

Attitudes of Parents towards Behavioural Management of Children with Intellectual Disability

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *The study was designed to understand the attitudes of parents of children with intellectual disabilities, with regard to the management of problematic behaviour of their children, and to identify whether the mothers or the fathers had more positive attitudes.*

Method: *A structured interview schedule was developed. Convenience sampling was used to select 74 parents (30 fathers and 44 mothers) of children with intellectual disability. The data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. For descriptive statistics, the frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviations were calculated. Inferential statistics included t-test and ANOVA.*

Results: *Indications were that parents of children with intellectual disability had positive attitudes towards their children. While mothers had more positive attitudes than fathers, there was no significant difference between the negative attitudes of fathers and mothers towards their children with intellectual disability.*

Conclusion: *It is recommended that further research should be conducted to identify the elements that influence the attitudes of parents of children with intellectual disability.*

Keywords: *Disability, behavioural problem, management, positive attitudes, negative attitudes.*

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INTRODUCTION

Intellectual disability is one of the most common childhood disabilities. It is estimated that 1 child out of every 120 children has intellectual disability in Pakistan (Ahmed, 1995). According to the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (2010), “**Intellectual disability** is a disability characterised by significant limitations in both **intellectual functioning** and in **adaptive behaviour**, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates **before the age of 18.**”

Parents who raise a child with developmental disability face challenges that are not shared by parents of normally developing children (Majumdar et al, 2005; Rayner & Moore, 2007). There is substantial indication that the challenges that parents face, and the ways in which they deal with these challenges, differ with the nature of the child’s disability (Kenny & Corkin, 2011). About 85% of children with intellectual disability have a mild level of impairment, so their intellectual limitation may not be easily observed. If these children with mild intellectual disability are managed properly before the age of 5 years, many of them will develop normal social and communication skills (Thomas, 2010). Unfortunately for many children, intellectual disability may not be identified until they are admitted in school.

The attitude of parents, either positive or negative, affects the child’s behaviour (Brobst et al, 2009). Studies have shown that parents’ attitudes are crucial to successfully caring for children with intellectual disabilities. For instance, Gardner and Harmon (2002) pointed out that relatively, parents’ reaction towards children with intellectual disability depends on their perceptions of disability and the real impact the disability has on them. Kono and Mearns (2013) agreed that parental attitude is a significant source of information about their behaviour towards their children with intellectual disability.

Research conducted by Rangaswami (1995) revealed that the parents of children with intellectual disability and behaviour problems had higher negative attitudes. The mothers had considerably higher negative attitudes towards these children.

Parental attitudes affect the way parents treat their children with intellectual disability and behave with them, which in turn influences the attitudes of children towards them (Bauman, 2004). Primarily, the parent-child relationship is reliant on parental attitude. The positive attitude of parents will lead to a successful parent-child relationship (Shokoohi-Yekta et al, 2011).

In traditional societies like Pakistan, due to the low economic levels and illiteracy, the intellectually challenged have still to find a place in the mainstream of social life. Parents are the most critical factor in the upbringing of the child and their attitudes play a vital role in the child's adjustment. The present study attempts to find out how parents of children with intellectual disability (mild to moderate) view the situation and cope with it.

Objectives

1. To identify the attitudes of parents towards problematic behaviour of their children with intellectual disability.
2. To assess who has more positive attitudes (fathers or mothers) towards behavioural management of children with intellectual disability.
3. To investigate the attitudes of parents in relation to socio-demographic variables.

METHOD

Study Sample

Convenience sampling was used to select 74 parents from institutions in Lahore dealing with special children. Of these parents, 44 were mothers and 30 were fathers.

