

Mental health of parents of children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities: characterization, relationship with parenting and behaviors, and mental health of their children

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Free Paper presented at the X Annual Congress of the Scientific Society of Psychology of Chile, organized by the Universidad de La Frontera, Campus Pucón, Chile, November 13-15, 2024.

Parenting is challenging, especially when children have intellectual disabilities (ID). People with ID present more challenging behaviors (CD), making their social inclusion more difficult. Parents of children with ID experience more stress and mental health problems, which is related to the frequency/severity of CD. We present a study conducted in Chile with families of children with ID between 7 and 17 years of age (n=247).

The aim was to explore the relationship between parental mental health, parenting and CD, considering adaptive behavior (AC) as a moderator, according to previous literature. Regression models, correlations, ANOVAs and cluster analysis were used to analyze the data and characterize the sample. Participants reported more anxiety and parental stress, but similar levels of depression and perceived stress compared to the general population. Two clusters were identified based on mental health symptoms (low vs. high), with differences in CD, parenting styles, parental age, and socioeconomic status.

Parents with low symptoms are older, have higher socioeconomic status, and reported better parenting attitudes, less CD, and more prosocial behaviors in their children, compared to the high symptom cluster. The moderation model showed that parental attitudes predict CD, moderated by CA. Mental health only predicts internalizing behaviors. Our results provide evidence on the relationship between parenting and parental mental health and CDs in children with ID, offering evidence in the Chilean context.

Keywords: Mental Health, Parenting, Intellectual Disability, Challenging Behaviors.

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