

Thesis Title The Relationships of Mothers' Perception,
 Social Supports and Stress Coping Behavior of
 Mothers of Mentally Retarded Children
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ABSTRACT

Mothers of mentally retarded children generally experience stress due to the burden of caring and nurturing their own children. To play mothers' role properly, they search for strategies to cope with stress.

The purpose of this study were to investigate :

1. strategies and level of stress coping behavior -problem-focus or emotion-focus.
2. relationships between stress coping behavior and stress levels.
3. relationships of mothers'demographic variables, perception of mental retardation, social supports and stress coping behaviors.
4. variables that can predict stress coping behavior.

The hypotheses of this study were as follow:

1. problem-focused coping behavior relates negatively with stress levels.
2. emotion-focused coping behavior relates positively with stress levels.
3. mothers' demographic variables relate with both problem-focused coping behavior and emotion-focused coping behavior.
4. mothers' perception to mental retardation relates positively with problem-focused coping behavior and relates negatively with emotion-focused coping behavior.
5. social supports relate positively with both strategies of stress coping behavior.
6. stress coping behavior can be predicted by mothers' demographic variables, mothers' perception of mental retardation and social supports.

Sample in this study consists of 60 mothers of trainable retarded children (6 months to 10 years). Data are collected by interviewing technique.

Major findings were as follows :

1. mothers use both strategies of stress coping behavior but they are more likely to cope with problem-focused behavior.
2. problem-focused coping behavior relates negatively with social supports ($r = -0.22$, $p < .05$), birth order ($r = -0.29$, $p < .05$) and period of mothers' perception of mental retardation ($r = -0.34$, $p < .01$) but relates positively with career satisfaction. ($r = 0.28$, $p < .05$)

3. emotion-focused coping behavior relates negatively with education levels ($r = -0.30, p < .05$), family income ($r = -0.26, p < .05$) and satisfaction to family income ($r = -0.35, p < .01$) but relates positively with stress levels. ($r = 0.42, p < .001$)

4. problem-focused coping behavior is predicted by three significant variables : period of mothers' perception of mental retardation, career satisfaction and social supports. ($F = 5.82, R^2 = 0.24, p < .01$)

5. emotion-focused coping behavior is predicted by satisfaction to family income. ($F = 7.95, R^2 = 0.12, p < .01$)

This study revealed interesting findings, such as mothers of mental retarded children use both strategies in coping with stress-problem-focused and emotion-focused behavior. Emotion-focused behavior, however, appears to relate significantly with high level of stress but the problem-focused behavior does not significantly relate to any level of stress. Therefore, problem-focused coping behavior should be recommended for mothers of retarded children. In addition, it is found that mothers who know and accept the retardation of their children at earlier stage use problem-focused strategy much more. The perception and acceptance of their children at the early stage are recommended for mothers to cope with stress and other problems effectively.