



SOCIO-ECONOMIC CRISIS OF THE MOTHERS OF SPECIAL CHILDREN DURING COVID-19: A REFLECTIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Apart from emotional impacts on the mothers of special children there is severe socio-economic stress on them especially those belonging to poor or lower middle-class strata of the society. Though organizations are engaged to better the life of persons of disables but their social life of parents does have unseen fears which are far away from all the made efforts. This study is the outcome of the reflections of twenty families under socio-economic burden because of the disabilities of their children aging from three to fifteen years having physical or other disabilities but despite all parental care and attention life is becoming social, economic and psychological challenge for them due to Pandemic COVID-19. The results, based on open ended questions, of the study present socio-economic worries of the mothers of the special children. Hence, the study suggests that special endowment fund be generated for such families having children with disabilities to extend socio-economic relief to the economically stressed parents for the physical and intellectual development of their special children.

Keywords: Special children, mothers, poor families, socio-economic burden

JEL Codes: D1, J12

I. INTRODUCTION

It is important to note that according to (Zuurmond et al., 2016), the world report with regard to disabilities is approximately 15% of the total population of the world and by furthering their statement they say that out of the estimated 93 million children there are zero- 14 years' aged children have either average or severe disability. Families always play a vital role in the life of each and every individual across globe which provide a sigh of relief for those children who are to enter in their academic or professional life. In other words, they are primary push and support without which even a person with string nerves stumbles in a society which is a stage to demonstrate their learnt knowledge and skills. But, life becomes harsh for children who have physical or mental disabilities in an economically de-stable society like ours and it is rather harder and a big challenge for the mothers of those children who have physical and mental challenges which take birth with them by inviting society members to come for their assistance. (Winarsih et al., 2013), very aptly said that the children having such specials needs do face not timely but very long living problems or challenges whether they are of physical, social or emotional nature as they remain with them through their life on earth and keep on developing as they grow. Families have various qualities that identify with the narratives, constructions and societies of the general public. Numerous conversations on moms and parenthood have been brought up in the writing, underlining the significant job that moms hold in the existence of the youngster as the kid develops (Cole, 2004, Sevón, 2005). The job of a mother is vital in molding the character of the youngster in numerous ways. The mother is the primary individual who the infant experiences and the first to impact and encourage the improvement of the kid and its transformation on the general public (Paroutsas, 2005; Wilson, 2012).

Though (Akbar, 2003), said that presently people have started thinking that all such person with disabilities can be engaged in life routine and could be very much productive for the society if they are properly educated and trained

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but this study aims to focus the mothers of special children pertaining to their socio-economic concerns and anxieties which haunt them like nightmares experienced with open eyes as the children are always before them despite being assisted at special centers but the agony starts when they are back home and need parents with them all the time. Though fathers are also playing significant role in shouldering their responsibilities but it's the mother who, despite being supported by their husbands, cannot live without the thought of probable bleak socio-economic future of their special children.

Keeping in view the problems of special children and their parents the study is conducted with an aim to understand that whether or not there are some other problems for the mothers of the disabled children expect education and, if there are, what is their nature in the recent socio-economic stressed times. Moreover, the study focuses on the reflections of the parents of the children with disabilities in general whereas mothers' in particular by considering the recent price hike, economic stress and societal attitude towards the special children in Lahore. The study is qualitative in nature by having case study design into consideration and has been conducted on twenty parents with a focus on the mothers of special children aging 3-15 years some of which receive education at the centers available for the special children but a majority children are on the mercy of their parents especially who are facing acute physical disability. An open ended interview of the parents was conducted to understand the agonies of the parents especially mothers to know, understand and suggest some recommendations pertaining to the socio-economic and motivational needs required to assist such mothers so that they may take such challenge with courage and emotional strength.

