

**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF PARENTS (MOTHERS AND FATHERS) OF CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LEVEL OF STRESS IN PARENTS AND THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE (QOL)**

**MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT**

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## **Aim of the Study**

The present study aimed at ascertaining the level of Emotional Intelligence, Quality of Life, and Stress in Parents (Mothers and Fathers) of Children with Intellectual Disability and studying the interrelationship between them. Apart from this, the study also intended to identify the coping strategies employed by the mothers and fathers of children with Intellectual Disability based on the level of Emotional Intelligence.

## **Method**

The sample consisted of 60 non working mothers and 20 working fathers of children with Intellectual Disability from Mumbai. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were set for mothers and fathers separately. Four tools were used to attain the proposed objectives. For measuring the Emotional Intelligence of mothers and fathers of children with Intellectual Disability, a self constructed Emotional Intelligence Scale [based on the Emotional Intelligence Scale Assessment [Self] developed by Stein, Mann, and Papadogiannis (2010) and EI scale developed by Shah (2011); Nayak (2005) and The Emotional Competence Framework (Goleman, 2000)] was used. A self constructed Quality of Life Scale (based on the QOL scale developed by Rathod, 2011) and a self constructed Stress scale was administered to measure level of Quality of Life and Stress of the mothers and fathers. Lastly, a self constructed Coping Strategies Scale (based on the scales developed by Jain, 2010, Carver, 1989; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985) was used to identify the usage and success rate of the coping strategies employed by the mothers and fathers based on the level of Emotional Intelligence. The data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.

## **Results**

Findings revealed that majority of the mothers (38) and fathers (16) perceived themselves as having a high level of Emotional Intelligence, followed by 22 mothers and four fathers who perceived themselves to be on the average level. It was also observed that for fathers and mothers, the means of all the four domains of Emotional Intelligence (Self Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Management) fell above their respective theoretical midpoints however for mothers, the means of 3 domains, Self Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness fell in the high level and the mean of the Relationship Management domain fell in the average level, indicating that more number of participants believed themselves to be average in Relationship Management competencies.

For Quality of Life, though majority of the mothers (35) and fathers (11) perceived themselves to be having a high Quality of Life, a substantial number of mothers (24) and fathers (9) viewed themselves to be at an average level. It was noted that for mothers, the means of domains of Social and Recreational and Support System and for fathers, the means of Support System domain fell in the average level.

With regard to Stress, it was found that majority of the mothers (42) and fathers (17) perceived themselves to be having a low level of Stress, and the rest of 18 mothers and three fathers identified themselves as having an average level of Stress. It was observed that for both, mothers and fathers, the means of the Financial and Future of the Child domains fell in the average level which meant that majority of the participants thought themselves to have an average level of Stress in these two domains.

From the findings of the Coping Strategies Scale, it was observed that among the high Emotional Intelligence group, the percentage of mothers having rated coping strategies of Confronting (52.6%), Self Controlling (68.4%), Suppression of Competing Activities (44.7%), Seeking Social Support (50%) and Positive Reappraisal (76.3%) as used often was more than the percentage of participants in the average Emotional Intelligence group. Also, these coping strategies were perceived to be more successful by the high Emotional Intelligence group rather than the average Emotional Intelligence group. Similar results were found for fathers too.

Multiple correlations were run. For mothers, Emotional Intelligence was found a moderate significant positive correlation with Quality of Life ( $r = .556, p = .000$ ) and a moderate significant negative correlation with Stress ( $r = -.518, p = .000$ ). Quality of Life was also shown to have a strong negative relationship with Stress ( $r = -.889, p = .000$ ). For fathers, Emotional Intelligence was found to have a moderate significant positive correlation with Quality of Life ( $r = .400, p = .040$ ) and a moderate significant negative correlation with Stress ( $r = -.429, p = .030$ ). Quality of Life was also shown to have a strong negative relationship with Stress ( $r = -.708, p = .000$ ). Strong correlations were also observed between the usage and success rate of different coping strategies employed by mothers and fathers of children with Intellectual Disability.

## **Conclusion**

Emotions form an integral and indispensable part of any human being. Being a parent is itself a blessing, with strong emotions attached to this mother – child relationship. For a parent of a child with Intellectual Disability too, this relationship is special, rewarding yet challenging. The lives of these parents comprise of more challenges and stresses different from that of parents of normal children. Thus it is justified that these parents should be possessing higher levels of Emotional Intelligence competencies to better cope with the stresses. This would help them keep their stress levels in check and experience a better Quality of Life, subjective well being and a higher sense of life satisfaction. According to Ken Nowack, an EI expert, parents who are high in EI might report higher QOL and report less stress than those low in EI (personal communication, May 23, 2013). Since substantial number of mothers and fathers scored at an average level on the competencies required for a parent, it is visible from this research that there is a need to enhance these Emotional Intelligence competencies through training. This would help them recognize and manage their own emotions in a better manner, ultimately transferring these skills in understanding the child's emotions and having more cordial and fulfilling relationship with significant others. Thus it would be true to say that Emotional Intelligence would be an asset to these mothers and fathers as it would help them enhance their overall Quality of Life, which would in turn benefit the child and help him grow. Thus this study has been an attempt to establish the importance of Emotional Intelligence in this parent – child relationship.