

QUALITY OF LIFE IN FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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Abstract

Research highlights that parents of children with developmental disabilities bear higher burden of distress and need more help and support than parents of typically developing children. Several research conducted over the previous two decades suggest that primary caregivers, are at risk for developing physical and mental health problems. Also, research indicates that increased and chronic distress may affect one’s overall quality of life negatively. In addition parents of children with developmental disabilities report worsen overall perception of their quality of life. Quality of life is a broad concept that includes objectively measurable life conditions experienced by an individual such as physical health, psychological wellbeing, social relationships, functional activities and pursuits and health related to environmental circumstances. During the last two decades there has been an increasing body of literature that focus on the quality of life of families of children with developmental disabilities. Aiming to shed light on how children’s disability may affect parents’ quality of life, this paper reviews existent research in this emerging field with a focus on parents’ quality of life. Studies that explore different fields of family’s quality of life, using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are considered. Studies were identified through a computer research of the database. Selection criteria were that they included specific keywords in the title and that they were focused on families of children with developmental disabilities. Fifteen studies met the criteria and were selected for review. Research evidence that all the fields of quality of life of caregivers of children with disabilities are affected. Children’s age, their problematic behaviors, symptom severity, social support perceived by parents, parents’ age and parents’ satisfaction with communication, support from spouse and marital life were identified as significant mediators of the relationship between caregiver health and depression.

Keywords: *developmental disabilities, family, quality of life, quantitative and quantitative methodologies*