H1: There are other fears of the parents of disabled children than educational in a sociological complex and economically stressed society of Pakistan by focusing on the subjects of Lahore.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The term unique necessities can likewise be utilized to depict handicaps inside a more extensive degree, as clarified by Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), that it covers anything disturbing a person's life capacities, like getting the hang of, talking, strolling, and cooperating with their current circumstance (ADA, 2019). Raising a child is everything except a straightforward endeavor. A parent needs to cut out the chance and energy to raise the child, to be there when he/she grows up and to manage the solicitations and stresses that are involved. A parent who raises a child with an insufficiency should find additional resources for adjust to the specific necessities of that child (Phtiaka, 2007). The primary experience of the child on the planet is with her mom and whenever impaired their gathering conveys implications past understanding as (Maria, Massae., and Maria, 2008) say that the mother fights with her own feelings, opposite and conflicting, first tendency an astoundingly strong physical and energetic severe dislike for the youth, which makes it stunning for her to take part in companionship and care, not having the choice to develop a maternal association and relationship with the child.

There is normally the shock and skepticism on finding that their child is regardless frustrated or obstructed. It is very hard to recognize that this is so. Besides, exceptionally ordinary close to the beginning for gatekeepers to prevent from their contemplations the way that their youth will need extra support and ought to be truly centered around extraordinarily, perhaps for eternity. Some genuine impedances are seen from birth, a couple of children encourage a disorder which produces them, while a couple of impediment are more misleading and little by little become obvious as the young person gets more prepared and shows up at different developmental accomplishments (Curtis, 2008). There is no denying the way that there is a carrier of challenges on their little shoulders which need to carry on for the duration of their lives. Be that as it may, what of individuals who manage these dears; the issues they face in dealing with a child who has handicaps? A gathering of such a child knows despairing, feel sorry for, fear, stress and more love than most families. They understand that each accomplishment, every movement taken toward what's to come is a positive one. What's all the more every movement back, but a hopelessness now and again, is a test to be won the detachment from friends and family, the change of typical and enthusiastic dealings with kinfolk at each troublesome period of life (Shaw, 2009). (Shaw, 2009) facilitates his contention by saying that the issues looked by families with injured young people were more vital than a large number individuals think. Moreover, regardless of whether it's Cerebral Loss of motion, mental obstruction, expulsion, ghastly frontal cortex injury, down condition, or learning ineptitudes. Overseeing and adjusting to the issues that come an adolescent and individuals who care for them reliably can create after some time. It was seen that various families contact their neighborhood workers, kid improvement associations which can help with working with the weight financially for the necessities a youth might require while adjusting to their debilitation. However, the cost is still high and compensations are made by all family members to help with bearing those troublesome events.

Though concerning the discerning forming of prerequisites, gatekeepers faced an unquestionably difficult task. Those were necessities prodding them to act towards additional creating opportunity, certainty through overcoming own real imperfection and oftentimes horrendous social conditions. To help watchmen, one should outfit them with interdisciplinary data on psychosocial conditions awakening people with impedances to go past the limitations of their current possibilities. This ought to be conceivable through fortifying prerequisites. Presented research is an undertaking of interfacing interdisciplinary, mental and enlightening data which is applied by the maker (Konarska, 2010). Maria et al., (2008) step further and uncovered an importance which showed that the family needs help to alter the goals and objectives and to deal with the opinions that arise in the day by day timetable of family experiences with the crippled adolescent. Get that, regarding the mother and the family, the inadequacy in like manner produces conflicting warm gestures for the clinical consideration bunch, who experiences impressions of defeat and of not understanding what to do or the legitimate conduct. In any case the exceptional feature on affiliation control of guards, watchmen consistently experience burdens about expecting a functioning part in their youngster's mentoring and stay ill- suited taking into account school-based cutoff focuses about parent interest nearby lacking joint effort with teachers (Buysse, Wesley, and Keyes, 1998; Epley, Summers, and Turnbull, 2011; Soodak and Erwin, 2000).

