



Comparative Study of Self other Relatedness among the Parents of Intellectually Challenged Children

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Abstract:

*The present study endeavours to cast a glance at Self Other Relatedness in the parents of intellectually challenged children. An ex-post facto research with an exploratory orientation was conducted on 120 parents (60 mothers and 60 fathers) of the intellectually challenged children who were selected through purposive sampling technique from Chetna Institute for the Mentally Handicapped in Lucknow city. They ranged in age from 30-40 years with the mean age of 35 years. The Circle technique developed by **Thrower, Bruce and Walton (1982)** was administered on the subjects. Results revealed that mothers of intellectually challenged children have poor self image for themselves than significant others as compared to fathers of intellectually challenged children.*

Keywords: *Self Other Relatedness, Intellectually Challenged Children, Parents.*

1. Introduction

“Relatedness involves other people an object of desire (as when we need someone to satisfy a particular need) but relatedness also serves as a context for the experience of the self” (Josselson, 1996).

Every individual is primarily related with self and this relation between individual and self decides how one would relate to others. Hence, self other relatedness is developed as a process of interaction and experience with others.

With references to self other relatedness it can be said that the most fundamental relationship is with one's own self. How one relates to one's own self determines as to how one relates with others. Thus, relationship forms the essence of one's life. Ironically, there has been dearth of literature focusing relationship of parents of intellectually challenged children.

This is with special reference to parents of intellectually challenged children where the world is full of relationships which reflect only rejection and in the period of stress, emotional, physical and psychological disturbances they feel helplessness and withdrawal from society.

Being aware of the fact that none of the parents are responsible for the birth of an intellectually challenged child, in fact, many factors are responsible for the same such as genetic, prenatal, perinatal illnesses and injuries, postnatal causes, environmental factors, biological, etc. Therefore, parenting an intellectually challenged child is the most challenging and stressful job on earth, a parent can come across in a life. As intellectually challenged children are yet not accepted by the society. They are still considered to be stigma in our society. Due to this, parents feel more stressed, emotionally disturbed and faces lots of challenges in their day to day life. Here, it seems strange but it is true that just an understanding, respect, love and support getting from others and society can help the parents.

There is a paucity of work with especial reference to self and self – other relatedness among parents of intellectually challenged children. The need of the hour is not just to add more empirical studies on

the problems of parents with intellectually challenged children but to stretch a hand out to them for more positivity of their well – being with the help of relationship warmth support. Hence, this intruded the researcher to pick up the present study whatever scanty literature was available by (Ravindranadan et.al, 2008; Upadhyaya & Havalappanavar, 2008) who reported that parents of intellectually challenged children definitely face more difficulties than parents of normal children, which in turn affect their quality of life and well being. While reviewing the literatures, some questions came in researcher’s mind – How do they perceive themselves in their life space? How significant other influence their life? How do they relate to the world outside? Is there any relationship between their self and significant others? Since it is impossible to answer all the above questions in one study, an attempt has been made to answer some of them in the present study.

2. Method

2.1 Sample

Sample for the present study was purposively selected. It consisted of 120 parents (60 mothers and 60 fathers) of the intellectually challenged children from Chetna Institute for the Mentally Handicapped in Lucknow city. They ranged in age from 30-40 years with the mean age of 35 years.

2.2 Nature of Study

It was an Ex – post facto research with an exploratory orientation.

2.3.Tool

2.3.1 Circle Technique

It was developed by **Thrower, Bruce and Walton (1982)**. It explores the relationship dynamics and systems with the help of circle drawings illustrated in a graphic form. It serve as a rich source of information concerning family dynamics and interpersonal relations (self and significant others).

2.4 Data Analysis

Data obtained were analyzed on the following six dimensions and percentage were completed –

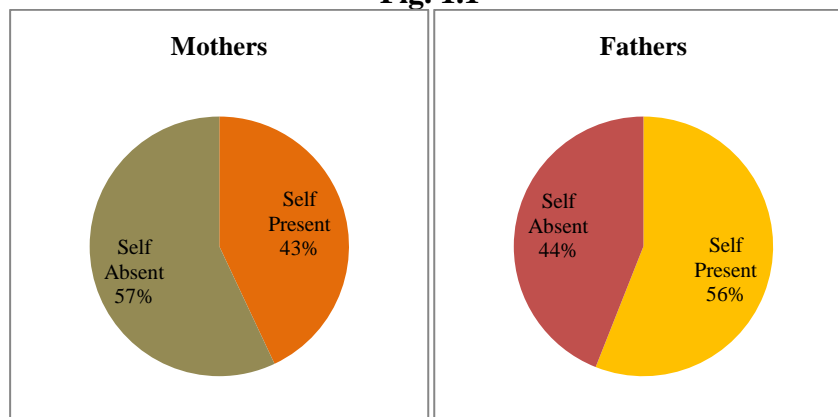
1. Presence of Self
2. Centrality of Self
3. Size of Self
4. Most Dominant Person
5. Significant others emerged in life space
6. Type of Relationship

