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## Role of socio-economic status on psychological well-being among parents of intellectually disabled children

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### Abstract

Parenting a child with intellectual disabilities (ID) poses unique challenges that can significantly impact the psychological well-being of parents. This systematic review aims to explore the role of socio-economic status (SES) in influencing the psychological well-being of parents with intellectually disabled children. The review analyzes existing research articles that investigate the relationship between SES and parental psychological well-being, including measures of stress, depression, anxiety, and overall mental health. The findings highlight the complex interplay between SES factors and parental well-being, shedding light on the importance of addressing socio-economic disparities to support the mental health of parents with intellectually disabled children.

This study aimed to investigate the psychological well-being of parents who have intellectually disabled children, with a focus on how socio-economic status (SES) influences their well-being. The psychological well-being of parents plays a crucial role in providing optimal care and support for their children with intellectual disabilities. However, the impact of SES on parental psychological well-being in this context remains underexplored.

The findings of the study indicated that parents from different socio-economic backgrounds exhibited varying levels of psychological well-being. Parents with higher SES showed higher levels of well-being compared to those with lower SES. Factors such as financial stability, educational attainment, and access to support services appeared to contribute significantly to the differences in well-being among parents. Furthermore, the study revealed that parents with higher SES had better access to resources, including specialized educational programs, therapeutic interventions, and support networks, which positively influenced their well-being. On the other hand, parents with lower SES faced numerous challenges, including limited financial resources, inadequate access to services, and higher levels of stress, which negatively impacted their psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** Socio-economic status, psychological well-being, parents, intellectually disabled children, stress, depression, anxiety, mental health

### Introduction

This section introduces the topic of parenting children with intellectual disabilities and the potential impact of socio-economic status on the psychological well-being of parents. It provides an overview of the unique challenges faced by parents of intellectually disabled children and the importance of understanding how socio-economic factors may influence their mental health.

The well-being of parents with intellectually disabled children is an important area of study, as it directly affects the overall quality of life for both parents and their children. This article aims to explore the psychological well-being of parents of intellectually disabled children, with a specific focus on how socio-economic status influences their experiences. By examining the impact of intellectual disabilities on parents' well-being and the role of socio-economic factors, we can gain valuable insights into the challenges faced by these parents and identify strategies to provide effective support. Understanding the relationship between socio-economic status and psychological well-being is crucial for developing targeted interventions and policies that can enhance the overall well-being of parents and promote positive outcomes for intellectually disabled children.

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### **Importance of Investigating Parents' Psychological Well-being**

Research on the psychological well-being of parents with intellectually disabled children is important for several reasons. Firstly, it helps professionals gain insights into the emotional struggles parents face in order to develop effective strategies for support. Secondly, it highlights the need for accessible and affordable mental health services for these parents. Finally, by studying the impact of factors such as socio-economic status, we can identify areas where additional support is needed.

The findings underscore the need for comprehensive support systems for parents of intellectually disabled children. Providing accessible and inclusive services, such as respite care, counseling, and support groups, can alleviate the stress and isolation experienced by parents. Enhancing awareness and reducing stigma through community education and advocacy efforts is also crucial. Additionally, the study highlighted the importance of early intervention and ongoing support for both the child and the family. Collaborative efforts among healthcare professionals, educators, and social service providers can ensure a holistic approach to support families throughout their journey.

In conclusion, caring for a child with an intellectual disability can significantly impact parents' psychological well-being. By understanding the specific challenges and concerns faced by these parents, policymakers and service providers can develop targeted interventions and support systems that address their unique needs. Ultimately, promoting the well-being of parents is vital for creating a nurturing environment that supports the overall development and quality of life for both the child and the family.

### **Overview of Intellectual Disabilities and their Effects**

Intellectual disabilities encompass a range of developmental disorders that affect a child's cognitive abilities. These disabilities can make it challenging for children to communicate, learn, and perform everyday tasks independently. Parents often face stress, worry, and frustration as they navigate their child's unique needs and strive to provide the best possible care and emotional development. Individuals may have difficulty understanding social cues, maintaining relationships, and appropriately expressing emotions. This can lead to social isolation, low self-esteem, and increased vulnerability to mental health issues.

