CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study, The Impact of Counselling on the stress level among the caregivers of the Intellectually Challenged is an experimental study carried out. The Methodology of the study focuses the entire work plan and the schedule worked during the course of the study.

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Statement of the Problem

Stress is the emotional and physical strain caused by our response to pressure from the outside world. Common stress reactions include tension, irritability, inability to concentrate and a variety of physical symptoms that include headache and a fast heartbeat. It is almost impossible to live without some stress. And most of us would not want to miss it, because it gives life some spice and excitement. But if stress gets out of control, it may harm our health, relationship and enjoyment of life. When this is going to be common for all individual, it is not the same for the parents / caregivers of the intellectually challenged children. The pain and stress they face is very intense in severity.
Having a retarded child is a terrible shock to the parents being unprepared to accept the truth, the ways and means are searched by the parents, most of the time it misleads them to odd mythology and believers. By the time they come to understand the facts related to their child, they are utmost to put up with multi-facet stress factors from all around in all walks of their life. Ultimately the quality of life of the parents gets affected and mostly ends in a frustrated situation. It is not only the parent that gets affected the entire family including the siblings, grand parents, relatives and even the neighbours get disturbed. At this juncture the need to do something for this group of our population craves importance.

**Significance of the Study**

Birth of an Intellectually Challenged lays an immense stress on the parents/caregivers of the Intellectually Challenged. Apart from general problems they face, physically and socially the psychological distress felt by them cannot be easily handled by ordinary relaxation technique as other individuals do. In this context it is appreciably demanded that some support need to be rendered to the caregivers of the Intellectually Challenged apart from general Rehabilitative guidance, (in the form of special schooling etc.,) The study focuses on the counseling module to the caregivers on the area of affect as well in mental health maintenance. The importance of counselling is also stressed by comparing the experimental group for whom counseling shall be offered with that of the control group for whom counselling intervention will not be given.

**Design of the study** method

The method of the study is done on an experimental design. Since the study intends to find the impact of counselling on the stress levels among the caregivers of the intellectually challenged, the selected population is divided into two groups namely the control group and the experimental group. The control group is the group for whom there will be assessment done in stress level in pre & post test etc., but interventional strategies will not be followed whereas for the experimental group pre test will be done. Interventional strategies - counselling is offered and the impact of the counselling is assessed in post test scores. The comparative results of both the group shall give the impact of counselling caused in the experimental group.
The term Intellectually Challenged is a broad term and it has various groups which come under them. Here the caregivers/parents were chosen under four category such as caregivers of the cerebral palsy children with mental retardation, caregivers of the Down Syndrome children with mental retardation, caregivers of the Autism children and mental retardation, caregivers of the mentally retarded children.

Total number of sample chosen for the study is 160 [(ie) 40 from each category (40×4= 160)] of control group and 160 of the experimental group. So total is 320 samples. All the sample-population chosen was given pretest of all the scale chosen (1) scale to study the socio-demographic profile (2) stress assessment questionnaire (3) factor-contribution to the stress (4) the quality of life. Then the Intervenational counselling is given for the experimental group in proper intervals to various groups chosen for the study. After a period post test is administered to both the experimental & the control group (for whom counselling is not done). The post test result of experimental group when compared with the pre test result will give the impact of counselling caused in the caregivers.

Selection of the study area

The study area was chosen in special schools, Rehabilitation clinic and hospital in Madurai. The special children who were identified through the government and private hospitals are usually sent to special schools in the city (or) to a Rehabilitation clinic run by experts for the training process. In such a way three important special schools in Madurai city was chosen. The names of the school chosen for the study are (1) Sri Krishna Development School (2) Shine Educational Trust special School (3) Bethshan special school. The Rehabilitation Clinic chosen were (1) Rehabilitation clinic atNarimedu, Pudur and Pandiaraj Children Hospital.

The Area of study was focused on the caregivers / parents of the Intellectually Challenged children on various (4) cadres such as (1) caregivers of the cerebral palsy children (2) caregivers of the Down Syndrome (3) Caregivers of the Autism (4) Caregivers of the Mentally retarded children.

The stress area of the caregivers focuses on the stress level in all aspects covering general aspect, family, work situation, children and welfare, economic status, death etc., The factors contributing to stress, focus on general, daily routine,
behavioural, family, education, social, economic, physical / mental status and government sector, then the quality of life of the caregivers which covers all general factors covering the quality of life of the individual.

**Sampling**

The sampling technique followed in the study is simple stratified sampling (or) the samples were chosen according to the category taken for the study in the quantified number in both the control and experimental group.

Here in this study the sample taken for the study were the caregivers of the intellectually challenged in two groups such as one on control group and other on experimental group. The numbers of sample in both the group are 160 in each which shall be stratified such as caregivers of - cerebral palsy children, Down Syndrome children, Autism affected children and children affected with general mental retardation, 40 in each category (40x4=160). This type of sampling would show the category in even order so that the impact of intervention would be co-related between both the groups in even order.

