

## Emotional Intelligence Among the Parents of Developmentally Disabled Children and Normal Children

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### ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in understanding and managing emotions in everyday life and is particularly important in parenting. Parents of children with developmental disabilities often face unique emotional, psychological, and social challenges compared to parents of typically developing children. The present study aimed to examine and compare the levels of emotional intelligence among parents of developmentally disabled children and parents of typically developing children. The study adopted a quantitative descriptive survey research design. A total of 140 parents were selected for the study, including 70 parents of typically developing children and 70 parents of children with developmental disabilities. The Emotional Intelligence Scale, developed by Arun Kumar and Suraksha Pal, was used as the data collection tool. The collected data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and t-test to determine the difference between the two groups. The results revealed that parents of typically developing children had significantly higher emotional intelligence ( $M = 301.86$ ,  $SD = 48.51$ ) than parents of children with developmental disabilities ( $M = 205.11$ ,  $SD = 61.77$ ). The calculated t-value (10.30) was found to be significant at the 0.01 level, indicating a statistically significant difference between the two groups. The findings suggest that the emotional challenges associated with raising children with developmental disabilities may influence the emotional intelligence of parents. The study highlights the need for counseling services, emotional support programs, and parent training initiatives to strengthen emotional coping abilities among parents of children with developmental disabilities.

**Keywords:** *Emotional Intelligence, Parents, Developmental Disabilities, Normal Children, Parenting Stress*

Emotional intelligence has emerged as an important psychological construct in understanding human behaviour, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships. The concept of emotional intelligence refers to the ability of an individual to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively in oneself and in others. Individuals with high emotional intelligence are generally better able to cope with stress, maintain positive relationships, and handle challenging situations in a balanced manner. In the context of family life, emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in parenting practices, family adjustment, and children's emotional development.

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## Emotional Intelligence Among the Parents of Developmentally Disabled Children and Normal Children

Parenting is a complex and demanding responsibility that requires emotional sensitivity, patience, and adaptability. Parents are the primary caregivers and play a vital role in shaping their children's emotional and social development. Their emotional responses, coping strategies, and interpersonal skills influence the overall family environment and the well-being of children. When parents possess higher levels of emotional intelligence, they are more capable of understanding their children's emotional needs, responding appropriately to behavioral challenges, and maintaining a supportive and nurturing environment.

The challenges of parenting may become more intense when parents are raising children with developmental disabilities. Developmental disabilities include conditions such as intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, and other neurodevelopmental conditions that affect a child's cognitive, social, or adaptive functioning. These conditions often require long-term care, specialized education, medical support, and constant supervision. As a result, parents of children with developmental disabilities may experience increased levels of emotional stress, anxiety, social stigma, and financial burden.

Research has shown that parents of developmentally disabled children frequently encounter psychological and emotional challenges that differ from those experienced by parents of typically developing children. They may face difficulties related to acceptance of the child's condition, concerns about the child's future, behavioral management issues, and limited social support. These challenges can significantly influence the emotional functioning and psychological well-being of parents. In such circumstances, emotional intelligence becomes an important factor that helps parents regulate their emotions, cope with stress, and maintain positive family relationships.

On the other hand, parents of typically developing children also experience parenting stress and responsibilities; however, the nature and intensity of these challenges may differ. Their parenting experiences may involve more typical developmental concerns such as academic performance, social behavior, and personality development. Consequently, their emotional demands and coping mechanisms may vary when compared to parents of children with developmental disabilities.

Understanding the emotional intelligence of parents in both groups is therefore important for several reasons. It can help identify emotional strengths and difficulties among parents, develop effective counselling and support programs, and improve the overall family environment. Additionally, insights gained from such studies can assist educators, psychologists, and social workers in designing parent support interventions that enhance emotional resilience and promote better developmental outcomes for children.

Despite the growing interest in emotional intelligence and family well-being, comparative research examining emotional intelligence among parents of developmentally disabled children and parents of normal children is still limited, particularly in the Indian context. Therefore, the present study aims to examine and compare the levels of emotional intelligence between these two groups of parents to gain a deeper understanding of their emotional functioning and coping patterns.

**Dabrowska, A., and Pisula, E. (2010)** investigated parenting stress and emotional experiences among mothers of children with autism. The study found that mothers of children with autism reported significantly higher stress and emotional difficulties than mothers of

## Emotional Intelligence Among the Parents of Developmentally Disabled Children and Normal Children

typically developing children, emphasizing the need for emotional support and coping mechanisms.

