Chapter 74
Struggles of a Child with ID and Their Family Members:
The Child's and Their Family's Difficulties and Factors Affecting Their Well-Being

Aili Hanim Hashim
University Malaya, Malaysia

Manveen Kaur Sachdev
University Malaya, Malaysia

Norharlina Bahar
Selayang Hospital, Malaysia

Wan Salwina Wan Ismail
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

There are many children with intellectual disability (ID) in recent years. The increase in numbers reflects the knowledge regarding the issue, thus creating awareness and increased detection for children for any developmental delay. Consequently, medical services are seeing and treating younger cohorts. Their disability may be mild to moderate, making it difficult even for medical professionals to identify these children. Invariably all parents want to have healthy, intelligent, and capable children who can achieve independence and a successful life. The reality is that parents having children with ID often struggle to understand what is happening with their child, what more how to cope with and help their child. Added to their distress is that even professionals dealing with the children and their family have various ideas and beliefs regarding this issue. Identifying families who are struggling and offering them the appropriate advice is essential as these families need proper guidance and services for their child.

INTRODUCTION

Though it is difficult to precisely state the prevalence of children with intellectual disabilities (ID) in any country, in reality, there are many more children with ID in recent years. Consequently, the medical services are seeing and treating younger children as the focus is early diagnosis and prompt intervention. However, in many of the children with ID, their disability may be mild to moderate. Thus, making it difficult even for medical professionals to identify these children.

In many societies, intelligence and success are still highly valued, and these two factors are of utmost importance for any individual to gain social standings and respect. Consequently, parenting a child with intellectual disabilities is challenging. Many people misunderstand these children and often blame the parents for not trying hard enough. The truth is that parents of children with ID are themselves unable to understand what is going on with their child, why is their child different and struggling, and what can they do to help their child. The fact is that for many parents, they continue to look for answers.

The child's disabilities pose many challenges for the child, their parents, and siblings. As the disability affects the child's development globally, understandably the child struggles to preform according to their biological age and as well as their healthy functioning peers.

The reality is that parents of these disabled children are themselves unable to grasp what is happening with their child, what more to cope with the child. In truth, many parents struggle firstly to understand what is going on with their child. Then, the parents have many thoughts regarding what to do with the child so that they can perform as the rest of the healthier children, and most importantly be independent.

Then, there are many children with mild ID and are not identified. These children with mild ID are struggling to function well in society, particularly in schools. This group of children is at risk as many of them look normal, and people misunderstand them as not trying hard enough. Additionally, it frustrates their parents as the adults are not aware of the real difficulties, and many adults continue to push the children to excel academically. It is tough for the children to excel or to catch up as ID is about deficits in the child's intellectual functioning and affecting their adaptive functioning and performance.

The chapter discusses problems faced by the children with Intellectual disability, their parents and siblings, including the possible impact on mental health of the family. The chapter will as well discuss the impact of the mental health difficulties in parents and its consequences on their parenting, and vice versa. The chapter highlights the need to recognize parents who are struggling, and what should professionals looked for in their assessment of families with children with intellectual disabilities. Identifying families who are struggling is important as the family environment has an impact on every family members' functioning and, consequently, their mental health.

Professionals working with children with ID and their families must be aware of these issues and additionally, consider their experience, values and attitudes to ensure that they respond appropriately to the children with ID and their families.

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Intelligence or the individual's mental capacity is essential to all humans. Human intelligence is vital for one's mental functioning. We need our intelligence to acquire and apply the knowledge, ideas and consequently develop further and appropriate thoughts, opinions and acquire skills to help us think, ascertain and deal with things around us effectively.

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