

## **Perceived Challenges Facing Parents in Managing Children with Intellectual Disability**

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### ***Abstract***

*Intellectual disability in children create fears, challenges and worries to those who have contact with them, particularly the parent. It therefore requires adequate management skills when handling them. Based on this, the study investigates perceived challenges parents face in managing children with intellectual disability. Descriptive research design was used for the study. Fifty (50) parents of children with intellectual disability were purposefully selected. An instrument titled perceived challenge questionnaire was used ( $r=0.75$ ). One research question was raised and one hypothesis was stated at 0.05 level of significant. Data gathered were analyzed using mean and t-test. The finding of the study revealed that the following are the challenges parents encounter when managing children with intellectual disability; financial stress, lack of social life, depression, physical exhaustion, discrimination, psychological problem and reduced quality of life. The findings also showed that there is no significant difference on perceived challenges faced by parents in managing children with intellectual disability based on gender ( $p>0.05$ ). It was concluded that parents are facing many challenges when managing children with intellectual disability. Therefore, it was recommended that stakeholders should come to their aid by assisting them in any form.*

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**Keywords:** *Children with intellectual disability, Parent, Challenges and management*

## Introduction

**D**isability is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations and participation restriction. Impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Managing children with disabilities require high level of knowledge of resources, information and services especially children with intellectual disability.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO, 2015); Intellectual Disability (ID) means a significant reduction in ability to understand new or complex information and to learn and apply new skills (impaired intelligence). This results in a reduced ability to cope independently. Wong (2012) also stated that, intellectual disability refers to a condition which is marked by subnormal intellectual functioning and adjustment difficulties which occur before a person is eighteen years of age. Children with intellectual disability are one of the most marginalised and excluded groups of children experiencing widespread violations of their rights. Despite the obligation in the convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities are provided with equal access to and quality of health care, their access to health care services is often limited, leading to health inequalities unconnected to disabilities.

The presence of a child with intellectual disability in the family has far reaching implication for the whole family; when parents learn that their child has a intellectual disability, they begin a journey that takes them into a life that is often filled with strong emotions, difficult choices, interactions with many different professionals and services. The impact of disability and problems associated with it is not restricted to the child but extend far beyond the child and affects the whole family; parents as the main caregiver play a vital role in caring for and managing children with intellectual disability including children and adolescents. Presence of behavioral problems in these children is a serious concern for most parents. It produces variant forms of challenges for them including social, emotional, economic and physical challenges. Some parents are ashamed to participate in social functions with their child with LD. Even though, some parents cope well and get adjusted to their situations but some cannot cope better. The childhood period can be a challenging time for all parents; however, parents of children with intellectual disability experience or encounter series of challenging while managing them.

It is important for any child to be healthy and free from any disabilities. Many children may face life with physical or mental disabilities that deprives them of a normal childhood (Wong, 2012). Children with disability are particularly vulnerable to health problems and experience difficulties in meeting their health care needs. Having a child with intellectual disability in a family is perceived in different ways and creates uncertainty for parents, some family members and the community at large. It is important that health care providers have an in-depth understanding of the experience encountered by these parents. Learning the challenges they face in caring and managing these children is the first step in identifying ways to improve support for such caregivers. Intellectual disability is a condition of arrested or incomplete development of the mind characterised by impairment of skills and overall intelligence in areas such as cognitive, language, motor and social abilities.

For that reason, providing care and managing children with intellectually disability poses a lot of challenges for some parents.

Parents of children with intellectual disability often face great sadness, fear, worry and more while managing them, they have to cope with the problems that come with managing them. Sometimes, these problems often leave the parents with mixture of emotions they have to hide and sometimes cannot share with anyone. Managing a child with intellectual disability often means that a parent has to automatically change and adjust his/her craving, hobbies and goals in life to suit the needs of their child. Most times, they have to deal with the way people look at and accept their child's condition, which most time is not acceptable to these parents. Their children with disability are sometimes discriminated against and maltreated without love by the society. This attitude towards such children could lead to the withdrawal of these children and their caregivers from taking part in activities and social events which makes these children and their parents depressed, weak, and excluded from society at large to the detriment of their well-being and society, children that are discriminated against cannot actualise and would be unable to contribute their quota to the development of their nation (Clever and Herna, 2017). Parents of children with LD are often worried because such disabilities might affect the children's development, functions and activities, thereby making such children depend so much on their parents for adequate care and management. Such children can also be stigmatised among peers, which affect them and their parents emotionally and psychologically (Abosi, 2007; Clever and Herna, 2017).

