

LINKAGES BETWEEN DEPRESSION AND CAREGIVER BURDEN IN PARENTS

RAISING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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Parents of children with disabilities/chronic conditions frequently experience a higher amount of stress/caregiver burden than parents caring for typically developing children. In addition, caregivers of children with disabilities/chronic conditions face challenges which may affect their well-being and put them at risk for being depressed. Therefore, the purposes of the study were to determine: (1) linkages between depression and caregiver burden; (2) if differences in depression and caregiver burden exist according to parent gender; and (3) if there is a difference in depression and caregiver burden according to the type of disability/chronic condition. One-hundred-fourteen fathers and 120 mothers completed questionnaires measuring depression and caregiver burden. Results indicated parents were depressed rarely/some of the time, sometimes experienced caregiver burden, and sometimes felt there was a hassle associated with caring for their child with a disability/chronic condition. On the other hand, they felt sometimes/a lot of the time they were not burdened in caring for their child. Mothers rated themselves higher for depression, frequency of burden, and hassle of burden than fathers. Mother's and father's frequency of burden and hassle of burden were related to depression in the expected direction. Parents of children with autism rated themselves higher for mother's/father's frequency of burden and father's hassle of burden than parents of children with Down syndrome or other developmental disabilities. Findings suggest interventions, especially for mothers and families raising children with autism, need to include support groups that allow sharing, contact with each other, provide information about the child's condition, and assistance in choosing healthy coping strategies to adjust to raising their child with a disability/chronic condition. Support groups can also provide opportunities for building relationships leading to help with caregiving and providing respite.

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