Study Tool

A structured interview schedule was developed. Comprehensive literature review was carried out to shortlist the different attitudes of parents towards behaviour management of children with intellectual disabilities. With those attitudes in mind, questions were prepared with multiple choice answers for each attitude. The tool was first developed in English, based on the terminology used in the text. It was then checked by a three-member team of psychologists and special educationists who deal with children with intellectual disability. Their suggestions were incorporated in the questionnaire. This consisted of a total of 26 items, in which each item was scored on one of the five options, as 1= "Strongly Disagree", 2= "Disagree", 3= "Unsure", 4= "Agree", and, 5="Strongly Agree". Of the 26 items, there were 13 items in which "Strongly Disagree" scored 5. For example, when asked, "I think by using physical aggression, I can manage the problematic behaviour of my child with intellectual disability in a better way",

if the parents responded with “Strongly Disagree”, it meant they had positive attitude. In the other 13 items, “Strongly Disagree” scored 1; for example, when asked, “I try to remove all disruptive things from his environment that instigates problematic behaviour”, if the parents responded with “Strongly Disagree”, it meant they had negative attitude. The maximum score on the tool was $13 \times 5 = 65$. The minimum score was $13 \times 1 = 13$. Each parent had to give a response according to the degree of agreement (or disagreement) with each statement by encircling the number conforming to one of five response categories.

The respondents were predominantly Urdu speaking; therefore the tool was translated into Urdu. Mapi guidelines were followed in the process of translating the tool (Beaton, Bombardier, Guillemin & Ferraz, 2000).

The tool was tested on 3 fathers and 3 mothers of children with intellectual disability. Pilot testing was done primarily to overcome any shortcomings in the process of observing the subsequent study sample. Cronbach Alpha reliability of the scale was 65.

Data Analysis

The data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. For calculations of descriptive and inferential statistics, SPSS ver.20 was used. For descriptive statistics, the frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviations were calculated. Inferential statistics included t-test and ANOVA. While t-test was conducted to compare the attitudes of fathers and mothers, and the effect of age on parental attitudes towards their children with intellectual disability, ANOVA was conducted to compare positive and negative attitudes of parents according to their education levels and professions.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Information of Parents

	Fathers		Mothers	
	F	%	f	%
Number of Participant Parents	30	40.5	44	59.5
Age				
30-45	17	56.7	31	70.5
45-60	13	43.3	13	29.5

Education				
Uneducated	1	3.3	5	11.4
Matric	9	30.0	12	27.3
Intermediate	11	36.7	7	15.9
Graduate	6	20.0	12	27.3
Masters	3	10.0	8	18.2
Profession				
Job	15	50.0	9	20.5
Business	15	50.0	1	2.3
Housewives	-	-	34	77.3

More mothers (59.5%) than fathers (40.5%) participated in the current research. Majority (70.5%) of the mothers were in the age group of 30-45 years, while 56.7% of the fathers were in that age group. More mothers were educated up to the Graduate and Masters level (27.3% and 18.2% respectively) than the fathers (20% and 10%). While the majority of the mothers (77.3%) were housewives, 50% of the fathers were employed, and the rest (50%) were running their own businesses.

