Title: Parenting Children with Intellectual Disability, Does Socioeconomic Status Matter?

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Introduction: Raising children is a challenging task, and when the child has a neurodevelopmental disorder the challenge is even greater. Although there are few studies about parenting children with intellectual disabilities (ID), most studies have focused in the emotional difficulties and the stress levels related with having a child with ID (e.g., Hassall, Rose, & McDonald, 2005). Research that has focused in parenting practices and attitudes has shown that there is a tendency to overprotection and inconsistency in establishing limits and norms (Manjarrés, 2012; Peralta, 2008), as well as less sensitivity to the child’s needs (Fenning, Baker, Baker & Crnic, 2007). In addition, it has been found that parents tend to promote less autonomy (Woolfson & Grant, 2006; Torres & López, 2013). Less is known about how social and contextual variables can influence the parental attitudes and practices when raising a child with ID, and if these kinds of variables can minimize the stress levels of the parents. Research has shown that contextual variables like having a secure and strong relationship between the parents, with mutual support and concern, strong feelings of personal reward associated with parenting, good communication with family members, and perceiving good levels of social support, can affect the positive coping behaviors of the family (Wai-Ping Li-Tsang, Kwai-Sang Yau, & Kong Yuen, 2001). Regarding social factors that can impact parenting a child with ID, research has shown that variables such as the cultural and socioeconomic level of the family, the presence of other children, and the severity of the disability can influence the parenting practices and beliefs of parents of children with intellectual disability (e.g., Arango, Aparicio, & Tenorio, 2018; Blacher, Neece, & Paczkowski, 2005).

Method: The present study explored parenting attitudes of primary carers of children and adolescents with ID and the relation for these attitudes with the family’s Socioeconomic Status (SES). The main carers (n=167, including mothers, fathers and grandparents) of children and adolescents with intellectual disability between 4 and 15 years of age, answered the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (Gerard, 1994). SES was determined according to the family’s income and divided in high, medium and low SES.

Results: Our results show differences between the three SES groups in the Satisfaction with parenting, Autonomy, and Role orientation scales of the PCRI, in favor of high SES in all variables.

Discussion: Our results suggest that there could be some cultural characteristics associated with SES in how raising a child with ID is perceived and the attitudes related to parenting. Also, the negative emotions and the high stress levels that previous studies have shown with this population could be related with our results. We discuss some possible implications of our results for the professionals working with these families and for the parenting interventions developed with them.

References:


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