

EVALUATION OF MENTAL AND COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS AND PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT IN MOTHERS OF CHILDREN WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES

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BACKGROUND AND AIM: Increased care burden, lack of social support, social isolation and economic difficulties are common in mothers caring for children with intellectual disability (ID). This study aimed to examine the effects of socio-demographic factors, cognitive abilities and perceived social support on mental health in mothers of children with ID.

METHODS: Mothers of children with intellectual disability participated in our study. Sociodemographic Data Form, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and Symptom Checklist-90-Revised (SCL-90-R) scales were given to all participants, and Benton Visual Memory Test (BVRT) was also administered. (Ethics committee approval number 2023/05-05 was obtained).

RESULTS: Sixty-four mothers participated in our study. Income level showed a significant relationship with the mean MSPSS score ($p=0.005$). BVRT score was significantly associated with history of chronic disease ($p=0.013$), income level ($p=0.043$), education level ($p=0.000$) and maternal age ($p=0.039$). BVRT score was negatively correlated with somatization ($p=0.001$) and anxiety ($p=0.030$). MSPSS total scores were moderately negatively correlated with SCL-90 overall mean ($p=0.009$),

somatization ($p=0.003$), interpersonal relationships ($p=0.000$), anxiety ($p=0.000$) and depression ($p=0.005$). Multiple regression analyses showed that MSPSS and BVRT scores were significant predictors of somatization level ($p<0.01$). MSPSS mean score was a significant predictor of anxiety level ($p<0.01$).

CONCLUSIONS: In our study, it was found that low income level negatively affected the perception of social support, and history of chronic disease and low education level were associated with a decrease in cognitive functions. The negative correlation of BVRT scores with somatization and anxiety suggests that cognitive functions may be related to psychological symptoms. The negative correlation of social support with depression, anxiety and somatization suggests that it may be a protective factor for mental health. In this context, it is important to strengthen social support systems and increase psychosocial interventions to support psychological well-being in mothers of children with intellectual disabilities.

Keywords: Intellectual disability, disability, maternal mental health, perceived social support, general mental symptoms, visual memory