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WELL BEING AND PSYCHIATRIC STATUS OF PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH MENTAL RETARDATION IN PAKISTAN

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**Introduction:** Studies have shown an association between parental distress and caretaking of children with cognitive delays. There is little data in developing countries, such as Pakistan, concerning the impact of raising children with Mental Retardation, upon the quality of parent functioning and risk for psychopathology.

**Objective:** To assess the level of distress and risk for psychopathology among parents of children with Mental Retardation (MR).

**Methods:** This was prospective study conducted at a tertiary care hospital in Pakistan. Participants were 200 parents (100 fathers/100 mothers) of 100 children with the diagnosis of MR. Parents were administered Self Report Questionnaire 20 (SRQ 20) and the Quality of Life BREF (QOL BREF).

**Results:** Mean age for mothers was 40.2 years while fathers was 42.9 years. The mean age of children was 10.5 years (30% females/70% males) with 25 % mild MR, 42% moderate MR, 20% severe MR and 13% profound MR. On SRQ 20, 25% mothers and 43% fathers scored above the cut off indicating possible psychiatric disorder. Mean QOL domain scores were for mothers (M) and fathers (F): M 13.2/ F 13.9 for physical health; M13.1 / F 13.7 for psychological health; M 13.9 / F 13.9 for social relationships, M 13.4 / F 14.8 for environment.

**Conclusions:**

Parents of children with MR are at higher risk for psychopathology, needing mental health assessment.

Fathers scores on the SRQ reflect more distress and psychiatric symptoms than mothers SRQ scores.

Limitations include lack of comparison group and small sample size.