Grobler (2012) provides a quick overview of some of the challenges faced by parents in looking after children with disabilities. She mentions constant subjection to a guilty feeling that they may be directly responsible for the disability through genetics, stressful moments while pregnant or abuse of alcohol. In addition to basic needs that must be fulfilled by their parents, children with disabilities may also need special facilities and services for their well-being. Parents of children with disabilities may therefore experience physical exhaustion and emotional stress as children with learning disabilities require extra attention

The findings of this study revealed that parenting and managing children with intellectual disability can be very stressful and have various challenges such as; psychological, social, physical and economical challenges. Intellectual disability places a severe burden on the individual and the family, this involves assistance in carrying out activities of daily living and self-care, all evidence points towards a substantial burden caused by this condition. Financial pressure appears to be the most prevailing challenge faced by parent while managing these children. Some financial burdens are placed on the parents as a result of caring for their disabled children. The fact that most of them have no support from the government and social societies makes their job of managing their children with intellectual disability very difficult. Previous studies by Lecavalier, et al, (2006); Skelly and Rohleder (2011) reported that financial stress/pressure is one of the major challenges faced by parents in managing children with intellectual disability, as there is generally lack of resources from government and other external organisations. On this note, the present study investigated perceived challenges facing parents in managing children with intellectual disability.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Children with intellectual disability are those who find it difficult to remember things, have trouble in understanding rules and learn to talk later or have trouble in speaking. These characteristics may not only affect their academics, but also their lives. Some of them also have difficulty in socialising with their peers and the society. This affects their vocational skills which could deprive them of expressing their feelings, what they know and what they can do and being self-reliant. All these can be challenging their parents while managing them. Based on this, the study investigated the perceived challenges parents face when managing children with intellectual disability.

**Research question:** What are the perceived challenges parents face in managing children with intellectual disability?

**Hypothesis:** There is no significant difference in the perceived challenges faced by parents in managing children with intellectual disability based on gender.

### **Methodology**

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Fifty parents of children with intellectual disability were purposefully selected school and home for children with intellectual in Ijebu Ode local government area. Perceived challenges questionnaire was the instruments used for the study. The questionnaire was constructed by the researchers and it contains section A and section B, section A measures the demographic data such as gender while section B contains 10 items with response choices of 4-point likert scale: Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly disagree (SD), it was validated using test-re-test and a co-efficient of 0.75 was obtained. The researchers then administered the questionnaires and collected them back on the spot. The data gathered were analysed using mean and standard deviation for the research question while hypothesis was analysed using t-test.

### **Result**

**Research Question:** What are the perceived challenges facing parents in managing children with intellectual disability?

