

Quality of Life for Parents of Children with Special Needs

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Abstract

Background: “Special Needs” refers to the existence of a fundamental difference from the average or the normal, and specifically. Quality of life (QOL) is a difficult term to define since it means various things to different individuals. **Objectives:** The study aimed to assess the QOL among children with special needs. **Materials and Methods:** A descriptive (cross-sectional) design study was conducted in Hilla City from the period December 2021 to March 2023 aiming to assess the QOL among children with special needs. Nonprobability purposive sampling was selected from rehabilitation centers consisting of 200 parents for data gathering using an interview approach that took 25–30 min to complete the form. A committee of 17 professionals verified the questionnaire. A pilot study was carried out to establish the instrument’s reliability, and the data were examined using statistical and descriptive data analysis methods carried out by SPSS, version 20. **Results:** The results of this study show that the overall QOL for parents with children special needs were poor responses QOL as described by the low; also the results show that there is a significant relationship between social supportive services, with some demographical characteristics at $P < 0.05$. **Conclusions:** There are statistically significant association in quality of life between mothers of special needs children with age group and education levels and their occupations.

Keywords: Quality of life (QoL), needs, children

INTRODUCTION

“Special Needs” refers to the existence of a fundamental difference from the average or the normal, and specifically.^[1]

Children are considered less aware of the danger and are one of the most vulnerable groups, which can be explicated with the ongoing development of neuromotor, cognitive, physical, sociopsychological, and sensory skills.^[2]

A child with special needs is a child who differs from the normal child or the average child in terms of mental or physical abilities sensory, or in terms of behavioral, linguistic, or educational.^[3]

Such as CP is attributed to a wide variety of etiologies and factors. Approximately 75% of all CP cases are thought to be caused by prenatal factors.^[4]

Quality of life (QOL) is a difficult term to define since it means various things to different individuals.^[5]

Overall well-being is referred to as QOL, and it includes both objective and subjective assessments of one’s physical, material, social, and emotional well-being, as well as one’s own personal growth and purposeful activity.^[6]

Characteristics to the extent that it becomes necessary to provide special education and support services to meet the unique needs of the child.^[7]

Most educators currently prefer to use the term children with special needs, because it does not include the negative connotations that it has the terms disability.^[8]

A disability according to the Americans with Disabilities Act is defined as a physical or mental injury that significantly limits or reduces an individual’s activities in one or more life skills.^[9]

Parents who reported higher levels of social support felt less stress and reported better health, and this relationship between stress perception and health was attenuated.^[10]

Disabilities seem to affect more males than females, with approximately four affected males for everyone affected

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female. Intelligence level affects this sex ratio: Males are substantially overrepresented among high-functioning cases, and males and females are more equally represented among cases with severe intellectual disability. Girls have been reported to show more social communication and had fewer repetitive behavior symptoms.^[11]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive (correlation) design study was conducted in Hilla City which was selected to confirm its objectives through the period December 2021 to March 2023.

A total of 200 parents of children with special needs were selected through a “nonprobability” (purposive) sample in the center of rehabilitation in Hilla city

Following a comprehensive assessment of the relevant literature, a questionnaire was created and amended. This questionnaire is divided into four sections: The sample's sociodemographic characteristics include father's age, mother's age, father's education, mother's education, father's occupation, mother's occupation, and family income per month. Children with special needs include child's age, age when the impairment was identified, child's gender, and kind of disability. The QOL for parents of special needs children included 21 questions. Direct interviewing is done to gather data using a structured questionnaire. For the purpose of completing the questionnaire, an estimated interview duration of 25–30 min was given. Data were collected after acquiring an official agreement from the Department of Development and a training/branch of studies and educational research in Babylon education directorate, through using research instruments in the period from August 9 to November 29, 2022.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows that parents' age was 30–39 years old for mothers under 28 (± 7.14) mean, whereas fathers recorded the highest percentage of the age 30–39 years old with a mean of 34 (± 8.74). As an educational level, parents of children with special needs who graduated from middle school constituted 29% and 24% of reason why that 63.5% of mothers were unemployed. In terms of family monthly income, 39.5% had insufficient monthly income.