**Green, S.A., and Baker, B.L. (2011)** examined emotional expression among parents of children with intellectual disabilities and typically developing children. The findings showed that parents of children with intellectual disabilities reported more negative emotional experiences and higher levels of stress, which influenced family interactions and child outcomes.

**Sharma, R., and Gupta, P. (2019)** examined emotional intelligence among parents of children with special needs and normal children. The study found significant differences in emotional intelligence levels, with parents of special-needs children showing stronger emotional coping abilities developed through caregiving experiences.

**Singh, K.K., and Kumar, A. (2022)** discovered that the degree of resilience varies among mothers of intellectually disabled children, children with locomotor impairments, and typically developing children. The study suggested that resilience is closely associated with the availability of social support and culturally appropriate resources, which help parents manage emotional challenges effectively.

**Yadav, S. (2024)** studied emotional intelligence and psychological well-being among parents of children with intellectual disabilities. The findings indicated that higher emotional intelligence was associated with better psychological well-being and more effective coping strategies among parents.

### ***Statement of Problem:***

The main aim of this research has been to compare the scores of emotional intelligences among the Parents of Developmentally Disabled Children and Normal Children. The exact problem is “**Emotional Intelligence Among the Parents of Developmentally Disabled Children and Normal Children**”

### ***Significance of the Problem:***

The present study is significant because emotional intelligence plays an important role in maintaining healthy family relationships and effective parenting. Parents of children with developmental disabilities often face various emotional, psychological, and social challenges that may affect their emotional functioning and well-being. Understanding the level of emotional intelligence among these parents can help in identifying their emotional needs and coping abilities. The findings of the study may provide useful insights for educators, psychologists, and counsellors in developing appropriate support programs for parents of children with developmental disabilities. The study also helps compare the emotional intelligence of parents of typically developing children and those of developmentally disabled children. Such comparisons may contribute to a better understanding of parental adjustment and emotional management in different parenting situations. Furthermore, the study's results may assist in designing parent training and counselling programs to improve emotional resilience and family well-being. Ultimately, the study contributes to the field of special education and family psychology by highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence in parenting.

## Emotional Intelligence Among the Parents of Developmentally Disabled Children and Normal Children

### Objective:

- To know the levels of emotional intelligence among the Parents of Developmentally Disabled Children and Normal Children.

### Hypothesis:

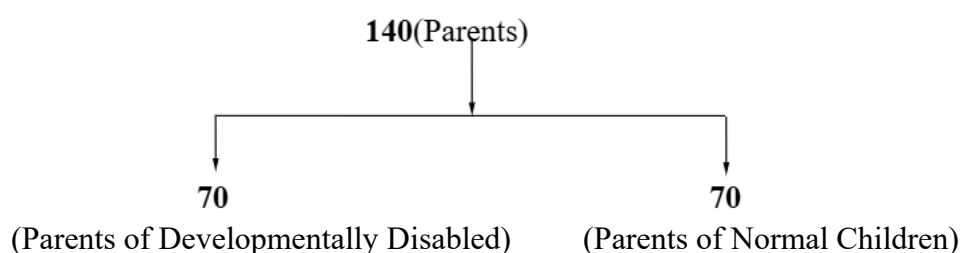
- (H<sub>01</sub>) There would be no significant difference in the scores of emotional Intelligence between Parents of Developmentally Disabled Children and Normal Children.

### Research Design:

The nature of the present research problem did not permit the use of an experimental method, as the variables under investigation could not be manipulated or controlled by the researcher. Therefore, a quantitative descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The investigation was conducted using the survey method, which is appropriate for collecting information about existing conditions and relationships among variables. In this approach, the phenomena under study had already occurred prior to the investigation, and the researcher examined them as they naturally existed. Data were collected from the selected respondents and analyzed using quantitative statistical techniques to understand the influence and relationship of the variables under study.

### Sample:

The sample of 150 Parents of Developmentally Disabled Children and Normal Children between the age ranges of 25 to 45 years were selected from the Jaipur district of Rajasthan state. Responses in the emotional intelligence questionnaire were found incomplete. So, finally, 140 parents were selected. Further, all the subjects were classified into two categories according to screening results i.e. Parents of Developmentally Disabled Children (70) and Parents of normal children (70). The categorization and detail of sample selection are as under:-



### Inclusion criteria

- Selected only the parents of developmentally disabled children.
- Selected the parents of normal children.
- Selected the parents between the 25-45 age range.