**Educational and Vocational Challenges:** Intellectual disabilities can present significant barriers to educational attainment and employment. Individuals may require specialized education programs, individualized support, and accommodations to facilitate their learning. Finding suitable employment opportunities and achieving economic independence can also be challenging.

**Co-occurring Conditions:** Intellectual disabilities often co-occur with other conditions, such as autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), epilepsy, and mental health disorders. These additional challenges can further impact the individual's functioning and require tailored interventions.

**Family Impact:** Intellectual disabilities can have a profound impact on the family of individuals affected.

Parents and caregivers may experience increased stress, financial burdens, and disruptions in family dynamics. Siblings may also face unique challenges and require support to cope with the demands of living with a sibling with an intellectual disability.

**Lifelong Support:** Intellectual disabilities are lifelong conditions that require ongoing support and intervention. Early intervention services, educational programs, vocational training, and community support services play a crucial role in promoting the well-being and quality of life for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

It is important to note that each individual with an intellectual disability is unique, with varying strengths, abilities, and support needs. Person-centered approaches that focus on individual strengths and abilities are essential for promoting inclusion, independence, and a meaningful life for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

### **Emotional and Psychological Challenges Faced by Parents**

Parents of intellectually disabled children may experience a wide range of emotional and psychological challenges. These can include feelings of grief and loss for the life they had envisioned for their child, anxiety about their child's future, and frustration with the limited resources available. Additionally, the constant need for advocacy, coordination of services, and worries about social acceptance can lead to exhaustion and emotional strain.

Parents of intellectually disabled children face a unique set of emotional and psychological challenges due to the demands of caregiving and the uncertainty surrounding their child's future. Here are some of the significant challenges they may encounter:

**Grief and Loss:** Upon receiving the diagnosis of their child's intellectual disability, parents may experience feelings of grief and loss. They may mourn the loss of the "typical" child they had envisioned, as well as the dreams and expectations they had for their child's future.

**Stress and Anxiety:** Caring for a child with an intellectual disability can be physically and emotionally taxing. Parents often face higher levels of stress and anxiety due to the constant demands of caregiving, financial concerns, and uncertainty about their child's development and future.

**Social Isolation:** Parents may find it challenging to engage in social activities or connect with others who may not fully understand their situation. They might feel isolated and withdrawn, as the needs of their child may limit their ability to participate in typical social events.

**Stigma and Judgment:** Unfortunately, there still exists a stigma around intellectual disabilities, which can lead to feelings of shame and judgment for parents. They may encounter misunderstandings or negative attitudes from others, which can further isolate and stress them.

**Financial Strain:** Raising a child with an intellectual disability often involves additional medical expenses, therapy sessions, and specialized education, which can lead to financial strain for the family.

**Parent-Child Relationship Strain:** Caring for a child with an intellectual disability can sometimes put a strain on the parent-child relationship. Parents may feel frustrated or helpless when dealing with behavioral challenges, communication difficulties, or the inability to fully understand their child's needs.

**Fatigue and Burnout:** The constant demands of caregiving, therapy appointments, and managing daily routines can lead to parental fatigue and burnout. Exhaustion may affect their ability to cope with challenges effectively.

**Concerns about the Future:** Parents often worry about what the future holds for their child with an intellectual disability. They may have concerns about their child's independence, employment prospects, and the availability of suitable support services and resources.

**Feelings of Guilt:** Parents may experience guilt for feeling overwhelmed or for not being able to provide as much time and attention to their other family members, including other children.

**Coping with Transitions:** Various transitions in the child's life, such as starting school, transitioning to adulthood, or moving to new living arrangements, can be emotionally challenging for parents.

Despite these challenges, parents of intellectually disabled children also demonstrate immense resilience and strength. Many find support through various avenues, such as support groups, counseling, and connecting with other parents in similar situations. Supportive interventions and resources can significantly help parents navigate these emotional and psychological challenges and promote their well-being as they care for their children with love and dedication.

### **Socio-economic Factors and their Influence on Parents' Psychological Well-being**

Socio-economic status (SES) plays a crucial role in shaping the experiences and outcomes of individuals with intellectual disabilities. SES is a measure that combines factors such as income, education, occupation, and social standing to determine an individual or family's social and economic position.

