



The Effects of Individuals with Exceptionalities on the Family Dynamic

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Motivation

- In 2015, roughly 19% of the United States population, had some sort of exceptionality.
- The number of children being served under IDEA has increased each year.
- In 2017, 7 million students ages 3-21 received special education services which is 14% of all public school students.
- Parents of children with exceptionalities often experience a higher level of stress than parents of children without exceptionalities.

Research Objective

- My research study aims to discover how exceptionalities can impact families physically, emotionally, mentally, or financially.
- My overarching goal is to determine what types of programs should be utilized that can best improve upon these families' lives.

Works Cited

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3. Mitchell, Darcy B., et al. "Spilling over: Partner Parenting Stress as a Predictor of Family Cohesion in Parents of Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities." *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, vol. 49-50, Mar. 2016, pp. 258-267., doi:10.1016/j.ridd.2015.12.007.
4. Sohmaran, Chithra D/o, and Shefaly Shorey. "Author Response for 'Psychological Interventions in Reducing Stress, Depression and Anxiety among Parents of Children and Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.'" *Journal of Advanced Learning*, 30 July 2019, pp. 3316-3330., doi:10.1111/jan.14166/v2/response1.

Solution Procedure

- Determine ways to lower stress levels for parents of children with exceptionalities by:
 - Examining predictors of stress in families
 - Examining psychological interventions
 - Examining impacts of family support
 - Examining early-intervention strategies
 - Examining financial support
 - Examining programs provided for this population

Results

- Psychological interventions reduce parental stress in the short-term, but not long-term.
- A positive Parent-Partner relationship can help decrease stress levels and increase family cohesion.
- Support of any kind (family, friends, or programs) increases parental competence.
- Parents may not seek support due to finances.
- 3 predictors of high stress levels for parents of children with exceptionalities include:
 - Negative coping strategies (emotion-oriented and avoidance-oriented)
 - High levels of problem behaviors of child
 - Low levels of parenting support for families

Program Recommendations

- Parental Counselling
 - Practice positive coping strategies (task-oriented).
 - Provide programs with other parents so that parents can work together and use one another's strategies.
 - Provide counselling not only on the parent-child relationship, but also the parent-partner relationship.
- Psychological Interventions
 - Use these interventions only when trying to reduce temporary stress, not long-term stress.
 - Focus on mindfulness-based interventions, behavioral parent training (BPT), and Stepping Stones Triple P for parents (SSTP).
- Family Interventions
 - Home-visits are individualized to each family and have greater family involvement.
 - Counsellors/ Social workers should document all family experiences to better understand the family dimensions and track progress.
- Provide affordable programs for all individuals with exceptionalities.
- Programs should recommend other resources for families who cannot afford specialized programs.

Future Work

- Focus on programs for adults with exceptionalities rather than just children.