**Tools & Techniques**

The tools used for the area of study was

1. Semi structured interview Schedule which was used to collect the complete socio-demographic profile of the caregivers chosen for the study which covers the complete history of the caregiver, his spouse, family and details related to the Intellectually challenged child in the family. It consists of 56 statements to be answered by the parent who takes care of the child.

2. Stress Assessment Questionnaire by Latha Sathish (1988) which covers the major domain such as family, workplace, environment etc., gives the stress level of the Individual. The scale was tried out on a sample of 80 subjects. The item reliability value was 0.86. A test reliability on a sample of 30 subject was found to be 0.96 (P<0.01) the content validity based on judges rating was 0.86. It consists of 52 statements to be answered in a two point scale Yes or No
3. Factors’ contributing to the stress is a linkert semistructured schedule prepared by the researcher (ie) for the caregivers in special areas associated with the affect of the child was framed and the major area focused covers, activities of daily living, motor, reading, writing, behavioural, psychological, social etc., It consists of 25 statements to be answered in 3 point scale.

4. Quality of life of the caregivers is assessed by using WHO.QOL (BREF) scale. It consisted of 26 statements to be answered in 5 point scale.

Techniques adapted to collect the data were interviewer-schedule, group counselling in small groups based on category. Questionnaire was circulated and procedure to fill the Questionnaire was explained in detail. After the completion the questionnaire were collected and the data collection was followed in the same way for both the experimental and control group. After the Interventional counselling offered to experimental group for a period of 3-6 months in small groups, post test was conducted to both the experimental and control group on the scales used in pretest.

**Data Collection & Data Analyses**

The Data collection was made in the area chosen for the study from the special school selected, the Rehabilitation clinic and the children hospital. After seeking proper permission from the Head of the institution, the basic information related to the types and number of children in each centre was collected. The population studied was then divided into experimental group for whom counselling is to be offered and the control group for whom no intervention was to be given.

The tools selected for the study was translated in Tamil with great care and was given to both the groups by organizing meeting in the schools, centre etc., Pre test was conducted and the scales were collected back. Then the experimental group was focused and counselling was offered to them based on their need and the stress.

The area focused in counselling are

(1) the basic knowledge related to the mental retardation

(2) Detailed study related to Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, Autism, Cause of Mental retardation, Identification, Types of treatment etc.,
(3) ‘Stress’ - Related to the affect and how all stress affects them more than the normal parents - How to face this stress - simple relaxation techniques which could be used.

(4) Attitudinal training

(5) Mental health and Its maintenance etc.,

After the completion of interventional counselling, post test evaluation is done for the experimental group to see the level of stress altered with respect to intervention made.

A manual for the parents of the Intellectually Challenged was also prepared by the Researcher to enhance and support them in their stressfull life.

The control group was also evaluated after a period of 6 months to see the changes undertaken if any or not without interventional strategies applied.

**Scoring**

The scoring followed to get the result for the stress assessment scale and factors contributing to stress for the data’s collected were such that the nominal and ordinal level is qualitative, interval and ratio level is quantitative.

The nominal and ordinal scale with the help of a scale was converted into interval scale. We have raised the power of the variable so that higher order statistical techniques are adopted.

**Data Analysis**

When Data collections were over the researcher has provided numerical coding for all the variables. The data were entered in Excel sheets and the entered data were verified by selecting the records at random.

Data were analysed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences, (SPSS). The descriptive and inferential statistics have been adopted for the study.

To find out significant differences between qualitative variables the non parametric test namely Chi Square was employed.

To find out the significant differences in the means of pre and post test, paired ‘t’-test was used.
To find out the significant differences among the means of three or more groups for quantitative variables F-test (One way Anova) was used. Further the post-hoc Test namely Scheffe test was also used.

Limitations of the study

(1) This is a risk of misunderstanding the statements given in the questionnaire.

(2) The motivational level of the caregivers should be given with a clear conscience with true response, rather than a fake report.

(3) The caregivers of the intellectually challenged who were given home based training for the child was not focused.

Conclusion

The study concludes that, there is an impact of counselling on the stress levels of the caregivers of the Intellectually Challenged who were taken for the study under four categories. In comparison with the control group some four categories were not given counselling. The quality of life of the experimental group showed increase than that of the control group.

The study shows that handling an Intellectually Challenged itself is a challenge to the caregivers of them, the stress they undergo in their daily life is really tough. Many times the frustration tops and brings forth complete depression to the entire family affecting the development process of the family. At this juncture when counselling is organized in special schools / public welfare centres they could definitely benefit and make their life meaningful and happy.

Recommendation based on the field experience

> Every special school should have a programme to assess the parents in their stress level and to offer counselling so that it would definitely improve the level of functioning of the parents which will facilitate the rehabilitation process of the children.

> The major factor of stress lies in the question, Who will take care of the child after their parents? They must seek a solution in various ways (1) seeking government-support (2) form a parent forum and find a home to take care of the child, after parents expiry.
Periodical support to the parents is needed in the form of guidance and counselling which could facilitate their quality of life and reduce the stress level in their walks of life.

Government support to the caregivers needs to be enriched. Financial assistance is not enough but social support to the children and their caregivers is an urgent need for a better living. This need must be looked into.