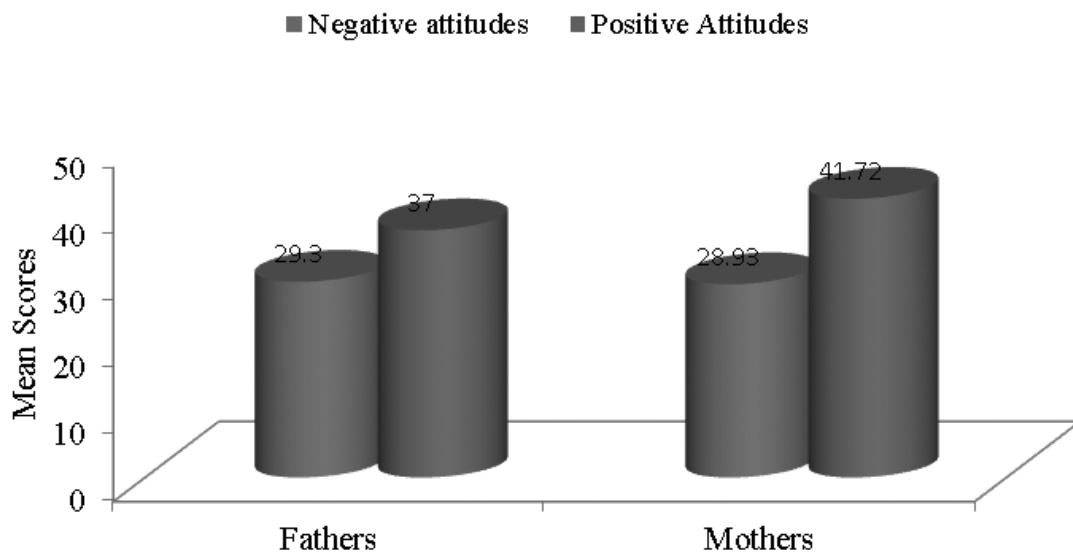
Attitudes of Parents

The results of the present study revealed that there was a significant difference in positive attitudes between fathers and mothers towards their children with intellectual disability. The score of mothers (Mean=41.72, SD= 6.42) was higher than the score of fathers (Mean=37.00, SD=8.25) in positive attitudes, indicating that mothers had more positive attitudes than fathers. The results revealed no significant difference between the negative attitudes of fathers and mothers towards their children with intellectual disabilities.

Table 2: Comparison between responses of Fathers and Mothers regarding Behavioural Management

Parental Attitudes	Fathers		Mothers		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Positive Attitudes	37.00	8.25	41.72	6.42	-2.767	.007
Negative Attitudes	29.30	6.62	28.93	7.86	.210	.834

Note: *p<.01

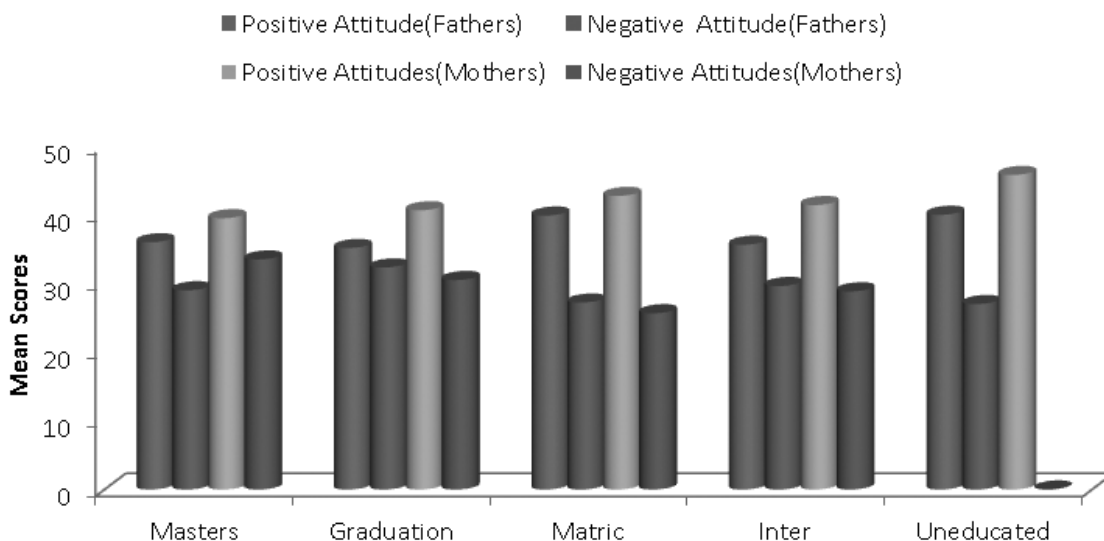


Attitudes of Parents according to Education Levels

The results of ANOVA revealed that there was no significant difference between positive and negative attitudes of fathers and mothers due to different education levels.

Table 3: Comparison of Positive and Negative Attitudes between Parents according to their Education levels

Parental Attitudes	Masters	Graduation	Matric	Inter	Uneducated	f	p
	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)		
Positive Attitude (Fathers)	36.00 (3.60)	35.16 (5.34)	39.88 (9.46)	35.63 (9.81)	40.00 (0)	.432	.784
Negative Attitude (Fathers)	29.00 (7.21)	32.33 (8.91)	27.22 (4.76)	29.63 (6.98)	27.00 (0)	.538	.709
Positive Attitude (Mothers)	39.50 (4.03)	40.66 (7.11)	42.75 (5.24)	41.42 (9.07)	45.80 (6.26)	.897	.475
Negative Attitude (Mothers)	33.50 (5.83)	30.50 (5.41)	25.66 (8.95)	28.85 (3.07)	25.80 (14.02)	1.592	.196

