ABSTRACT

Becoming the parent of a child who has a disability is a time of great stress and change (Thompson, 2000). Parents of disabled children face problems and perceive considerable stress as their whole life-style get affected including their personal and psychological well-being. They used different coping styles to manage and deal with the stressful situation in order to avoid negative psychological, emotional and physical consequences. The study was designed to assess the stress and coping styles of parents of disabled children. In this regard the following hypotheses were formulated:

Mothers and Fathers differ in terms of their scores on parental stress, family coping and their subscales.

Parents of children who have simple disability differ in scores on parental stress, family coping and their subscales from those of children with multiple disabilities.

Certain demographic factors, namely, urban-rural status of parents, income of the parents, working status of the mothers, age and gender of disabled children influences the stress level and coping among the parents of disabled children.

The study was conducted on the parents of disabled children. Using purposive sampling technique 200 parents (100 mothers and 100 fathers) were taken from 6 different institutions of Hyderabad. To assess the stress level of parents, PSI developed by R. Abidin (1995) was used and Family Coping Scale developed by M. Annapurna (1999) was used to assess coping behaviour of the parents of disabled children. To assess demographic information socio-demographic sheet was used, developed by the researcher.

Parents of disabled children fulfilling inclusion and exclusion criteria consenting for the study were selected. The data was analyzed using t-test, correlation and regression analysis.
Results revealed that the parents of children with disabilities experienced increased level of stress and all the dimensions of Parental Stress Index were similar source of stress for both the parents. However mothers showed higher score on total stress as compared to fathers. Children of multiple disabilities produce more difficulty for mothers in their adjustment of personal aspects of parenting. Demographic variables also influenced significantly on the amount of stress experienced and coping behaviour used by parents of disabled children. The findings have important implications for interventionists, NGOs and for healthcare professionals.