The results showed that 59% of the parents of children with special needs showed a poor QOL as described by the low average 33.75 (± 6.714).

Table 2 shows that there were highly significant differences in QOL with sociodemographic characteristics of the study sample regarding the mother's age, mother's education, father's occupation, mother's occupation, and family income/month at ($P > 0.05$), whereas the study results show that there was no significant relationship

Table 1: Sociodemographic characteristics

SDVs	Classifications	Freq.	%
Fathers Age			
M $\pm$ SD=34 $\pm$ 8.74	<20 years	5	2.5
	20–29 years	56	28.0
	30–39 years	78	39.0
	40–49 years	51	25.5
	≥ 50 years	10	5.0
Mothers age	Total	200	100.0
M $\pm$ SD=28 $\pm$ 7.14	<20 years	21	10.5
	20–29 years	74	37.0
	30–39 years	83	41.5
	40–49 years	19	9.5
Fathers education	≥ 50 years	3	1.5
	Total	200	100.0
	Illiterate	12	6.0
	Primary school	46	23.0
	Intermediate school	58	29.0
	Secondary school	52	26.0
Mothers education	College	32	16.0
	Total	200	100.0
	Illiterate	32	16.0
	Primary school	40	20.0
	Intermediate school	48	24.0
	Secondary school	39	19.5
	College	41	20.5
Fathers occupation	Total	200	100.0
	Employed	129	64.5
Mothers occupation	Unemployed	71	35.5
	Total	200	100.0
	Employed	73	36.5
	Unemployed	127	63.5
	Total	200	100.0
Family income/month	Enough	55	27.5
	Enough to certain limit	66	33.0
	Not enough	79	39.5

with other demographical data such as fathers age and fathers education at $P > 0.05$.

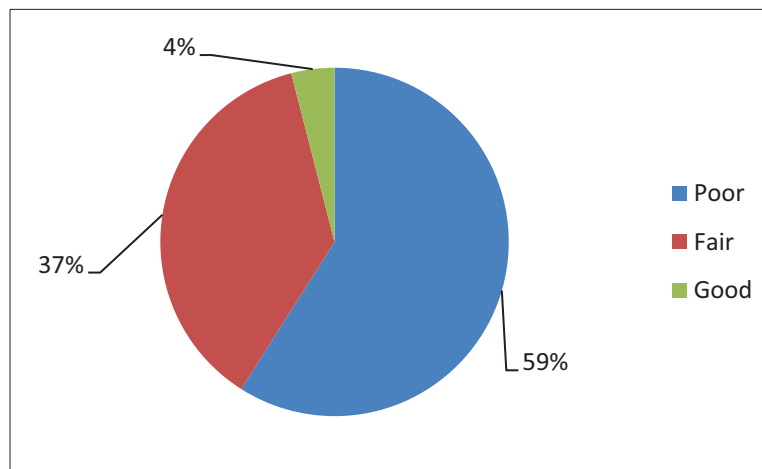
DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that most of the parents (39 %) were in the age group (30–39) years. The parents mentioned the importance of sharing everyday responsibilities. This study disagrees with a survey research design study in Thailand,^[12] which found that 70.59% of parents aged between 30 and 39 years are mostly preferred among therapists when helping children with physical impairment.