3. Results and Discussion

A cursory glance at the data brought to the fore interesting results.

1. Presence of Self

Fig. 1.1



In life space, the presence of self is perceived as an indicator of the developed self concept. As depicted in fig. 1.1, 43% of mothers of intellectually challenged children have a developed self

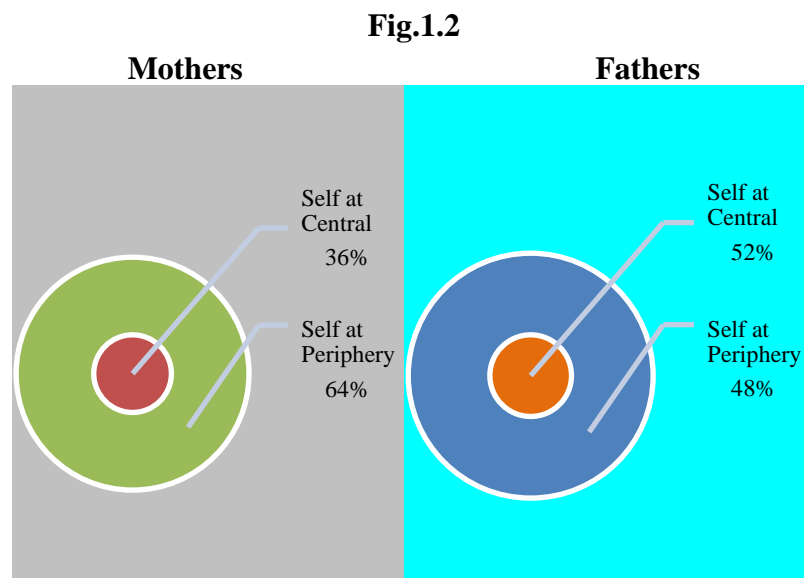
concept whereas, 57% of mothers did not have a developed self concept which indicated by absence of self in the life space.

On the other hand, 56% of fathers of intellectually challenged children have a developed self concept whereas, 44% of fathers did not have.

This result denotes denial of self in one's life space. Majority of mothers do not want to recognize their self because they feel low self – esteem as compared to fathers. This finding was also supported by **Perkins et.al., (2002)** who found that mothers tends to have lower self esteem as a result of having an intellectually challenged child.

A probable reason could be that mothers viewed themselves as more negatively, less productive so that's why they feel their self is neglected, abandoned and deserted in real life also.

1. Centrality of Self: This dimension pertains to the position of self in the life space of a person. Placement of self at central point shows extend of control one has in his/her life. Contrary to it placement at periphery reveals inadequacy and insignificant of self.



As fig. 1.2 depicts that only 36% of mothers of intellectually challenged children have placed themselves at the central point in comparison to 64% of mothers where self is placed at periphery.

On the other side, 52% of fathers of intellectually challenged children have placed themselves at the central point whereas, 48% of fathers' self are placed at periphery.

This result was also supported by **Rousso, (1984)** who found that parents perceived themselves as generally inadequate with respect to self.

A probable reason could be that consumption of alcohol depends upon the individual willing power. If one has weak will power and low self respect, he tends to become alcoholic.

