

**“ A Study on Psychological Transformation of Parents of the Child
with Mental Retardation, ”**
British Psychological Society Annual Conference 2003 (Abstract), p.1,
Bournemouth, Mar. 2003

Abstract:

Objectives

Most parents of children with a learning disability are anxious about how their children can continue to lead fulfilling lives even after they, themselves, are dead. Psychologically, parents need to look into the past when they and their children had been living together, as well as prepare for the future when they will be separated by death. In this paper, we examine the psychological processes parents undergo and discuss what kinds of transformations occur in them as they go through these.

Design

This paper describes the case of mother A (52 years old) whose daughter M (29 years old) has a learning disability. Daughter M selected a public work place near her home for her daily activity after she graduated from high school at the age of 18. Since 25, her main place of abode has been a group home although she spends weekends at home with her family. We chose this as a case study because the daughter and mother were accustomed to frequently being separated and their emotions were precursors of the type experienced after the death of a loved one.

Methods

The method involves interviewing the mother, creating verbatim records of these interviews, and analysing them. The interviews focus on how well the mother and daughter psychologically coped with physical separation from the daughter's birth to the present.

Results and Discussion

From the interviews and analyses, we found that they had accepted a physical sense of separation through experience. However, we also found that they had not yet accepted this cognitively. We found that there was an acceptance of separation due to it happening so frequently, but ultimate psychological stability depended on the mother's expectations of the continuing availability of social support for her daughter after she had passed away.

Conclusions and Future Work

We examined the psychological processes parents and children with learning disabilities went through in coping with separation. We found that even a socially conscious family found it difficult to cognitively accept separation and this was based on the level of social support. Based on what we have learned here we intend to interview more parents who have children with learning disabilities. The target of the interviews will be three kinds of parents: those whose children live with them, those whose children are accommodated by institutions, and those whose children live at group homes nearby. We will discuss how the parents achieve psychological stability, including analysis from social points of view, such as contributions made by the community and those who administer policies for the learning disabled.