CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY

In the present investigation, an effort has been made to study some of the social and psychological factors affecting families with handicapped children. The variables chosen were parental attitudes, marital adjustment of parents, social burden, and temperament of the children. Accordingly, the aim of the investigation was to study the temperament of handicapped children and to investigate the impact of a handicapped child on the family. Based on the review of literature, the following hypotheses were formulated.

i) Mothers of normal children will have more positive orientation towards child rearing than those of physically handicapped children, followed by the mothers of mentally handicapped children.

ii) Mothers of physically handicapped children will have more knowledge of the handicap than those of mentally handicapped children.

iii) Mothers of physically handicapped children will have more favourable attitude towards the handicap and the management of the handicap than those of mentally handicapped children.

iv) Parents of normal children will have better marital adjustment than those of mentally handicapped children.

v) Mothers of mentally handicapped children will report higher social burden than those of physically handicapped children.
vi) Normal children will be more sociable than the handicapped children.

vii) Physically handicapped children will be higher on emotionality than the mentally handicapped children, with the normal children falling between the two.

viii) Mentally handicapped children will show more energy followed by normal children and then the physically handicapped children.

ix) Mentally handicapped children will be more distractable than the physically handicapped and normal children.

The sample consisted of mothers of 50 physically handicapped (24 boys and 26 girls), and 50 mentally handicapped (29 boys and 21 girls), 50 normal children (26 boys and 24 girls). All the children (79 boys and 71 girls) were in the age range of 8-15 years.

The study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the children were selected from the respective institutions and their intelligence was assessed. Mentally handicapped children fell in the I.Q range of 35-70. Physically handicapped and normal children in the I.Q range of 85-115 were chosen for the study.

In the second phase of the study, the mothers of the children were interviewed in two sessions. In one session, information on the demographic variables was collected and temperament measurement schedule (Malhotra, 1984), and marital adjustment questionnaire (Bhat and Gauba, 1978) were administered. The second session
consisted of administering the parental attitude scale (Bhatti and Narayanan, 1979) and social burden scale (Pai and Kapur, 1981) to the mothers.

Two way analysis of variance (2x3) was applied to study the effect of sex (boys & girls) and handicap (physically handicapped, mentally handicapped and normals) on orientation towards child rearing, marital adjustment, and temperament of the children. Whenever the main effect of handicap yielded significant results, orthogonal comparisons were made. In one of the comparisons, the handicapped group (both the physically and mentally handicapped groups together) was compared with normal group while in the other comparison, physically handicapped group was compared with mentally handicapped group.

A 2x2 factorial design with 2 levels of sex and 2 levels of handicap (physical and mental) was applied on the other subscales of parental attitudes (knowledge of handicap, attitude towards handicap, attitude towards management of handicap) and social burden. Intercorrelations between parental attitudes, marital adjustment, and temperament was also computed for physically handicapped, mentally handicapped and normal groups separately. On the social burden scale, correlational analysis was done only on the two handicapped groups. The t-test was applied to study the effect of maternal employment, and type of family (nuclear vs. joint) on the different variables. The following results were obtained.

1. Mothers of physically handicapped children had more favourable attitude towards management of the handicap than
those of mentally handicapped children. Regarding sex, mothers of handicapped boys had more favourable attitude towards the management of the handicap as compared to those of handicapped girls. Neither the main effects of sex and handicap nor their interaction yielded significant results on orientation towards child rearing, knowledge of handicap and attitude towards the handicap.

2. Parents of normal children had better marital adjustment than those of the handicapped children. Within the handicapped group, parents of physically handicapped children had better marital adjustment than those of the mentally handicapped children.

3. Mothers of mentally handicapped children reported more disruption in family routine and family interaction and perceived more overall burden than those of physically handicapped children. Regarding sex, mothers of handicapped girls reported more disruption in family leisure and more effect on mental health than those of handicapped boys. Interaction was significant for disruption in family leisure which showed that mothers of mentally handicapped girls felt more disruption than the mothers of physically handicapped girls.

4. Normal children were higher on all the temperament characteristics, i.e., they were more sociable, emotional, energetic and distractable than the handicapped children.

In the handicapped groups, physically handicapped children were found to be more sociable and distractable than the mentally handicapped children. The difference in emotionality
characteristic was in the reverse direction, i.e. mentally handicapped children were more emotional than the physically handicapped children. On energy characteristic, the children of the two handicapped groups did not show any difference.

Regarding the sex difference, boys were more energetic than girls in both the handicapped groups. The handicapped boys in both groups were more sociable and more distractable than their female counterparts. However, the trend was opposite in the normal group, i.e., girls were more sociable and distractable than boys.

5. In the physically handicapped group, martial adjustment of the parents had a positive correlation with attitude towards management of handicapped children. Also in this group, orientation towards child rearing was positively correlated with energy and distractability characteristics of temperament. Emotionality of physically handicapped children was positively correlated with the effect on physical health of others.

6. In mentally handicapped group, parental orientation towards child rearing yielded negative correlation with disruption in family interaction. Sociability and energy characteristics of children were correlated with effect on mental health and disruption in family leisure respectively.

7. Temperament of children had no correlation with marital adjustment of the parents in any of the groups.

8. Mental health of the nonworking mothers of mentally handicapped children was affected more than that of the
working mothers.

9. There was no effect of family type on any of the variables studied.