2. Size of Self:

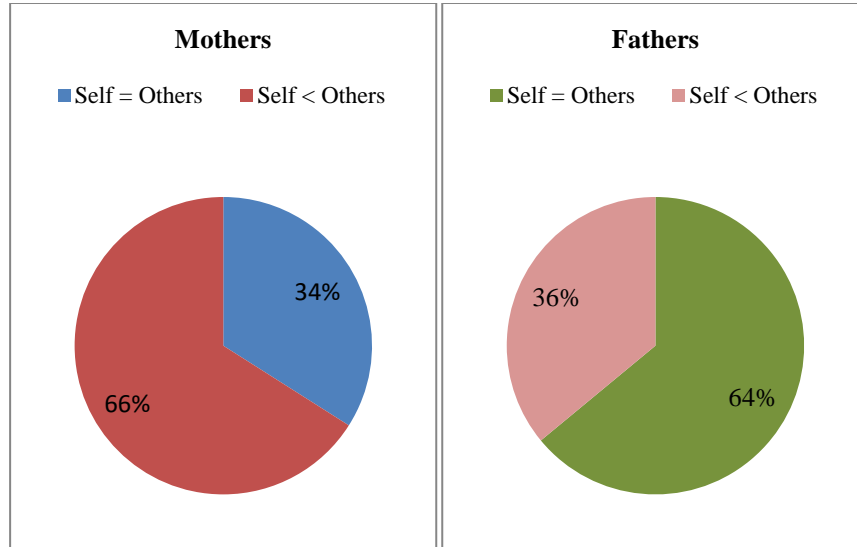


Fig.1.3

The above fig. 1.3 connotes the dominance of self in relation of others. Three categories are generally emerged – “Self smaller than others”, “Self bigger than others”, “Self equal to others”.

Fig 1.3 depicts that in the present study 66% of mothers of intellectually challenged children revealed self smaller than other, adding to the perception of self as small, weak, insignificant and of course rejected whereas, 34% of fathers perceived their self smaller than others.

This may be the reason that mother’s self-competence may also be more related to the parenting role than father’s, and therefore, mothers may be more vulnerable when stress and difficulties arise in the parenting domain (Olsson & Hwang, 2001).

