

Examining Psychological Symptoms and Self-efficacy of Parents with Disabled Children

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and psychological symptoms of the parents with disabled children. This is a descriptive study. The sample of the study consists of the parents of 165 students with disabilities. 63,3% (n=105) of the participants were mothers and 36,4% (n=60) were fathers. Data was collected with the help of Parent Self-efficacy Scale and Brief Symptom Inventory. In the analysis of the data, t-test, Anova, and Pearson Moments Correlation Analysis were used. This study showed that there is a negatively meaningful relationship between parent self-efficacy and psychological symptoms. There were meaningful differences in psychological symptoms and self-efficacy of the parents according to some demographic variables. As a result, we can say that increase in parent self-efficacy will lead decrease in psychological symptoms.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Parent Self-efficacy, Psychological Symptoms

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Extended Summary

Introduction

The self-efficacy perception of parents is a collection of judgments and beliefs regarding their capacities to carry out and organize parental tasks related to the children (Montigny and Lacharite, 2005). Parents with strong beliefs regarding their self-parental efficacies are tending to display positive parental behavior (Coleman and Karraker, 2000). Hung et al. (2010) have stated that the perception of the family regarding the disability of the child is the most important factor affecting the mental health of the family. Parental self-efficacy has been defined as an important variable in understanding the relation between the mental health results of parents of disabled children and the behavioral problems of the child (Hastings and Brown, 2002). According to Barlow, Powell, Gilchrist (2006) families with disabled children are under psycho-social disorder risk and may not have the sufficient self-efficacy regarding their abilities to contribute in the care of their children.

Khamis (2007) states that the severity of the disability of the child affects the psychological disorders of the family. According to Leung and Li-Tsang (2003), families with disabled children have stated that they have undergone frequent physical and psychological disorders and that this in turn has affected their quality of life. It is a known fact that while the quality of life of the family members under continuous anxiety and stress deteriorates, there might be limitations in actualizing the rehabilitation goals for the children. It is very important that the social and psychological problems of families with disabled children are known and that solutions are tried to be found (Akmeşe, Mutlu and Günel, 2007).

The objective of this study is to examine the relationships between the self-efficacies of parents of disabled children and their psychological symptoms. In addition, another objective is to determine whether the self-efficacies and psychological symptoms of parents change according to gender and education level.

Method

This study is based on descriptive method. The sample of the study is composed of the parents of 165 students with various disabilities who applied to the Guidance Research Center for private training in Izmir in 2010 and 2011. Of the parents, 63,6% (n= 105) are mothers and 36,4% (n= 60) are fathers. Of the children whose parents participated in the study, 87 (%52,7) have Mental Disabilities, 4 (%2,4) have Orthopedic disabilities, 16 (%9,7) are Autistic, 17 (%10,3) have Language and Speech Disorder, 9 (%5,5) have Hearing Disabilities, 5 (%3) are visually impaired, 27 (%16,4) have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The study data have been acquired via Parental Self-efficacy Scale, Brief Symptom Inventory and Personal Information Form. For data analysis, *t*-test, One Way Analysis of Variance and Pearson Moment Product Correlation Analysis have been used for independent samples. The statistical analyses of the study have been carried out using SPSS 16 package software.

Results

As a result of the analyses that have been carried out, a statistically significant difference has not been determined between the self-efficacies of parents regarding gender. However, a statistically significant ($p<.05$) difference to the detriment of mothers has been determined regarding the psychological symptoms of depression, anxiety, somatization, hostility, negative self-perception dimensions. Regarding education level, a statistically significant difference to the detriment of primary school graduates ($p<.05$) has been determined in the access of parents to resources and total parental self-efficacy and also depression, anxiety, hostility, negative self-perception dimensions of psychological symptoms. It has been determined that there are negative and statistically significant relations between parental self-efficacy and depression ($r= -.21, p<.01$), anxiety ($r= -.33, p<.01$), negative self-perception ($r= -.25, p<.01$), somatization ($r= -.26, p<.05$) and hostility ($r= -.38, p<.01$) scores.

Discussion

As a result of the study no difference was determined between the parental self-efficacies regarding gender but statistically significant differences were determined for psychological symptoms. It can be stated that the depression, anxiety, somatization, hostility, negative self-perception scores of mothers are higher than those of the fathers. Statistically significant differences were observed with regard to education level between the access of parents to resources and in the general parental self-efficacy. It has been determined that parents who have high school or university level education with disabled children had a higher ability to access resources and it has also been determined that their general parental self-efficacies are higher. Similarly, a statistically significant difference has been determined between the psychological symptoms of parents of disabled children such as depression, anxiety, hostility, negative self-perception scores with regard to education level. It can be stated that parents of disabled children with a lower level of education have more psycho-

logical symptoms in comparison to parents of disabled children with a higher level of education. The reason why parents of disabled children with a higher level of education, experience less psychological symptoms might be the facts that they can access resources more easily, they feel more sufficient regarding child care and education, and that they can overcome problems more easily in comparison to parents of disabled children with a lower level of education. It has been determined that there are negative and statistically significant relationships between parental self-efficacy and depression, anxiety, negative self-perception, somatization and hostility scores. It can be stated that as the parental efficacies of parents with disabled children increase, psychological symptoms tend to decrease.

Conclusion

In conclusion, training of parents regarding the developmental properties of disabled children and increasing their efficacies in dealing with the problems that they experience can help them to deal with their psychological symptoms more easily. The gender factor should be considered in studies that will be carried out to prevent and decrease the psychological symptoms of parents. Mothers can receive more psychological support. Further studies can prepare training programs to increase the self-efficacies of parents of disabled children and can examine the efficiency of these trainings.

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