

ROLE OF PARENTAL SUPPORT TO QUELL THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE CHILDREN WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

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***Abstract**

Parental support focuses on the feelings of the child and helping them by listening; it incorporates the emotional role parents play in their child lives. The children with mild intellectual disabilities manifests delays in social development, unable to receive non-verbal cues in social situations, emotionally immature. For this parents play the powerful role to create positive, encouraging atmosphere which fosters self esteem. Therefore, through this article the research suggests the ways to improve the parental support in order to decrease the impact of COVID-19 on the children with mild intellectual disabilities.

Keywords : Parental support, mild intellectual disabilities, COVID-19, emotionally immature

INTRODUCTION:

Intellectual disability (ID) once called mental retardation, is characterized by below average intelligence of mental ability and a lack of skills necessary for day to day living. People with ID can do and learn new skills but they learn them more slowly. ID is of varying degrees from mild to profound.

Intellectual disability is thought to affect about 1% of the population and of those affected, 85% have mild ID. This means they are just a little slower than average to learn new information or skills. But if the right support will be given they can be able to live independently.

Families are interactive, interdependent systems with individual members reciprocally effecting each other (Hornby, 1994; Dunst, Trivette, Deal 1988).

Family members are very much be beneficial for a person with ID. Research and experiences in working with families have repeatedly stressed that unmet needs may not only have negative effects on the health and wellbeing of the family, but also interfere significantly, in the implementation of intervention programmes. Hence, it is essential that families be supported appropriately to empower and strengthen to involve effectively in intervention programmes and rehabilitation of persons with ID. When it is the case of mild intellectual disability parental support plays very crucial role as they need limited to intermittent level of support in view of their less severity of disability. They are very much able to spend their life more similar like any other normal human being. If their family members mainly parents remain very much conscious and aware about their child disability,

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needs, strengths and limitation and get involved in their intervention programme or we can say remain cooperative then there is no doubt that a child with mild intellectual disability can be able to achieve his/her goals easily and get mainstream in the society without any problem. Once the parents of a mild intellectual disable patronize their child, their acceptance from other family members and society will become much permissible.

Parental involvement as well as parental support both are equally important for the success of any intervention programme. Parental involvement is characterized by the presence of a parent in one's daily life and school activities. Parents who are involved in the students life participate and make an effort to attend their child's events, school activities and be involved in the student's academic pursuit. Whereas, parental support incorporates the emotional role parents play in their children's lives. Supportive parents provide encouragement and emotional warmth to their child throughout adolescence. In short parental support focuses on the feeling of the child and helping them by listening, whereas parental involvement focuses on spending time with the child and taking interest in what is going on in his/her life (Ratelle, Carose, Guay & Sural, 2005). Thus parental involvement and parental support can be used vice-versa.

As a parents, the most powerful thing they can do for their child with mild intellectual disability is to create positive, encouraging atmosphere which will foster self-esteem. These children generally struggle with feelings of confidence and self worth. When parents notice and complement positive progress, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, the child's self esteem is bolstered to some degree and more positive change becomes possible for the future.

It clearly indicates that parental support is equally more important like parental involvement for a mild intellectual disable as it works and affects the psychology of the child.

Impact of COVID-19 on children with ID

As we know the whole human world has experiencing the profound effects of pandemic COVID-19 since last 02 years (approx.). Its consequences have been noticed by everyone not only by normal but people with ID are also at greater risk of infection for a range of reasons that include physical health problems, social circumstances and limitations in understanding (Grier et al 2020).

In general, people with ID live in the community with support from family members or paid carers depending upon their level of support needed. Those with mild (IQ 50-70) are likely to require less support to undertake activities of daily living compared with those with moderate to severe levels of ID. Their participation in community activities is good with access to community activities and some people are engaged in paid employment. People with ID often follow their own routines and need to be prepared for change. If not, sudden, changes can increase their level of anxiety causing behavioural challenges and potentially mental health conditions.

