

Parenting Stress in Parents of Children with Developmental Disabilities

Background: Parents of children with developmental disabilities (DD) experience greater levels of stress than parents of typically developing children. Parenting stress has a number of negative effects, such as increased risk of health problems, psychological distress, and increased difficulty in caring for children. Parents of children with DD who are also immigrants may be particularly vulnerable to the negative outcomes of parenting stress because of the disruption to social support networks engendered by the immigration process. Further, immigrant families are more likely to face financial difficulties and linguistic or cultural barriers to accessing support. Although precise prevalence rates are not available, some research suggests that people of African descent are more likely to have a child with a DD. **Objectives:** The goal of the present study is to explore factors related to parent stress among parents of children with DD who are also African-Canadian immigrants. Specifically, the present study endeavours to identify factors that may contribute to parent stress (e.g., stigma, lack of social support, financial difficulty) and factors that may help promote positive outcomes for these parents (e.g., coping strategies, positive outlook). **Methods:** Participants are African-immigrant parents living in Canada who have a child with a developmental disability. Participation involves parents completing a confidential interview that can be scheduled at their convenience. Interviews can be completed in person or over the phone (45-60 mins). Parents will also be asked to complete a questionnaire (20-30 mins) about their experiences raising a child with a developmental disability. Data collection is ongoing. **Implications:** The results of the study may lead to a better understanding of the experiences of distress and coping in parents of children with DD, especially those who have immigrated from African countries. This research can help clinicians, educators, and other support staff better understand how to support parents and direct them towards services or supports that will lead to optimal outcomes for parents. Ultimately, the main goal of the study is to support better outcomes among parents of children with DD with the intention that better outcomes for parents will lead to better outcomes for the children as well.