Poster abstract

Parents of children with autism spectrum disorder and children with intellectual disabilities and their stress and general health

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Abstract

Introduction: The negative impact on mother's well-being of having a child with developmental disabilities is well established in Western societies. By contrast less research has been undertaken in other cultures or with fathers.

Method: A convenience sample of 91 parents was recruited in Tehran: 50 parents of children with intellectual disabilities and 41 parents of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). A Farsi translation of two widely used scales—general health questionnaire (GHQ) and parental stress index—was used to gauge parental well-being.

Results: Mothers had significantly higher scores than fathers on the GHQ and had higher levels of child-related stress. Also, both mothers and fathers of younger children tended to have significantly higher stress scores, same goes for parents whose children had ASD.

Conclusion: Hence in Middle Eastern countries such as Iran, mothers in particular face stress and health problems as a consequence of caring for a child with developmental disabilities and these seem to be more marked when the child has ASD.

Discussion: Further research is needed with fathers around their decreased involvement with the affected child and cultural expectations that fathers should be able to cope. These findings may also have implications for carers of older persons in non-Western societies.

Keywords

autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disabilities, parental stress, parental general health, Iran

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