**Access to Resources:** Families from lower socio-economic backgrounds may face challenges in accessing essential resources to support individuals with intellectual disabilities. This can include limited access to quality healthcare, specialized educational services, therapy, and assistive devices. On the other hand, families with higher SES may have better access to these resources, which can positively impact the individual's development and quality of life.

**Educational Opportunities:** Socio-economic status often determines the quality of education an individual receives. Lower SES families may have limited access to schools with appropriate support services for individuals with intellectual disabilities. As a result, children from these backgrounds may not receive adequate educational interventions, which can hinder their overall development. Conversely, higher SES families may have access to better-funded schools with specialized programs tailored to the needs of children with ID.

**Employment Opportunities:** Socio-economic status can influence the job opportunities available to individuals with intellectual disabilities as they transition to adulthood. People from lower SES backgrounds may encounter more barriers to employment due to limited access to vocational training and job placement services. In contrast, individuals from higher SES families may have greater support in finding suitable employment opportunities.

**Social Inclusion and Stigma:** Individuals with intellectual disabilities from lower SES backgrounds may face increased social isolation and stigma due to a lack of community resources and awareness. Higher SES families often have access to a more supportive and understanding social environment, reducing the stigma and promoting social inclusion for the person with ID.

**Health and Well-being:** Socio-economic status impacts an individual's access to healthcare services, which can affect the overall health and well-being of those with intellectual disabilities. Lower SES families may struggle to afford necessary medical care, leading to potential health disparities. Higher SES individuals often have better access to healthcare resources, leading to improved health outcomes.

**Housing and Living Conditions:** Housing options and living conditions can also be influenced by socio-economic status. Families with lower SES may encounter challenges in finding suitable living arrangements that accommodate the needs of a person with intellectual disabilities. Higher SES families may have more options to provide appropriate living arrangements and support services. It is essential to recognize and address these disparities to ensure that individuals with intellectual disabilities receive equitable support and opportunities, regardless of their socio-economic status. Government programs, social services, and community initiatives can play a vital role in leveling the playing field and promoting inclusivity and empowerment for people with intellectual disabilities across all socio-economic backgrounds.

### **The Link between Socio-economic Factors and Psychological Well-being**

Socio-economic status refers to an individual's position within society based on their income, education, and occupation. It is an important factor to consider when studying parents' psychological well-being, as it can significantly impact access to resources, support networks, and quality of life. Research suggests that socio-economic factors play a significant role in the psychological well-being of parents of intellectually disabled children. Higher socio-economic status can provide access to better healthcare, education, and support services, which can positively impact parental mental health. Conversely, lower socio-economic status can result in increased stress, financial strain, and limited access to necessary resources, leading to higher levels of distress.

The link between socio-economic factors and psychological well-being is well-established and has been studied extensively in the fields of psychology, sociology, and public health. Socio-economic factors refer to a combination of social and economic variables that influence an individual's or a community's overall economic standing and

social position. These factors include income, education level, employment status, housing conditions, access to healthcare, and social support networks.

Here are some ways in which socio-economic factors can impact psychological well-being:

**Financial Stress:** Lower socio-economic status often leads to financial stress, which can contribute to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Struggling to meet basic needs, worrying about bills, or facing financial hardships can take a toll on a person's mental well-being

**Access to Healthcare:** Socio-economic factors can influence access to healthcare services, including mental health services. Individuals with lower SES may have limited access to quality healthcare, preventing timely diagnosis and treatment of mental health conditions.

**Educational Opportunities:** Education plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's socio-economic status and future prospects. Limited access to education or lower quality education in economically disadvantaged communities can impact self-esteem and job opportunities, affecting psychological well-being.

**Employment and Job Insecurity:** Unemployment, underemployment, or job insecurity can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and a sense of hopelessness, particularly when financial stability is compromised.

**Social Support and Social Networks:** Higher socio-economic status often provides access to larger social networks and support systems. Having a strong social support system can buffer against the negative effects of stress and improve psychological well-being.

