

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SOME DIMENSIONS OF PERCEIVED PERSONAL COMPETENCE AND PERMANENT LOW-INTENSITY STRESS IN PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES¹

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The aim of this investigation was to compare one group of parents, those whose children are mildly intellectually disabled with the group of parents whose children intellectually functioned normally. The comparison was made in terms of their perceived anxiousness. Also, the aim was to compare the group of children with no intellectual disabilities with the group of children with mild intellectual disabilities regarding hyperactivity and aggressiveness.

The investigation was conducted on the two samples of participants. The first sample included parents of children with no developmental difficulties, N = 186; the second sample included parents whose children were mildly intellectually disabled, N = 86. The two groups of children attended lower primary school grades, (the group of intellectually disabled children is integrated into regular school settings and attends a shorter, individualized educational program).

In order to compare the two groups of parents and their self estimations on five levels, Likert type scales were used.

The children's behavior was estimated by parents and teachers on a three-level estimation scale, which consisted of 15 items - descriptions of disturbing behaviors which are usually found in school children.

The data were analyzed through discriminative analysis and the analysis of variance.

A significant difference between the perceived competence for the parental role, self-respect, locus of control, and social anxiousness, was detected between the groups of parents. Those parents whose children intellectually functioned normally, expressed internal orientation, estimated higher personal competence for the parental role, and had a higher level of self-respect as well, while their social anxiousness was significantly lower than those of the group of parents whose children had intellectual disabilities.

The teacher's and parental estimations of the children's aggressiveness and hyperactivity showed significantly lower incidence of such behavior in children with normal intellectual development.

The permanent low intensity stress in the parents whose children have intellectual disabilities, causes a lower perception of competence for the parental role, more external orientation in interpreting causes and effects of behavior, lower self-respect and greater social anxiousness. These characteristics affect, and are affected by, maladjusted behavior in the child, which is significantly more frequent in children with intellectual disabilities.

INTRODUCTION

The cognitive aspect of human functioning consists of different processes, such as learning, memory, cognition, perception, etc. Not only the way in which we feel, but the way in which we think about ourselves determines the level of our adjustment to the outer world. Cognitive interpretation of

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