In explicit evaluations, guards express that correspondence among guardians and educators is restricted and parent support isn't maintained in youth meld programs (Epley et al., 2011; Lim, 1996). This clearly proposes attracting gatekeepers to defeat the hardships experienced while playing out their situations as collaborators is of most preposterous significance for the youngster to benefit most from youth joining (Purcell et al., 2007; Guralnick, 2011; Senturk and Ali, 2021; Haider and Ali, 2015; Sajid and Ali, 2018; Kassem et al., 2019; Roussel et al., 2021). The everyday life suffers changes on account of the energetic demands and living with the weakened child, which can make conflicts and excited instability. In this sense, I acknowledge clinical orderlies should appreciate the energetic reactions that the mothers' insight and the effects that the child's impediment has on the family, so they can focus on the family (Maria et al., 2008). (Barbosa et al., 2004), assisted it by expressing that being comfortable with the kid's powerlessness is a loathsome experience, which can change the energetic state of the family members. Right when the powerlessness is revealed, the whole family starts a variety battle to recover their balance. But a solitary relative is injured, all are affected and, fairly, disabled by it. (Maria et al., 2008) feel that the mother comprehends that the energetic circumstance made by the child's insufficiency moreover impacts the nearest relatives and that such experience helps the family connection, what accumulates itself towards assisting with giving idea. The mother believes this reality to be a working with solidification mentality toward the debilitated kid in the family.

Finally, it important to consider the findings of the study of McCauley (2010) who in her investigation of the encounters of six guardians of kids determined to have mental imbalance observed guardians experienced extraordinary sensations of misfortune that McCauley depicted as a melancholy response, after their kid was analyzed. She proposed that these sentiments were identified with the way that guardians before the finding was given would have envisioned a life for their normal kid. McCauley contended that the sooner the lamenting system can start the faster the acknowledgment of the kid by the guardians, which thus prompts them looking for fitting help for them as well as their children.

III. FINDINGS

The study kept into consideration the hypothesis that there are other fears of the parents of disabled children than educational in a sociological complex and economically stressed society of Pakistan by focusing on the subjects of Lahore. The broad areas of the study were education, social attitude in an economically stressed society like ours which have been rather doubled by COVID-19 which has almost devastated the shape of the entire globe transforming the social and economic status of the countries and its inhabitants. But, its impacts are severer on the already economically stressed class of the societies and for the people of developing countries like Pakistan has de-shaped the life of millions especially who are having some children with disabilities. We are a country with estimated 220 million people and a large majority is below the poverty line which meet new crisis from dawn to dusk. Socially speaking we still lack an attitude conducive for the welfare of the people with disabilities because of less appropriate education ratio; even the literacy rate is not up to the mark according the international standards. There are training centers, schools for special children and efforts of various organizations but these units could pave way to some children to learn social behavior which could prepare them live in the society but question arises about the people who are even unable to send their special children to such schools or places; these are the people who remain alien on this planet because of the attitude of their own kin and kith which normally seen in our social set up.

Some of the reflections of the subject mothers are heart touching when they said that their special children are not accepted by the normal children of their own families as they have to face highly derogatory remarks irrespective of the relation they have with them. The children with disability are only left with tears and these are not the tears of those of have some disability but of their mothers because these are the mothers who have to stay with them. The fathers are mostly away from domestic scene to ensure bread and butter for the day and all day emotional but concrete instances are to be faced by the mothers of the special child leaving a lot to sigh. For instance, some of the mothers reflected on the future of such children by saying that who will look after them if they pass away. This is no irony of fate for them but a complete and established comment on the overall attitude of the society which itself is facing irreparable socio-economic loss. Life means activity but the subjects' life appears that their activity is only restricted to look after the children with disabilities whereas the normal ones are also ignored as we see that there is a family which has two male special children and one female normal. It is not surprising to know that the normal female child herself has become second mother for her brothers and bolsters responsibilities which are primarily done by the mother in the absence of father who has to work as beast of burden to ensure their existence till the time of their departure comes. While answering the role of the daughter the father's remarks were: "*What will happen to us when she is married?*".