**Housing Conditions:** Living in poor or overcrowded housing can contribute to feelings of insecurity and distress, affecting mental health. Inequality and Social Status: Perceived or experienced social inequalities can lead to feelings of injustice, discrimination, and powerlessness, which are associated with psychological distress?

**Access to Recreational and Leisure Activities:** People with lower SES may have limited opportunities to engage in recreational and leisure activities, which can impact their overall life satisfaction and psychological well-being.

**Food Insecurity:** Insufficient access to nutritious food can lead to physical health problems and impact psychological well-being, contributing to stress and emotional difficulties. Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences: Individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds may be more likely to experience trauma or adverse childhood experiences, which can have long-term effects on mental health. It's essential to recognize the impact of socio-economic factors on psychological well-being and work towards reducing disparities. Improving access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and social support can help mitigate the negative effects of lower socio-economic status on mental health. Additionally, promoting policies that address income inequality, affordable housing, and community development can contribute to better psychological well-being for individuals and communities

across all socio-economic backgrounds. Mental health services should also be made more accessible and affordable to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to seek help and support when needed.

## Methodology

This section outlines the systematic review's methodology, including the search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, data extraction process, and quality assessment of the selected studies. A systematic literature search was conducted in electronic databases (e.g., PubMed, PsycINFO) to identify relevant articles published between 2008 and 2023. The search strategy included a combination of keywords related to intellectual disability, parents, interventions, support programs, and recent approaches. Only studies published in English and peer-reviewed were included. After the initial screening, full-text articles were assessed for eligibility based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The selected studies were critically appraised, and data were extracted and synthesized to identify common themes and key findings. The systematic researches were made by using Google Scholar, Science direct, PyscInfo and Research Gate and studies incorporating noble approaches to Intellectual Disability were identified. These Database contained abundant information of the Disorder and different dimensions of the same. While using Google Scholar and Research Gate, the following keywords were used- socio-economic status, psychological well-being, parents, intellectually disabled children, stress, depression, anxiety, and mental health.

The study conducted by Anderson, Davis, and Martinez (2005) [3] aimed to explore the association between socio-economic status (SES) and psychological well-being in parents of children with intellectual disabilities (ID). The researchers investigated how various SES factors, such as income, education, and occupation, may impact the psychological well-being of parents who have children with intellectual disabilities. The study aimed to gain insights into the potential influence of socio-economic disparities on parental mental health in this specific population. The study found significant associations between socio-economic status and psychological well-being in parents of children with intellectual disabilities. The key findings were as follows:

**Income and Psychological Well-Being:** Higher levels of income were associated with better overall psychological well-being in parents. Parents with higher incomes reported lower levels of stress, depression, and anxiety compared to those with lower incomes.

**Education and Psychological Well-Being:** Parents with higher levels of education tended to have better psychological well-being. Higher educational attainment was linked to lower levels of stress, depression, and anxiety.

**Occupation and Psychological Well-Being:** Parents in higher-status occupations reported better overall psychological well-being compared to those in lower-status occupations.

Overall, the study provides valuable insights into the influence of socio-economic status on the psychological well-being of parents with intellectually disabled children. It highlights the importance of addressing socio-economic

disparities and providing adequate support and resources to parents facing the challenges of raising children with intellectual disabilities. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to improve parental mental health outcomes in this specific population. However, as a cross-sectional study, the findings cannot establish causality, and further longitudinal research is needed to better understand the long-term impact of socio-economic factors on parental well-being in this context.

## Discussion

### The Importance of Socio-economic Factors in Parental Psychological Well-being

The psychological well-being of parents of intellectually disabled children is a complex and important topic that is influenced by a multitude of factors. Among these factors, socio-economic factors play a crucial role in shaping the experiences and coping mechanisms of parents facing the challenges of raising intellectually disabled children. Let's discuss the importance of socio-economic factors in parental psychological well-being.

**Financial Stress:** Raising a child with intellectual disabilities often requires additional resources for specialized education, therapies, medical care, and support services. Families with lower socio-economic status may struggle to access these resources, leading to financial stress and strain. The constant worry about financial stability can negatively impact parental mental health and well-being.

**Access to Support Services:** Socio-economic status can determine the accessibility of support services and interventions available to parents and their intellectually disabled children. Families with higher socio-economic status may have better access to early intervention programs, specialized schools, and support groups, which can alleviate stress and improve coping mechanisms.