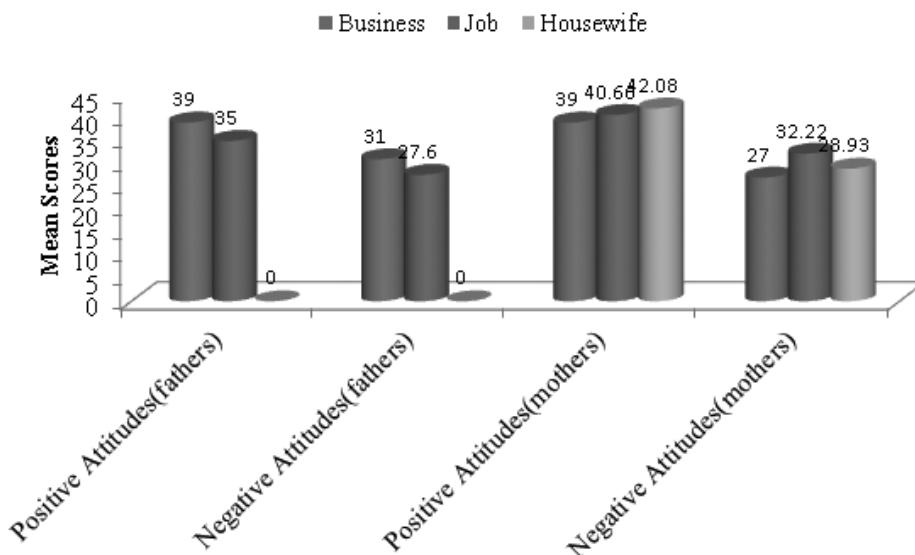


Attitudes of Parents according to their Professions

The results of ANOVA revealed that there was no significant difference between positive and negative attitudes of fathers and mothers due to different professions.

Table 4: Comparison of Positive and Negative Attitudes between Parents with Different Professions

Parental Attitudes	Business	Job	Housewife	f	p
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Positive Attitudes (Fathers)	39.00 (7.53)	35.00 (8.70)	0	1.81	.19
Negative Attitudes (Fathers)	31.00 (5.91)	27.60 (7.04)	0	2.05	.16
Positive Attitudes (Mothers)	39.00 (0)	40.66 (7.00)	42.08 (6.41)	.26	.77
Negative Attitudes (Mothers)	27.00 (0)	32.22 (6.970)	28.93 (7.86)	1.00	.38



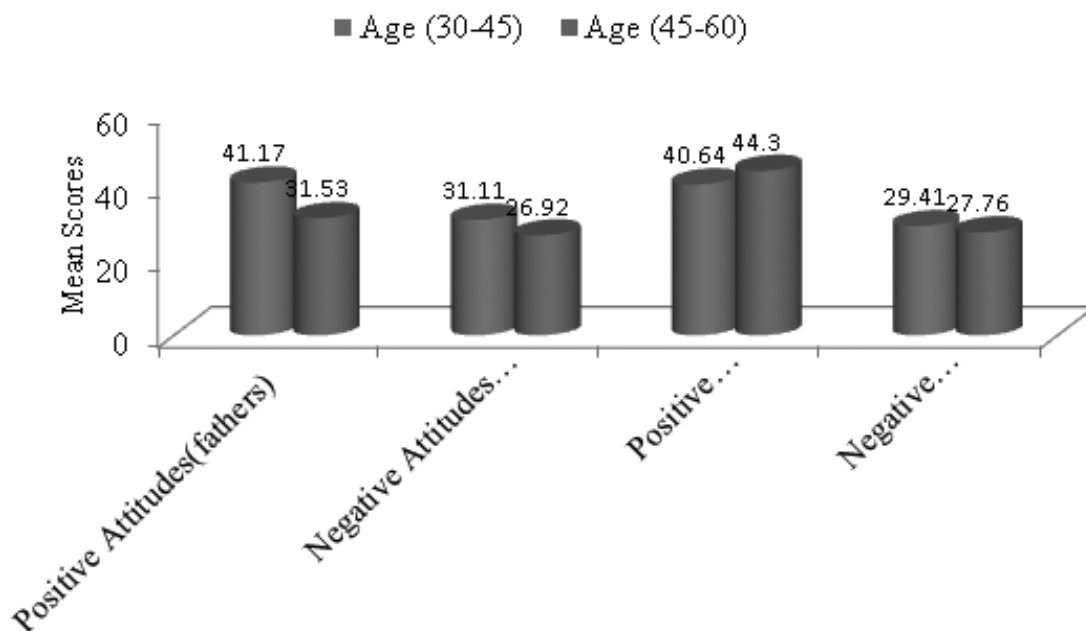
Attitudes of Parents according to their Age

