

## **DEGREE OF MENTAL CHALLENGE-A STRONG PREDICTOR OF LEVEL AND TYPE OF PARENTAL STRESS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present study assessed and compared the type and level of perceived stress by the parents of 150 mentally challenged children from 3 RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India) recognized special schools of Delhi across child's degree of mental challenge. Sample was drawn randomly in equal proportions from three categories of mental challenge under study viz. mild, moderate and severe from both low and middle income groups. The levels of stress perceived by parents were assessed using Family Interview for Stress and Coping in Mental Retardation, Part I developed by NIMHANS. From the present study, it was observed that under LIG, mothers with severely challenged children perceived more stress because of giving extra efforts in daily care of the severely challenged child, prevailing family emotional problems; faced more financial expenditure because of the severity of child's disability and received less social support when compared with the mothers of mildly and moderately challenged children. However, fathers of severely challenged children perceived more stress due to the family emotional problems, had more social embarrassment and financial stress as compare to fathers who had mildly and moderately challenged children. Among MIG, mothers and fathers with severely challenged children perceived more stress due to the daily care of the child, personal problems, more financial expenditures; siblings of mentally challenged child and family worries were also affected more. Besides these changes, social life of parents of severely challenged children altered more when compared to those with mildly and moderately challenged children.

**KEYWORDS:** Mental Retardation, Mothers, Fathers, Daily Care Stress, Low and Middle Income Groups