### Exclusion criteria

- Those parents who had critical medical and psychological disorders were not included

### Tool:

**Emotional Intelligence Scale:** The Emotional Intelligence Scale, developed and standardised by Dr Arun Kumar and Prof. Suraksha Pal, was utilised in the present study. This scale is widely used in psychological and educational research to assess an individual's capacity to perceive, understand, manage, and effectively apply emotions in different life situations. The

## Emotional Intelligence Among the Parents of Developmentally Disabled Children and Normal Children

instrument consists of a series of structured statements designed to evaluate different aspects of emotional intelligence. It measures key dimensions such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, which together reflect an individual's overall emotional functioning and interpersonal effectiveness.

**Scoring:** The Emotional Intelligence Scale consists of a number of statements to which respondents indicate their level of agreement. Each response is assigned a specific numerical score according to the scoring key provided in the manual. The scores obtained on all the items are summed to obtain the total emotional intelligence score of the respondent. Higher total scores indicate a higher level of emotional intelligence, while lower scores reflect a lower level of emotional intelligence.

### ***Data Collection Procedure:***

For the purpose of the present study, the researcher first identified parents of normal children and parents of developmentally disabled children from selected schools and special education centers. Prior permission was obtained from the concerned school authorities and institutions to conduct the study. The researcher explained the purpose and significance of the study to the participants and assured them that their information would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. After obtaining participants' consent, the Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Arun Kumar and Suraksha Pal was administered to the selected parents. The respondents were given clear instructions regarding how to respond to the statements in the scale. Adequate time was provided to complete the questionnaire, and any questions raised by participants were addressed by the researcher. The questionnaires were collected after completion and checked for completeness. A total of 140 respondents, including 70 parents of typically developing children and 70 parents of children with developmental disabilities, constituted the final sample for the study. The responses obtained from the participants were carefully scored according to the scoring procedure of the scale and subsequently used for statistical analysis.

### ***Statistical Analysis:***

For the present research study to determine the significant mean difference between the scores of parents of developmentally disabled children and those of normal children on emotional intelligence, statistical measures such as independent-samples t-tests, mean, and SD were calculated using SPSS version 20.

## **RESULTS**

***Table-1 Represents Mean, SD& t-values between parents of normal and developmentally disabled children for Emotional Intelligence.***

Category of Parents	N	Mean	SD	t	Significant Level
Parents of Normal children	70	301.86	48.51	10.30	$p < .01$
Parents of Developmentally disabled children	70	205.11	61.77		

Table 1 presents a comparison of emotional intelligence between parents of typically developing children and parents of children with developmental disabilities. The mean emotional intelligence score of parents of normal children ( $M = 301.86$ ,  $SD = 48.51$ ) is higher than that of parents of developmentally disabled children ( $M = 205.11$ ,  $SD = 61.77$ ). The

## Emotional Intelligence Among the Parents of Developmentally Disabled Children and Normal Children

calculated t-value is 10.30, which is greater than the critical value at the 0.01 level of significance with 138 degrees of freedom. This indicates a statistically significant difference between the two groups. Hence, it can be concluded that parents of normal children possess significantly higher emotional intelligence compared to parents of developmentally disabled children.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that a significant difference exists in emotional intelligence between parents of normal children and parents of developmentally disabled children.

This finding can be justified through previous research studies. Parents of children with developmental disabilities often experience higher levels of emotional stress, caregiving burden, and psychological strain due to continuous caregiving responsibilities, behavioral challenges, social stigma, and uncertainty about their child's future. These factors may influence their emotional regulation and emotional functioning. Studies by Dabrowska and Pisula (2010) reported that parents of children with developmental disorders experience higher parenting stress and emotional difficulties compared to parents of typically developing children. Similarly, Raina et al. (2005) found that the psychological well-being and emotional health of parents caring for children with developmental disabilities are significantly affected by caregiving demands and lack of support systems. These research findings support the present study's results, which indicate differences in emotional intelligence between the two groups of parents.

### CONCLUSION

From the analysis of the data, it can be concluded that parents of normal children exhibit higher levels of emotional intelligence compared to parents of developmentally disabled children. The significant difference observed in emotional intelligence may be attributed to the increased emotional, psychological, and social challenges faced by parents raising children with developmental disabilities. These challenges may affect their emotional regulation, coping ability, and overall emotional functioning.

#### *Educational and Social Implications:*

- Need for Parent Counselling and Emotional Support Programs. The findings highlight the importance of providing counselling services, emotional support programs, and training workshops for parents of developmentally disabled children.
- Educational institutions, special schools, and rehabilitation centres should organise parent guidance programs, support groups, and awareness sessions to strengthen emotional intelligence and psychological well-being among parents of children with developmental disabilities. These initiatives can improve family adjustment and enhance the overall development of children with special needs.

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## Emotional Intelligence Among the Parents of Developmentally Disabled Children and Normal Children

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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