A Study on Psycho-Social Conditions and Physical Status of Mothers of Autistic Children in Karnataka

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Abstract

The study was conducted on the mothers of Autistic children in Karnataka in the age group between 24 and 45 years. It is found mothers in the age group 35 and above facing psychosocial issues such as depression, anxiety and stress when compared to younger group. The study also reveals the persistent disturbed BMI in the mothers of autistic children, as it is statistically proven that correlation between psychosocial condition and physical status is significant. In such situation, education about physical fitness, balanced nutrition becomes essential. Yoga and meditation techniques can also be introduced as therapy towards enhancing healthy lifestyle to facilitate the process of child's development. Mothers can utilize the time when their children are engaged with therapy sessions from experts for these activities which may improve their psychological health, social relationships and environment. Further the application of therapies such as reality therapy, individual and group therapy, family therapy and parent counselling may help them to develop their knowledge leading to quality of life.

Keywords

Depression, Anxiety, Stress, Quality of Life, Autism

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Introduction

Bond between the mother and the child is so special that it cannot be replaced with any other relationships. Mothers have an important role in development of child's psychological, emotional, physical and social health since they attend the basic needs of the child. Infact, every child has their own needs but some children has special needs that challenges parents to find ways to prepare the children for future. Common special need conditions and diagnosis include chronic medical conditions, genetic risk factors, imbalance in psychological as well as psychiatric health status etc. Parents of the specially abled children have to put more efforts in balancing the equilibrium of the family as well as the child in need, through they go through distress, especially mothers as they are the primary care givers.

Under specially abled children, Autism Spectrum Disorder more prevalent one which affects cognitive, emotional, social and physical health. It is a complex neurodevelopment condition involving persistent challenges with social communication, restricted interests and repetitive behavior. While autism is considered a lifelong disorder, the degree of impairment in functioning because of these challenges varies between individuals with autism. WHO defined Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) as a diverse group of conditions characterized by some degree of difficulty with social interaction and communication, a typical patterns of activities and behaviours such as difficulty with transition from one activity to another, a focus on details and unusual reactions to sensations. Epidemiological reports suggest that the number of children who are receiving diagnosis of autism and ASD is rising. The abilities and needs of autistic people vary and their needs depends on their capacity to cope up with their conditions. The more dependent children demands huge efforts from the families towards care and support. Societal attitudes and the level of support extended by the family members determining the quality of life of children with autism.

Generally, mothers of autistic children being also the care takers of them, may go through several levels of stress, anxiety and also depression while offering proper care, quality treatment and addressing the social stigma attached to it are some of the common stressors. Chances are high that they go through mental health issues. The condition of Autistic children can be treated and corrected through therapies. As mothers play an important role in the improvement of the child, a healthy relationship between mother and child is necessary. So how social work intervention can help in improving a healthy relationship between mother and child formulated the problem of the study on psychosocial conditions and nutritional status of mothers of autistic children.

In general, taking care of such children is considered as a burden in India compared to other developed countries. The care takers, especially their mothers are more affected by this condition, they may face psychological and social issues. There is a need to find out how the psycho social condition and nutritional status of mothers of autistic children. Many studies have focused on the psychological issues of the mothers with autistic children so the aim of the study is to find out the significant relationship between psychosocial condition and quality of life of mothers of autistic children

The study aims' at understanding the psycho-social status of the mothers of autistic children who are also the care takes of those children. To collect data, DASS scale has been adopted and the collected data has been statistically analysed, tabulated and discussed as below.

Table No 1:Level of Depression among mothers of autistic children

Age group of the respondents	Level of Depression						$\chi 2$
	Extreme	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Normal	Total	
20-34 years	0	6	2	2	10		4.39
	0%	30%	10%	10%	45%	66.7%	df=4
35 +	2	2	1	1	4	10	0.355
	20%	20%	10%	10%	40%	33.3%	

Representation of level of depression among the mothers of autistic children is made based on the age, it is evident from the analysed result that 50% of the respondents in the age group 20-34 are under depression among which 30% respondents are under mild depression, 10% are under moderate depression (10%) and 10% are under severe depression (10%). Among age group 35 and above 20% respondents has mild depression, 10% are suffering from moderate depression (10%), 10% respondent has severe depression and 20% respondents had extreme depression .In sum, it is understood that depression can be evident with the respondents of the age group 35+ when compared to younger age. That means to say, the older the mother, the higher the depression they undergo. In other words, age and depression has direct correlation to each other.

Table No 2: Anxiety Level among mothers of autistic children group

Age group of the respondents	Level of Anxiety						$\chi 2$
	Extreme	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Normal	Total	
20-34 years	1	4	5	1	9	20	3.871
	5%	20%	25%	5%	45%	66.7%	df=4
35 +	1	0	3	2	4	10	0.427
	10%	0	30%	20%	40%	33.3%	

It is evident from the analysed result that 55% of mothers of age group 20-34 are under anxiety among which 1 respondent has extreme anxiety(5%), 4 respondent has mild anxiety (20%) , 5 respondent has moderate anxiety (25%), 1 of the respondent has severe anxiety (5%) , and among age group 35 and above 60% of respondent are under anxiety among which 1 respondent has extreme anxiety(5%) , 4 respondent has mild anxiety (20%) ,3 respondent has moderate anxiety (25%), 2 respondent has severe anxiety (20%). In sum, it is understood that anxiety can be, evident in mothers of age group 35 and above, that means to say older the mother higher the anxiety they undergo. In other words, the age and anxiety has direct correlation.