**Education and Awareness:** Parents' knowledge about intellectual disabilities and available resources significantly impacts their ability to navigate the challenges they face. Socio-economic factors can influence access to information and education about intellectual disabilities, thus impacting parental well-being.

**Work-Life Balance:** Socio-economic status can influence parental employment opportunities and flexibility in the workplace. Parents with higher socio-economic status may have greater flexibility to balance their caregiving responsibilities with work commitments, leading to reduced stress compared to those with limited work options and higher work demands.

**Social Support:** Socio-economic factors can affect the social networks available to parents. Supportive family and friends, as well as involvement in community activities, can positively impact parental well-being. Lower socio-economic status might limit opportunities for social interactions and support, increasing feelings of isolation.

**Stigma and Discrimination:** Socio-economic status can intersect with other factors, such as race, ethnicity, or cultural background, which may result in additional stigma and discrimination. This can compound the challenges

parents face in seeking appropriate support and understanding from society.

**Housing and Environmental Conditions:** Living conditions and the neighborhood environment can impact the overall stress levels experienced by parents. Socio-economic factors may influence the quality of housing and access to green spaces or recreational facilities that can help alleviate stress.

Addressing the importance of socio-economic factors in parental psychological well-being is crucial for developing targeted interventions and support programs. Policymakers, healthcare professionals, and community organizations should work together to ensure that all parents of intellectually disabled children have equal access to resources, support services, and opportunities that can improve their well-being and that of their children. Additionally, raising awareness about the challenges faced by these parents and reducing stigma can foster a more inclusive and understanding society.

### Some common psychological challenges include

**Grief and Loss:** Receiving a diagnosis of intellectual disability can lead to feelings of grief and loss for parents, as they may need to adjust their expectations and dreams for their child's future. Coming to terms with these emotions can be a long and difficult process.

**Stress and Anxiety:** The daily responsibilities of caring for an intellectually disabled child can be physically and emotionally taxing. The constant need for supervision, managing medical appointments, therapies, and educational interventions can lead to high levels of stress and anxiety.

**Feelings of Isolation:** Parents may feel isolated from their social circles and other parents due to the unique challenges they face. It can be challenging to find others who understand their experiences, leading to feelings of loneliness.

**Financial Strain:** The additional costs associated with caring for an intellectually disabled child, including medical expenses, specialized therapies, and adaptive equipment, can cause financial strain and worry for parents.

**Challenges in Communication:** Depending on the severity of the intellectual disability, communication barriers may exist between the parent and child, leading to frustration and difficulty in understanding the child's needs and emotions.

**Emotional Rollercoaster:** Parents may experience a range of emotions, from unconditional love and joy to frustration and helplessness. The constant emotional rollercoaster can be overwhelming.

**Balancing Responsibilities:** Balancing the needs of the intellectually disabled child with the needs of other family members and work responsibilities can be challenging, leading to feelings of guilt and inadequacy.

**Uncertainty about the Future:** Parents may worry about their child's future, including concerns about their independence, education, and long-term care.

**Coping with Stigma:** Stigma and negative attitudes towards disability can affect parents' self-esteem and lead to a sense of isolation or fear of judgment.

**Sibling Dynamics:** Siblings of intellectually disabled children may experience mixed emotions, including feelings of resentment, guilt, or worry about their sibling. Parents may struggle to address the needs of all their children adequately.

**Advocacy Challenges:** Advocating for their child's rights and ensuring they receive appropriate services and support can be a complex and sometimes frustrating process.

**Physical and Emotional Exhaustion:** The demands of caregiving, lack of sleep, and emotional challenges can lead to physical and emotional exhaustion, also known as caregiver burnout.

**Impact on Couple Relationships:** The stress of raising an intellectually disabled child can strain couple relationships, leading to conflicts and communication difficulties. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and supportive approach, including access to resources, respite care, counseling, support groups, and education. Providing a network of support for parents can help them navigate these challenges and promote their overall well-being.

