

A Case Study :

## A study of attitude of mothers of mentally challenged children involved and uninvolved in the special education programme of their children

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The study was conducted to find out the attitude of mothers of mentally challenged children who are involved and uninvolved in the special education programme of their children. Forty mothers (twenty involved and twenty are uninvolved in the special education programme) were selected from three schools for special children in Chennai. The attitude of mothers was measured and the mean and SD of the data obtained were calculated. t- test was also used to find the significance of variance between involved and un-involved mothers of mentally challenged children on the attitude variables. The results of the study indicated that mothers who were involved in the special education of their mentally challenged children had a more positive attitude towards the handicapped condition of their children than the mothers who were un-involved.

The birth of a child is usually an anticipated event. Parents are excited and have expectations about what the child would look like, whom the child would resemble etc. There are many factors that contribute to the normal development of a child – the parental care, attitude of significant people and availability of stimulating environment.

The birth of an exceptional child can shatter the dreams of parents and can leave them feeling shocked, guilty, bitter, angry and ashamed. Rice and Norman (1995) studied families with an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) child. The results showed that the course of family adjustment to the ADHD child is difficult and long term and all family members are affected. Higher than normal levels of stress was reported by parents. An exceptional child is different in some

way from the ‘average’ youngster. Such a special child may have problems or special talents in thinking, seeing, hearing, speaking, socializing or moving. This child may have a combination of special abilities and disabilities. They need special education and related services if they are to realize their full human potential. The exceptional children may be mentally challenged, gifted, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, physically challenged, or may have disordered speech or language, impaired hearing or impaired sight. Parents of such children can have mixed attitudes towards their children. Biberfeld (1983) studied the attitudes of Jewish mothers towards their mentally retarded children and reported that mothers of mentally retarded children had a negative attitude towards their normal children. Various studies have shown that parents have a negative attitude toward their moderately retarded children. Mental retardation generally refers to substantial limitations in present levels of functioning reflected in delayed intellectual growth and is manifested in inappropriate or immature reactions to one’s environment and below average performance in the academic, physical, linguistic and social domains. Special education means specially designed instruction that meets the unique needs of an exceptional child. Special materials, teaching techniques, equipments or facilities may be required.

Limitations in any domain make it very difficult for individuals to cope with the demands they encounter each day. The severity of the condition ranges from mild difficulties to such profound limitations that the person so involved is nearly totally dependent upon others for basic needs.

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