3. Most Dominant Person: Dominant person is one who is valued most in one’s life space.

Fig.1.4

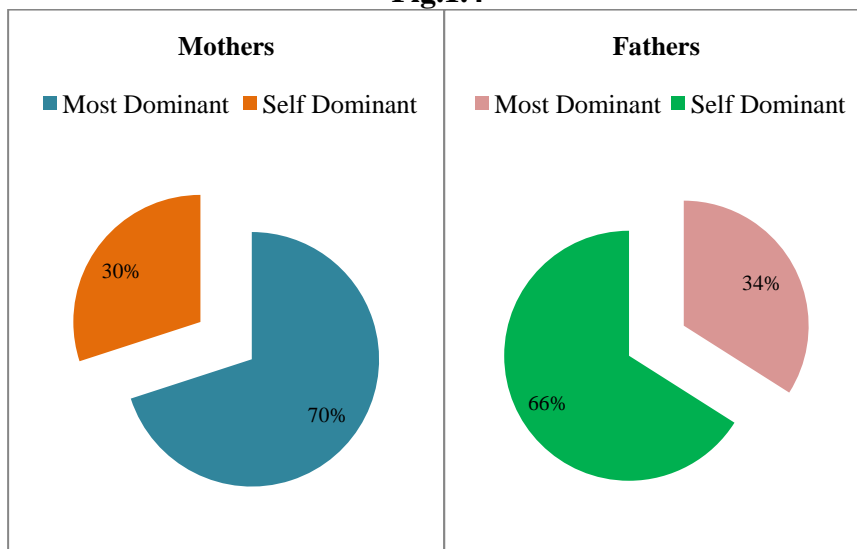


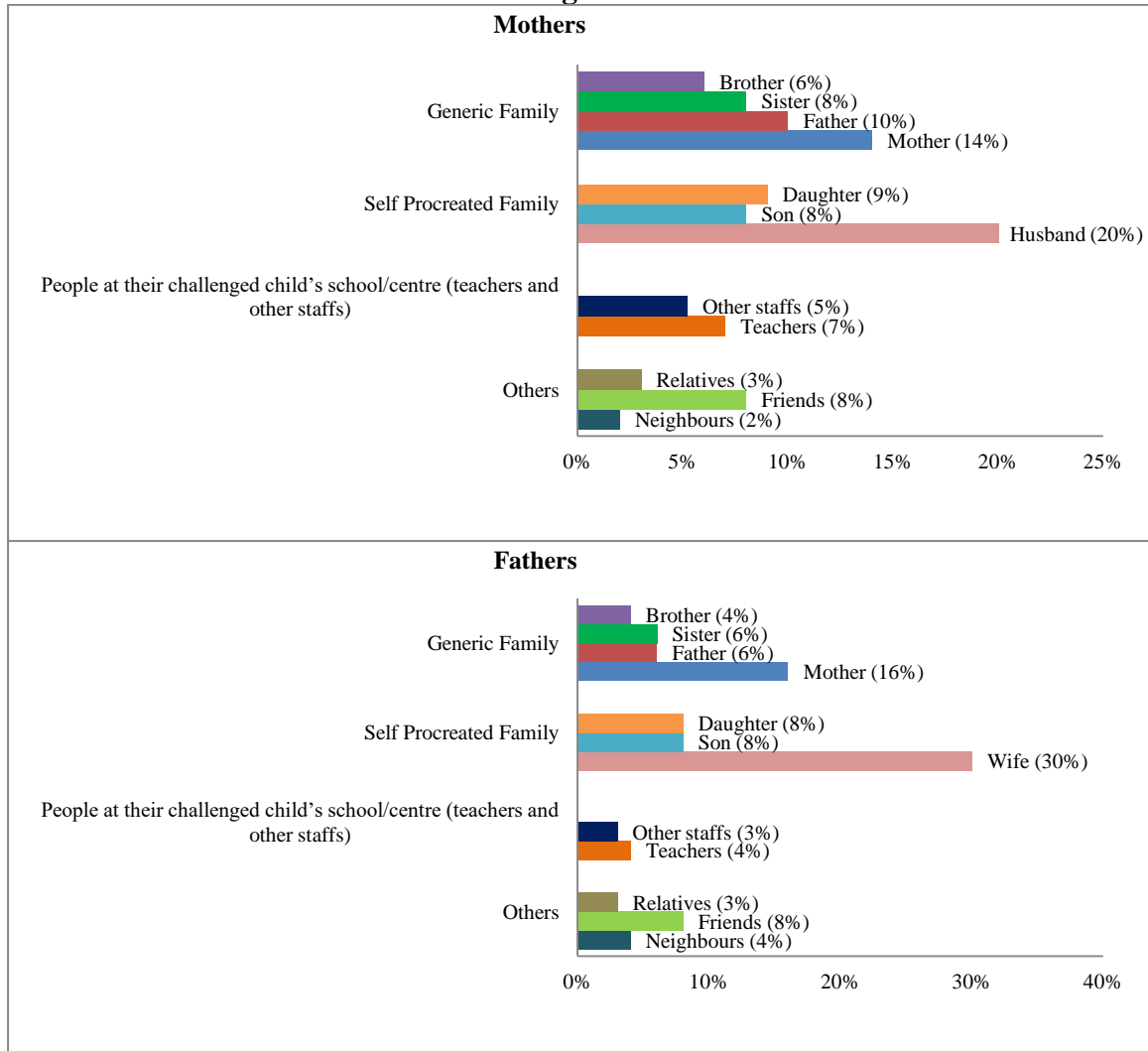
Fig. 1.4 makes it evident that 70% of mothers of intellectually challenged children showed other’s dominant whereas, only 34% of fathers reported the same. This portraying adds inadequacy and feeling of inferiority towards self.

A probable reason could be that it’s believable that others have avoided to intellectually challenged children and their parents but despite the fact that parents valued significant others most in their life space.

4. Number of Significant others emerged in life space – This dimension indicates a kind of emotional support which is perceived from significant others. On this dimension four categories emerged which were as follows:

- Generic Family (mother, father, brother)
- Self procreated family (wife, son, daughter)
- People at their challenged child’s school/centre (teachers and other staffs)
- Others (relatives, friends, neighbours)

Fig.1.5



Data revealed that in mothers highest incidence was received by their husband (20%) and after that for their biological mother (14%). The same result was found with respect to fathers who get the highest emotional support from their wife (30%) and their biological mother (16%). This result shows that they get more emotional support from their spouses and mothers than others.

This was supported by Neidenthal et.al, (2006) and Wilson et.al, (2008) found that women are stereotypically more emotional and men are angrier.

This may be the reason that females are more emotional and sensitive than males. So that’s why female members of the family gave more emotional and mental support to parents of intellectually challenged children than male members.

5.Type of Relationship – Thrower, Bruce and Walton (1982) have given four category of relationships:

- Fused / Enmeshed (boundaries between self and significant others are not clear)
- Emotionally Divorced (self and significant others are emotionally separated and distant)
- Single Dominated (concentration of power on a single person)
- Double Dominated (power at two parallel levels)