

PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES: A LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE ROLE OF PARENTAL COGNITIONS IN RELATION TO CHILD CHARACTERISTICS, FAMILY SUPPORT AND COPING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Research indicates that parents of children with disabilities are more likely to experience significantly higher levels of stress than are parents of nondisabled children. However, research also suggests that stress levels experienced by parents vary considerably from family to family. Stress levels experienced by parents of children with disabilities have been associated to a wide range of variables. In the double ABCX model of family stress, within family resources factor (bB), parental cognitions are considered to be one the basic and most important personal resources of parents influencing their stress levels and their adaptations to daily difficulties presented by children with disabilities. This is supported by many studies which stress that parental cognitive processes play a key role as mediators in stress levels. Dealing and working with parents' cognitions is an important part of professionals who work with families of children with disabilities. Therefore a literature review was undertaken to investigate the role of parental cognitions. The present study aims shedding light on the mediating role of parental cognitions on stress levels, family support and coping strategies employed by parents. It reviews the literature focused on parental self esteem, self efficacy, locus of control, parental satisfaction and attributions. Nine studies met the criteria previously set by the researcher and were selected for review. All selected studies used quantitative methods. The selection criteria were that the studies focused on at least one of the above mentioned cognitive variables, and investigated its relation to parental stress levels. The role of positive and negative parental cognitions is discussed. Implications for further research and the design of therapeutic interventions for parents are discussed.

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