Results of independent sample t-test revealed that there was no significant difference in positive and negative attitudes of mothers due to difference in age. There was no significant difference in negative attitudes of fathers due to their age but there was a significant (i.e., $p < .01$) difference related to positive attitudes of fathers because of age. The fathers between 45-60 years of age had less positive attitudes than fathers between 30-45 years of age.

Table 5: Comparison of Positive and Negative Attitudes between Parents according to their Age

Parental Attitudes	Age (30-45)		Age (45-60)		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Positive Attitudes (Fathers)	41.17	5.99	31.53	7.73	3.85	.001
Negative Attitudes (Fathers)	31.11	6.88	26.92	5.66	1.78	.086
Positive Attitudes (Mothers)	40.64	6.53	44.30	5.54	-1.77	.084
Negative Attitudes (Mothers)	29.41	5.29	27.76	12.22	.63	.532

Note: * $p < .01$



DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to identify parental attitudes towards problematic behaviour of their children with intellectual disabilities. The findings of the study suggested that majority of the parents had positive attitudes towards their children with intellectual disability. There were a small number of parents who had negative attitudes, but none exhibited strongly negative attitudes.

The present research concluded that the majority of fathers and mothers accepted their children with intellectual disability and were hopeful about the future of their children. Contrary to these findings, the study of Kermanshahi et al (2008) found that the parents of children with intellectual disability had a problem in accepting their children and were not optimistic about their children's future.

Findings of the present study indicated that only a few parents felt embarrassed about the problematic behaviour of their children with intellectual disability. However, the study conducted by Taanila et al (2002) contradicted these findings, as it found that parents had difficulty in accepting the presence of disability, and parents seemed to be embarrassed about having such children.

The results of this study revealed that mothers had more positive attitudes than fathers. This contradicts the research of Rangasawami (1995) which

showed that mothers had considerably higher negative attitudes towards these children.

The research work of Govender (2002), on the attitudes of parents towards their children with intellectual disability in Zululand, revealed that the majority of the parents had a positive attitude towards these children. Although some of them had a negative attitude, none of them had shown a strongly negative attitude. That study also observed that although most mothers and fathers exhibited positive attitudes, mothers had more positive attitudes than fathers. The important outcome was that both fathers and mothers did not exhibit strongly negative attitudes. The results of Govender's study (2002) support with the results of the present study.

CONCLUSION

The present study found that parents had positive attitudes towards their children with intellectual disability. Although mothers had more positive attitudes than fathers, there was no significant difference between the negative attitudes of fathers and mothers towards these children. The majority of fathers and mothers accepted their children with intellectual disability and were hopeful about the future of their children.

Implication and Limitations

The findings of this study will help social institutions (family, schools, etc.) to establish programmes for parents to make them understand how they can manage the problematic behaviour of their children in a better way. It will also help the special institutions or NGOs to build appropriate and successful rehabilitation and intervention programmes for management of children with mild to moderate intellectual disability.

Since the present study was limited to the general attitudes of parents towards their children with intellectual disability, it is recommended that further research should be conducted to discover the elements that influence the attitudes of parents with children like these.

This study focussed on the socio-demographic effect on attitudes towards children with intellectual disability. Future studies could consider the child-related factors such as age of the child, severity of intellectual disability, opportunity for schooling, the type of disability, and extent and/or intensity of their problem behaviours.

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