants. The participants were instructed that express their feelings, thinking and conditions according to the scale of intensity of 0, 1, 2, 3. The scoring was conducted according to the manual of the scale. The quarries of the participants were handled before, during and after the form completion. In the end, participants were thanked for their valuable contribution in the study.

Variables	Depression	Anxiety
Depression	-	.833**
Anxiety	-	-

**Table 1: Correlation of Depression and Anxiety of Participants Parents**

Table 1 shows highly significant correlation between parent's depression and parent's anxiety with disabled children on DASS subscale, i.e. ( $r=.833$ ), and the hypothesis is accepted.

**Hypothesis 2** - It was hypothesized that physical disability through independent sample t-test.

Variable	Type of Disability	M	S	T	P
Depression	M.R. Physical Disability	1	1	2.	.
		4	1	87	0
		.	.	2*	1
		7	6	*	
		8	8		
		.	6		
		0	.		
		6	9		
			2		
			2		
Anxiety	M.R. Physical Disability	1	9	3.	.
		3	.	44	0
		.	9	8*	0
		9	3	**	1
		7	5		
		.	.		
		1	6		
		3	5		

df =83, \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Table 2: Difference between Parents of Children with M. R. and Physical Disabled**

### Statistical Analysis

Pearson product moment correlation and independent sample t-test was used to analyze the data.

### FINDINGS

**Hypothesis 1-** It was hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between depression, anxiety and stress among parents of children with disabilities. The hypothesis 1 was tested by checking the correlation between depression and anxiety among parents of children with disabilities through Pearson product moment correlation

parents of children with mental retardation would have more depression and anxiety as compare to parents of children with physical disability. This hypothesis was tested by comparing the means of depression and anxiety among parents of children with mental retardation and

Table 2 shows that a highly significant difference was found in the mean scores between depression and anxiety among parents of children with mental retardation and parents of children with physical disability. Parents of children with mental retardation have significantly higher level of depression and anxiety as  $t(83) = 2.872$ ,  $p < 0.01$  and  $t(83) = 3.448$ ,  $p < .001$  than parents of children with physical disability

**Hypothesis 3-** It was hypothesized that the depression and anxiety would be higher among the parents of mental retarded children as compare to parents of children with visual disability. This hypothesis was tested by comparing the means of depression and anxiety among parents of children with mental retardation and visual disability through independent sample t-test.

V a r i a b l e s	T y p e o f D i s a b i l i t y	M	S D	T	P
D e p r e s s i o n	M.	1	11	1	0
	R v i s u a l D i s a b i l i t y	4 . 7 6 1 . 7 2	. 8 8. 32	. 4 0 5	. 1 6
A n x i e t y	M.	3	9.	0	0
	R v i s u a l D i s a b i l i t y	. 9 2 1 2 . 1	93 8. 49	. 9 1 4	. 3 6

df =93, \*\* $p < .01$

**Table 3: Difference between Parents of Children with M. R and Visual Disabled**

Table 3 shows that no significant difference was found among depression and anxiety between parents of children with mental retardation and parents of children with visual disability.

**Hypothesis 4 -** It was hypothesized that mothers of children with disabilities would have higher level of depression as compare to fathers of children with disabilities. This hypothesis was tested by comparing the means of depression between mothers of children with disabilities and fathers of children with disabilities through independent sample t-test.

V a r i a b l e s	G r o u p s	M	SD	t	P
D e p r e s s i o n	F a t h e r s	6 . 1 1	5.22	7 . 2 2 * * * *	0 . 0 0 0 1
	M o t h e r s	1 5 . 4 4	9.58		

## DISCUSSIONS

with intellectual disability had higher depression and anxiety than parents of other type of disability. And Parents' levels of anxiety and depression were shown to be significantly correlated with having impaired children on the DASS subscales. The findings are also corroborated by the literature study. Research in India by Gundogar and Uskun (2010) is consistent with this findings. According to the results, parents of challenged children are most impacted by financial difficulties. The incapacity of their kid also caused significant worry for the parents.

In order to evaluate the parent-child connection, Baxter et al. (2012) conducted a comparative research in India and the United States with parents who had children with disabilities. Key results from support stated hypothesis partially, as on depression and anxiety subscales of DASS parents of children with mental retardation showed significant difference from parents of children with physical disability. Literature reviews support the stated findings. Parents of children guilt was found as a route cause for depression and

this research shown that, in comparison to parents in the United States, parents in India had more unfavorable connections with their impaired children. Educated parents, on the other hand, were less likely to blame themselves and had stronger bonds with their children.

Due to the intense sentiments of shame and guilt associated with having a disabled child, many Indian parents experienced severe psychological and emotional distress after giving birth to a child with a handicap. They may also be under stress because of social and economic demands.

Depression, worry, and stress are more common among parents of children with mental impairment compared to those with physical disabilities. The study's results

anxiety.

The reasons behind these results in India might be that parents of mental retarded children feel helpless when their child is sitting among family physically but not mentally, due to their lacks of mental capacities.

The results also revealed that no significant difference was found on depression and anxiety subscales of DASS.

Literature review supports it but with separate comparison among parents of MR children with normal ones and separate studies available on parents of children with visual disability. The comparison between the stated two groups is a new comparison.

This study is in line with the study of **Gupta & Kaur, (2014)** had conducted a research on stress among parents of children having intellectual disability. The conclusions of this research were that parents of children having (ID) experienced higher stress. However, all the participants experienced higher level of mental stress than physical one.

In Indian, parents experienced more depression and anxiety with disabled children due to strong guilt feelings. However mental retarded child is considered more stressful for parents than other disabilities.

The reasons behind it might be mental retarded child is always consider burden on family because visual disabled child could progress in his/her life than MR Child.

The study also revealed that highly significant difference was found on depression subscale of DASS. Literature reviews also support it. There are many studies are available on it. The

study in line with the studies of **Olsson & Hwang (2013)** in which expressed that fathers of children with disabilities have more depressive symptoms than fathers of normal children but they have less depressive symptoms than mothers of children with disabilities.

**Bumin et al (2014)** investigated the relationship between depression and anxiety with quality of life in mothers having disabled children in U.S. The conclusion was that mothers of disabled children had depression and anxiety.

Increased depression and anxiety influenced poorly on mother's health and

quality of life. **Sloper & Turner (2000)** conducted a study in which find out that fathers of children with physical disabilities experienced little psychological distress as compare with mothers.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The present research aimed to better understand how parents of disabled children experience anxiety and despair. The results of this research showed that parents whose children have disabilities are more likely to suffer from despair and anxiety. Moreover, compared to dads, moms of disabled children had significantly lower ratings on anxiety and depression questionnaires. The research also found that compared to parents whose children had visual or physical disabilities, those whose children had mental retardation were more likely to suffer from sadness and anxiety. The mean ratings of anxiety and sadness were not significantly different between parents of handicapped girls and boys. Parental sadness and anxiety were more common among those with lower levels of education (classes 1-4) compared to those with higher levels of education, suggesting that educational attainment is a demographic characteristic that influences the mental health of children with impairments. Findings from this research indicate that parents' levels of despair and anxiety vary depending on whether they have one disabled kid or more than one.

kids with disabilities. This suggests that there is still a need to investigate the variations in the number of disabled children per parent. This research found that the two groups were evaluated similarly

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women who are moms or dads who are parents themselves. Therefore, further studies are needed to evaluate it independently.

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