During pandemic, people with mild ID who functions in the community with little support, may face problems to maintain their public health measures to reduce the spread like self isolation, handwashing of physical distancing from others. All such social behavioural

demands can be difficult to understand and to implement especially for those with behavioural challenges such as spitting as it increases the risk to other people with ID and their carers. In such situation, it is difficult for carers to support people having problematic behaviours. In other words we can say quarantine is likely to be difficult for people with ID to tolerate and compounded by not understanding its importance and the implications of not adhering to restrictions.

Moreover, due to pandemic closures of all schools, day care centres and professional centres parents especially of children with ID get tensed and worried as they were not able to get appropriate expert helps to continue the intervention programme of their special children at home. Special children also get confined to their houses due to which their structured daily routine get disturbed. As COVID needs continues or regular directions to follow their routines which was given to them by their teachers, trainers or professionals. But due to pandemic all over the world schools, institutions get closed and all the services get stopped. It effects the mental as well as physical health a lot as their training programmes, routines get interrupted. But anyhow gradually with the passage of time and efforts of government and health system situation are now becoming normalize. Many preventive measures like mass vaccination campaigns, awareness against COVID-19 regarding do's and don'ts were carried out to overcome the pandemic.

In view of above, the researcher wants to suggest that in order to avoid the above consequences all the parents of the special children should be empowered so that in any situation they can protect their special child with ID and continue their training programme.

“The major goal of state family support programmes is to enhance care giving capacity and improve the quality of life for the family; a related goal is to prevent or defer unnecessary out of home placement.” (Bradley, Knoll and Agosta, 1992).

According to the researches various schemes of parental support to decrease the impact of COVID-19 on the children with mild intellectual disabilities are given below :-

- (1) **Parent and Sibling associations** : Both parents as well as siblings are the permanent teachers, socializing agents and primary caregivers for the child. They are better aware of the strength and weakness of their ward. So, it is very desirable to involve parents, siblings in the process of planning and implementation of any service program for its success. Based on these considerations parents or siblings of the children with intellectual disability come together and form parents or sibling groups or associations. These groups associations actively involved in providing parent to parent information and emotional support, organizing awareness programmes for parents, community and in self advocacy programmes.
- (2) **Periodic parent teacher meeting** : Like regular schools these parent teacher meetings are also necessary in special schools also in order to review child's performance. During these meetings teachers and parents clarify their doubts regarding child's performance, take guidance from the teachers to implement the planned programme at home in more effective manner. These meetings enhance family participation undoubtedly.

- (3) **Home base training** : As programme run at the centre base is not sufficient for the children with intellectual disabilities but it is very much necessary to run home base training programme efficiently. To run this training contribution of siblings, grandparents and other significant members of the family need to be taken.
- (4) **Family cottage service model** : For promoting or enhancing the family participation in the training of children with intellectual disability. Family cottage service model as introduced by NIPIID should be introduced. This model provides a short stay facility (1-2 weeks) for the family similar to home environment to the family of the child with intellectual disability. During the stay family avail all the services like explanation of intervention, strategies with live demonstration and an opportunity to practice for few days and clarify their doubts before learning cottage. This will enhances family participation both qualitatively as well as quantitatively in the child's rehabilitation process.
- (5) **National or Regional Level Parents meets** : In order to equip parents of children with intellectual disabled with the knowledge of govt. policies, latest trends and provisions related to disability rehabilitation should be organised from time to time so that a right based society for persons with disabilities can be established.
- (6) **Parents training programmes** : Training programmes for parents or families having children with intellectual disabilities can be organised focusing or empowering them. After attending the programme they will be able to manage their children with intellectual disabilities.
- (7) **Parents as volunteers in service centres** : Parents should be encouraged to participate supporting existing service delivery system, e.g., interested parents can support the professionals as volunteers in early intervention centre, special schools and vocational training centres. The exposures of such type of service models may broaden the knowledge and competencies of parents on management aspects of rehabilitation.

CONCLUSION :

It is concluded that no doubt post COVID-19 era brought a greater challenge and barrier before the parents and professionals of the persons with ID but with proper enlightenment, insight and adequate guidance they must overcome all the challenges and barriers.

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