

PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT IN FAMILIES OF INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED CHILDREN IN BHOPAL

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Abstract

The birth of a child with intellectual disability presents significant emotional, psychological, social, and economic challenges to families. Parents often experience anxiety, guilt, stress, and uncertainty regarding their child's future, which influences their emotional adjustment and caregiving practices. The present study investigated parental attitudes and emotional adjustment among families of intellectually disabled children in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. A descriptive cross-sectional research design was adopted. Data were collected from 150 parents enrolled in special schools and rehabilitation centers using the Structured Questionnaire. Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, independent t-test, and regression analysis. Results indicated that parents generally demonstrated moderately positive attitudes toward their children; however, many experienced moderate emotional maladjustment. A significant positive relationship was observed between positive parental attitudes and emotional adjustment ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$). Mothers reported significantly higher emotional stress than fathers. The study concludes that psychological counselling, parental training programmes, and community support services are essential for improving family well-being.

Keywords: Intellectual Disability, Parental Attitudes, Emotional Adjustment, Families, Rehabilitation, Bhopal

INTRODUCTION

Intellectual disability (ID) is characterized by significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour that originate before the age of eighteen. It affects learning ability, communication, self-care, and social functioning. The diagnosis of intellectual disability influences not only the affected child but also the entire family system.

Parents generally expect their children to achieve developmental milestones comparable to their peers. When a child is diagnosed with intellectual disability, parents frequently experience shock, denial, sadness, guilt, anxiety, frustration, and concerns about long-term care. Over time, many families gradually adapt, although the extent of adjustment varies according to family support, education, socioeconomic status, severity of disability, and availability of rehabilitation services.

Research has consistently shown that parental attitudes influence children's behavioural development, social participation, adaptive functioning, and rehabilitation outcomes. Positive parental attitudes are associated with better emotional adjustment and improved family functioning, while negative attitudes such as rejection, overprotection, or hopelessness are linked with increased parental stress and poorer

child outcomes. Psychoeducation and family interventions have been shown to improve parental attitudes and coping.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Russell et al. (2018) demonstrated that structured psychoeducation significantly improved parental attitudes toward managing children with intellectual disability in an Indian setting, highlighting the value of family-based interventions.

Hazarika et al. (2017) reported that although parents generally expressed love and acceptance toward their children with intellectual developmental disorder, many also experienced frustration and overprotectiveness, which could hinder children's independence.

Mathew and Srivastava (2023) found that more positive parental attitudes were associated with fewer behavioural problems among children with intellectual disability, suggesting that family perceptions play an important role in child adjustment.

Merla (2021) observed elevated levels of anxiety, stress, depression, fatigue, and guilt among both mothers and fathers of children with intellectual disability, with emotional challenges present across both genders.

Rajan and John (2017) concluded that resilience among Indian parents depended strongly on how they perceived the impact of their child's disability, with positive perceptions acting as protective factors.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess parental attitudes toward intellectually disabled children.
2. To evaluate emotional adjustment among parents.
3. To examine the relationship between parental attitudes and emotional adjustment.
4. To compare emotional adjustment between mothers and fathers.
5. To identify factors influencing parental emotional adjustment.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H01: There is no significant relationship between parental attitudes and emotional adjustment.

H02: There is no significant difference in emotional adjustment between mothers and fathers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Descriptive Cross-sectional Survey

Study Area: Bhopal District, Madhya Pradesh

Population: Parents of intellectually disabled children attending special schools and rehabilitation centres.

Sample Size: 150 Parents

Sampling Technique: Purposive Sampling

Tools Used : Structured Questionnaire

Statistical Tools

- Frequency
- Percentage
- Mean
- Standard Deviation
- Pearson Correlation
- Independent Sample t-test
- Multiple Regression

RESULTS

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics (N=150)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Male	65	43.3
Female	85	56.7
Graduate & Above	82	54.7
Monthly Income > ₹30,000	72	48.0
Mild ID	52	34.7
Moderate ID	63	42.0
Severe ID	35	23.3

Table 2 Mean Scores

Variable	Mean	SD
Parental Attitude	72.54	8.13
Emotional Adjustment	65.31	9.25

Parents generally demonstrated moderately positive attitudes but also showed moderate levels of emotional maladjustment.

Table 3 Correlation Analysis

Variables	r	p-value
Parental Attitude & Emotional Adjustment	0.62	<0.001

A significant positive correlation exists between parental attitude and emotional adjustment. Therefore, **H01 get rejected.**

Table 4 Independent Sample t-test

Group	Mean	SD	t	p
Mothers	62.80	8.90	2.84	0.005
Fathers	68.52	9.12		

Mothers exhibited significantly poorer emotional adjustment compared to fathers. Hence **H02 get rejected.**

Table 5 Multiple Regression

Dependent Variable: Emotional Adjustment

Predictor	Beta	t	p
Parental Attitude	0.48	6.82	<0.001
Education	0.19	2.31	0.022
Income	0.17	2.08	0.039

Model Summary

- $R = 0.68$
- $R^2 = 0.46$
- Adjusted $R^2 = 0.44$
- $F = 41.73$
- $p < 0.001$

Parental attitude emerged as the strongest predictor of emotional adjustment, while education and income also contributed significantly.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that although parents generally accept and care deeply for their intellectually disabled children, many continue to experience considerable emotional challenges. Positive parental attitudes were strongly associated with better emotional adjustment, consistent with prior Indian studies showing that psychoeducation and supportive interventions improve parental coping and outlook.

The greater emotional burden observed among mothers may reflect their primary caregiving responsibilities and prolonged involvement in daily child care. These findings support earlier evidence that mothers often report higher levels of stress, anxiety, and caregiving demands.

CONCLUSION

Parents of intellectually disabled children in Bhopal generally display positive attitudes toward their children but continue to experience moderate emotional distress. Emotional adjustment is significantly influenced by parental attitudes, educational status, and socioeconomic conditions. Strengthening counselling services, family support programmes, and rehabilitation facilities can improve parental well-being and promote healthier family environments.

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