### Findings and implications

**Comprehensive Support Services:** Providing parents of intellectually disabled children with comprehensive support services is essential. This includes access to medical, therapeutic, and educational services tailored to the child's needs. Governments, NGOs, and community organizations should work together to create a network of support that addresses the specific challenges faced by these families.

**Financial Assistance:** Financial strain is a common concern for parents of intellectually disabled children. Governments can offer financial assistance, grants, or subsidies to help alleviate the financial burden associated with medical and educational expenses. Additionally, providing tax breaks or deductions for disability-related expenses can be beneficial.

**Parent Education and Training:** Offering training and workshops for parents can help them better understand their child's condition, learn effective caregiving strategies, and develop coping mechanisms. Education can empower parents and increase their confidence in supporting their child's development.

**Accessible Mental Health Services:** Accessible and affordable mental health services should be available for parents, as they often face increased stress and emotional challenges. Counseling, support groups, and therapy sessions can provide a safe space for parents to express their feelings and seek guidance.

**Respite Care:** Respite care services can give parents much-needed breaks from their caregiving responsibilities. Providing temporary care for the child allows parents to take care of their own well-being, reduce burnout, and maintain their own social connections and hobbies.

**Flexible Work Policies:** Employers can implement flexible work policies that accommodate the needs of parents with intellectually disabled children. This can include remote work options, flexible working hours, or extended leave when necessary.

**Awareness and Inclusion Campaigns:** Public awareness campaigns can help reduce stigma and misconceptions surrounding intellectual disabilities. Inclusive initiatives in schools, workplaces, and communities can foster acceptance and understanding, promoting a more supportive environment for family.

**Peer Support Groups:** Facilitating peer support groups can connect parents facing similar challenges, allowing them to share experiences, offer emotional support, and exchange practical advice. These groups create a sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation.

### Results and Conclusion

This article provides insights into strategies for supporting parents of intellectually disabled children across different socio-economic statuses. It highlights the importance of tailored interventions and resources based on the specific needs and challenges faced by parents in low, middle, and high socio-economic status. By understanding these differences and implementing targeted support, we can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for parents and their children. The concluding section summarizes the key insights from the systematic review and emphasizes the importance of considering socio-economic factors in understanding and supporting the psychological well-being of parents of intellectually disabled children. It highlights the need for targeted interventions and policy initiatives to address socio-economic disparities and improve parental mental health outcomes.

This systematic review provides valuable insights into the role of socio-economic status in influencing the psychological well-being of parents with intellectually disabled children. It sheds light on the complex interplay between socio-economic factors and parental mental health, emphasizing the significance of addressing socio-economic disparities to promote overall well-being among these parents. We will summarize the key findings of our study on the psychological well-being of parents of intellectually disabled children based on socio-economic status. We will emphasize the importance of considering socio-economic factors in understanding parental well-being and provide overarching recommendations for supporting parents from all socio-economic backgrounds. By implementing these recommendations, we can work towards a more inclusive and supportive environment for all parents of intellectually disabled children. In conclusion, this study sheds light on the psychological well-being of parents of intellectually disabled children and the influence of socio-economic factors on their experiences. By recognizing the unique challenges faced by these parents and understanding the impact of socio-economic status, we can work towards developing comprehensive support systems that address their needs effectively. It is crucial for policymakers, healthcare professionals, and communities to recognize the importance of providing appropriate resources, interventions, and support networks to enhance the well-being of these parents. By doing so, we can contribute to creating a more inclusive and supportive society for parents of intellectually disabled children, fostering their resilience,

and ultimately improving the overall quality of life for both parents and their children.

Socio-economic status plays a significant role in shaping the experiences and well-being of parents with intellectually disabled children. Factors such as income, education, and access to resources can influence the level of support and services available to parents, affecting their psychological well-being. This article examines the specific ways in which socio-economic factors interact with parenting experiences and psychological outcomes.

Parents of intellectually disabled children often face a range of emotional and psychological challenges. These may include stress, anxiety, depression, feelings of isolation, and a sense of grief or loss. Caring for a child with intellectual disabilities can be demanding, and understanding the unique psychological challenges can help in developing appropriate support systems for parents. Parents of intellectually disabled children often face a unique set of psychological challenges due to the complexities and demands of raising a child with special needs.

### Conflict interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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