The highest percentage regarding to educational level, the current study revealed that intermediate school was the educational level of father while, mothers less than one quarters. This study agrees^[13] who observed that mothers of disabled children had a worse quality of life and suffered from depression more frequently than fathers, also having

Table 2: Statistical QOL with socio-demographical characteristics of the sample (n = 200)

Demographic data	Source of variance	Sum of squares	d.f	Mean square	F-statistic	P Value
Fathers Age	Between groups	.294	4	.073	.707	.588 NS
	Within groups	20.240	195	.104		
	Total	20.534	199			
Mothers Age	Between groups	3.384	4	.846	9.620	.001 S
	Within groups	17.150	195	.088		
	Total	20.534	199			
Fathers education	Between groups	.271	5	.054	.519	.762 NS
	Within groups	20.263	194	.104		
	Total	20.534	199			
Mothers education	Between groups	1.766	4	.441	4.586	.001 S
	Within groups	18.768	195	.096		
	Total	20.534	199			
Fathers occupation	Between groups	3.370	1	1.64	2.560	0.11 S
	Within groups	17.164	198	1.52		
	Total	20.534	199			
Mothers occupation	Between groups	1.760	1	1.81	8.034	.000 H.S
	Within groups	18.774	198	1.48		
	Total	20.534	199			
Family Income/ month	Between groups	1.819	2	.910	9.574	.000 H.S
	Within groups	18.715	197	.095		
	Total	20.534	199			

**Figure 1:** Overall quality of life among parents of special needs children

lower QOL are mothers of children with different types of impairments. Parents with disabled children frequently experience feelings of incapacity and helplessness, and this is particularly true for moms of young children, according to and.^[14]

In terms of life satisfaction, university or high-school graduate fathers' children get higher scores compared to primary or secondary-school graduate father's children. The sense of family life quality improves as education levels rise, but there does not seem to be a connection between this perception with the work position of the parents. Several study findings contradict the veracity of this study.^[15]

This study results illustrated that a high percentage of the sample was father occupation more than half (64.5%) had jobs employment. Most mothers (63.5%) were unemployed, which this study supported.^[16]

Moreover, a third of the sample (39.5%) felt that their economic condition was inadequate in comparison to their demands and the requirements of their families.^[17]

The results showed (59%) that the children with disabilities QOL depends on the parents of special needs children a poor response towards the QOL [Figure 1]. This study agrees with^[18] family systems theory regarding the equilibrium seeking and adaptation to changes by the

families. To maintain a good QOL or even to keep the balance between the members.

Another study is consistent with a presented study showing that parents who have a realistic image of their child's abilities OoL are more capable of understanding the needs of their child, and are more likely to let their child develop optimally, given their developmental disability.^[19]

According to the analysis of variance, there were no statistically significant variations in QOL between dads of special needs children based on their age groups. Similar findings have been observed with dads of disabled children, where child traits were not shown to be substantially related to variation in fathers' psychological distress.^[20]

The analysis of variance revealed statistically significant disparities in the QOL of moms of special needs children. The findings of this study accord with those of a previous study.^[21] Parents of disabled children have a distinct perspective on their disabled children. There were no statistically significant differences in QOL between father's education of special needs children. This study disagrees with this.^[22] done in Erbil city – Kurdistan, Iraq There is a significant association between fathers' occupation and their thought.

This study discovered statistically significant differences in QOL between special needs children's mothers' education and their years of schooling. The findings of this investigation indicated that there were differences between studies^[23] research discovered no significant variations in parents' cognitive, material, social, and emotional requirements based on parental education ($P > 0.05$).

The analysis of variance showed that there were statistically significant differences in QOL between father's occupations of special needs children and findings demonstrated there were statistically highly significant differences in QOL in this study. The current study disagreed study done in Iraq.^[24] who confirmed that there is no statistically significant relationship between the professional level of the parents and QOL.

The analysis of variance revealed statistically significant disparities in the QOL of parents of special needs children. The results of the shown study contradict the conclusions of another study that found no significant variations in parents' cognitive, material, social, and emotional requirements based on economic position ($P > 0.05$). These findings contradict previous findings.^[25] First and foremost, the requirements of mentally disabled children do not alter based on their socioeconomic status since they are the same needs.^[26]

CONCLUSION

According to the findings of this study, the most important QOL requirements of parents of disabled children were

indicated by low-level mean scores, with material needs scoring the highest, followed by cognitive needs, social needs, and emotional needs, in that order.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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