**Table 1: Table showing the perceived challenges facing parents in managing children with intellectual disability**

| S/N | Item   | SA       | A        | D        | SD     | Mean | Rank            |
|-----|--|----------|----------|----------|--------|------|-----------------|
| 1   | Parents of children with intellectual disability experience lack of social life in managing their children | 13(26.0) | 27(45.1) | 7(14.0)  | 4(8.0) | 3.0  | 2 <sup>ND</sup> |
| 2   | Molestation is one of the challenges facing parents of children with intellectual disability               | 6(12.0)  | 21(42.0) | 21(42.0) | 2(4.0) | 2.6  | 9 <sup>TH</sup> |
| 3   | I do have psychological problem when am managing my ward with intellectual disability                      | 36(72.0) | 5(10.0)  | 714.0    | 2(4.0) | 2.9  | 6 <sup>TH</sup> |
| 4   | Financial stress is major challenge I face when managing my child with intellectual disability             | 24(48.0) | 19(38.0) | 6(12.0)  | 1(2.0) | 3.3  | 1 <sup>ST</sup> |
| 5   | I do feel depressed all the time because of my child with intellectual disability                          | 9(18.0)  | 34(68.0) | 6(12.0)  | 1(2.0) | 3.0  | 2 <sup>ND</sup> |
| 6   | When managing children with intellectual disability, physical exhaustion is a challenge                    | 9(18.0)  | 32(64.0) | 8(16.0)  | 1(2.0) | 3.0  | 2 <sup>ND</sup> |
| 7   | I do experience discrimination because of my child with intellectual disability                            | 9(18.0)  | 32(64.0) | 8(16.0)  | 1(2.0) | 3.0  | 2 <sup>ND</sup> |
| 8   | Reduced in quality of life is a challenge experience in managing children with intellectual disability     | 2(4.0)   | 32(63.0) | 15(30.0) | 1(2.0) | 2.7  | 7 <sup>TH</sup> |
| 9   | We do feel rejection from social gathering   | 7(14.0)  | 19(38.0) | 23(46.0) | 1(2.0) | 2.6  | 9 <sup>TH</sup> |
| 10  | I feel neglected all the time  | -        | 36(72.0) | 13(26.0) | 1(2.0) | 2.7  | 7 <sup>TH</sup> |

Note: The figures in parentheses are in percentages

Table 1 shows the perceived challenges facing parents in managing children with intellectual disability. The following shows the perceived challenges facing parents in managing children with intellectual disability as follows: financial stress (3.3), lack of social life (3.0), depression (3.0), physical exhaustion (3.0), discrimination (3.0), psychological problem (2.9), reduced quality of life (2.7), neglect (2.7), rejection from social gathering (2.6) and molestation (2.6). The weighted mean was 2.9, which mean that calculated mean was greater than fixed mean (2.5). This implies that all the items are the challenges parents faced when managing children with intellectual disability but financial stress, lack of social life, depression, physical exhaustion and discrimination top the ranking

**Ho1:** There is no significant difference on the perceived challenges faced by parents in managing children with intellectual disability based on gender.

**Table 2: Summary of t test result showing the perceived challenges faced by parents in managing children with intellectual disability based on gender**

|                      | Gender | N  | Mean  | STD  | T    | F    | Df | Sig  | Decision |
|----------------------|--------|----|-------|------|------|------|----|------|----------|
| Perceived Challenges | Male   | 19 | 28.00 | 3.74 |      |      |    |      |          |
|                      | Female | 31 | 29.45 | 4.83 | 2.63 | 1.19 | 48 | 0.27 | Not Sig  |

Table 2 showed the summary of t-test result showing that there is no significant difference on the perceived challenges faced by parents in managing children with intellectual disability based on gender. It was revealed that male parents of children with intellectual disability had mean score 28.00 and standard deviation 3.74 while female parents of children with intellectual disability had mean score 29.45 and standard deviation 4.83, the t was 2.63, degree of freedom 48, F was 1.19 and significant level of 0.27 ( $P>0.05$ ). This implies that there was no significant difference on the perceived challenges faced by parents in managing children with intellectual disability based on gender. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference no significant difference on the perceived challenges faced by parents in managing children with intellectual disability based on gender was not rejected.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The finding of the study revealed that parents faced the challenges the challenges of financial stress, lack of social life, depression, physical exhaustion and discrimination among others in managing their wards with intellectual disability, the reason could be that the society are not encouraging in term of managing children with disability. This finding is in line with the findings of Lecavalier, et al, (2006); Skelly and Rohleder (2011) who found out that financial stress is one of the challenges faced by parents in managing children with intellectual disability. Grobler (2012) revealed that physical exhaustion, discrimination and emotional stress are challenges parents faced when managing them. The second finding of the study shows that there was no significant difference on the perceived challenges faced by parents in managing children with intellectual disability based on gender.

### **Conclusion**

This study revealed that, parents of intellectually disabled experience various psychological and emotional, social, economic and physical challenges while managing their children with intellectual disability. Professional assistance, public awareness of intellectual disability in children, social support from government, private sector and non-organization are important for addressing these challenges.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the results of the present study, the following recommendations are suggested

1. Government and Non government organization should come to parents of children with intellectual disability aids by providing adequate support in managing their wards.
2. Seminar should be provided for parents of children with intellectual disability on various ways of managing children with ID.

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