Table 3: Level of stress among mothers of autistic children based on age group

Age group of the respondents	Level of Stress						$\chi 2$
	Extreme	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Normal	Total	
20-34 years	0	5	6	0	9	20	0.310
	0	25%	60%	0	45%	66.7%	df=40.
35 +	0	2	4	0	4	10	856
	0	20%	40%	0	40%	33.3%	

It is evident from the analysed result that 55% of the mothers among age group 20-34 are under stress among which 5 respondent had mild stress(25%), 6 respondent has moderate stress (30%). And among age group 35 and above 60% are under stress among which 2 respondent has mild stress, 4 respondent has moderate stress (40%). In sum, it is understood that stress can be evident in mothers of age 35 and above which means to say the older the age higher the stress level, in other words the age of the mothers and stress level had direct correlation

Table 4: Physical status based on their mothers age

Physical status of the respondents	Normal	Obese	Over weight	Under weight	$\chi 2$ df=3 p value
20-34 years	10	2	6	2	1.721
	50%	10%	30%	10%	
35 +	7	1	2	0	0.632
	70%	10%	20%	0	

The above table shows that physical status of mothers of autistic children based on their age the tabulated results show that mothers in the age group of 20-34 10 respondents are normal (50%),2 respondents are obese(10%) ,6 respondents are overweight (30%) ,2 respondents are underweight (10%). And among age group 35 and above 7 respondents are normal (70%) 1 respondent is obese (10%), 2 respondents are overweight (30%) , and no respondent is underweight. It is evident from the analysed result that there is disturbed BMI observed among the age group 20-34 when compared to age group 35+, according to the table , physical ailments

occur more among mothers of younger age group, in such situations researcher suggest to provide them tips to reduce their weight and how to maintain proper body mass index also let them know the benefits and hazards of the food habits they follow and correct it and provide them awareness on how to lead a healthy lifestyle

Table No 5: Correlation between Physical status and Depression

BMI Interpretation/Level of Depression	Extreme	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Normal	$\chi 2$ df=12 p value
Normal	2	4	1	3	7	14.206
	11.8%	23.5%	5.9%	17.6%	41.2%	
Overweight	0	2	2	0	4	0.288
	0%	25.0%	25.0%	0%	40.0%	
Underweight	0	2	0	0	0	
	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	
Obese	0	0	0	0	3	
	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	
Total	2	8	3	3	14	
	6.7%	26.7%	10.0%	10.0%	46.7%	

It is evident from the analysed result that mothers who has normal BMI and overweight are under depression when compared to the mothers with other disturbed BMI, according to the table 58.8% of the mothers who has normal BMI are under depression and 60% of the mothers who are overweight are under depression. In such situations the researcher suggest the interventions such as to give them tips to maintain proper BMI and provide them awareness to improve their positive mental health, provide them therapy, encourage them to do meditation to maintain positive mental health.

Table No 6: Correlation between Physical status and Anxiety

BMI Interpretation/Level of Depression	Extreme	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Normal	$\chi 2$ df=12 p value
Normal	2	1	2	3	17	19.47
	11.8%	5.9%	5.9%	17.6%	56.7%	0.078
Overweight	0	2	5	0	8	
	0%	25.0%	25.0%	0%	26.7%	
Underweight	0	1	1	0	2	
	0%	50%	50%	0%	6.7%	
Obese	0	0	0	0	3	
	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%	
Total	2	4	8	3	30	
	6.7%	13.3%	26.7%	10.0%	100.0%	

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It is evident from the analysed result that the mothers with normal BMI and overweight has anxiety when compared to mothers with other disturbed BMI , according to the table the mothers who are normal and overweight has more anxiety

Table 7: Correlation between Physical status and Stress

BMI Interpretation/Level of Depression	Mild	Moderate	Normal	$\chi 2$ df=12 p value
Normal	1	2	9	19.47
	5.9%	5.9%	56.7%	0.078
Overweight	2	5	1	
	25.0%	25.0%	26.7%	
Underweight	1	1	0	
	50%	50%	6.7%	
Obese	0	0	3	
	0%	0%	10%	
Total	4	13	13	
	13.3%	26.7%	43.3%	

It is evident from the analysed result that the mothers who are overweight has stress when compared to mothers with other BMI status , in other word according to the table more mothers who are overweight suffering from stress.

Suggestions and Conclusion

With the discussion on analysed reports, it is found mothers in the age group 35 and above facing psychosocial issues such as depression, anxiety and stress comparing to other age group. The reasons are lack of complete scientific knowledge about the child's conditions and its handling techniques. This gap identify the need for creating awareness among the mothers of autistic children with the scientific procedure to handle the self as well as the child. Further, the researcher also suggests the interventions such as reality therapy, individual and group therapy, family therapy and parent counselling which helps them to develop their knowledge leading to quality of life. Physical health being an important factor for caring children qualitatively, the study shows that there is persistent disturbed BMI in the mothers of autistic children. The study also has proven that correlation between psychosocial condition and physical status is significant. In such situation, education about physical fitness, balanced nutrition becomes essential. Yoga and meditation techniques can also be introduced as therapy towards enhancing healthy lifestyle to facilitate the process of child's development. Mothers can utilize the time when their children are engaged with therapy sessions from experts for these activities which may improve their psychological health, social relationships and environment. Towards

the same, more updated therapeutic techniques and methods of social work can be adopted.

In sum, social work intervention with child and care takers becomes essential in enhancing their quality of life. The scope of practicing methods of professional social work is wider where the social worker has the challenge of equipping the multidisciplinary knowledge. The area also demands multidisciplinary team approach for building a positive life of these needed segments of the society.

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