This is not only a one liner statement but a comprehensive judgement on the social approach of the society and also on the life of haves and have nots. Today when every nation is running after technological advancement we have millions of people who are least concerned with such ideas but are only worried about their dismal present and bleak future because of the societal norms where educational all opened for special children but almost no training is available for the normal people to amend their attitude towards the children with disabilities and their parents so that there could be behavioral equity in the society like ours. Similarly, some the others responded that it's hard for their disabled children to have empathetic attitude of the nearby people as a majority subjects reside in the poor housing areas of the city. Even, couple of families, living in a bit privileged area, have almost the same opinions regarding people's attitude towards special children and hence, somehow they avoid social gatherings because of such conduct of the people around them.

The second aspect of our hypothesis is of economic nature which determines the living style of every individual on earth. Currently, the economies of the world facing economic crunch due to COVID-19 and consistent price hike has generated severity in the life of those who are already stressed and work double to meet their both ends. In a situation like this the parents, having one or two disable children, are no more than machines with no emotions but the results of the study convey some different aspects of life to us; a bleak present and future of the disabled children. The subjects feel that even the life of the normal children has become very difficult then what will happen to their special children who are and will be, by all means, constant economic burden on them. A majority said: "*Their disabled children cannot live on their own; how would they be able to look after us when we grow old!*"_A majority subject mothers are more effected as their husbands have to go for double shift to earn more because of the regular price hike and their work is also doubled since they have to face troubles of their special children more because of the psychological loneliness in the absence of their husbands who somehow assist to look after the children along with their spouses but today's economic stress has dragged them to a world of many unseen fears. Our family system is generally based on the concept that children look after their parents when they get retired and it has been observed that mostly it happens so. On the other hand, the fears of the subjects are justified because they are living an absolutely unguaranteed present with an un-predictable future. This raises many questions on the economic policies of the governments which might have done a lot but without analyzing the possible economic problems of all segments of the society out of which the parents of special children carry maximum weightage because they are not parents one or two disabled children but parents of the future of the society who if not properly looked after could generate more economic problems.

The third aspect of the study hypothesis is related with psychology of the parents of the special children which, in light of the responses/reflections of the study, are more troublesome as majority subject families, especially mothers, are dragging them sort psychological patients and are making them beg. In that case it is significant to write that there's less ratio of special children in the world, as has been reflected in the study, whose parents could easily be looked after by devising viable plans for the welfare of not only the special children but parents as well. The reflections of the subject mothers are more heart touching than fathers because it's the mother who plays a vital role in the life of children. She is teacher, a mentor and shaper of the life her children but when socially neglected, economically stresses she will not be able to lay even a single role. Hence, we are in a position to say that our

hypothesis is proved that there are other fears of the parents of disabled children than educational in a sociological complex and economically stressed society like ours.

IV. CONCLUSION

After filtering the reflections of the subjects the study concludes that life of the parents, having special children, with low income is becoming harder and harder day by day which demands drastic governmental interference to boost the economic stature of such families so that through the economic assistance the special children through socially and economically balanced parents could be trained in such a way that they may not become permanent socio-economic burden on their parents and be able to make efforts for their physical and intellectual development. Based on findings, this study has following suggestions.

1. Government should work not only for the welfare of the special children but also for their parents.
2. There must some endowment fund in each Tehsil of Pakistan which should be utilized for socially and economically stressed parents having special child or children.
3. There must be at least one course in all school, college and university academic programs which may contain ethics and training aspects for normal people telling how to deal with special persons.
4. There must be some efforts by the Government at Tehsil level to collect data of such mothers having special children so that special social and economic care be given to them.
5. A handsome chunk of baitulmal must be allocated for the welfare of special children and their parents especially who belong to low income class.

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