

## Role of Social Support in Reducing Stress Among Mothers of Children with Special Needs

Shabana Nurudeen

Research Scholar, Shri Khushal Das University, Rajasthan, India

### Abstract:

**Background:** Caring for a child with special needs places considerable emotional and physical demands on mothers, often resulting in chronic stress and diminished well-being. Social support has been identified as a critical protective factor that can buffer the negative effects of caregiving stress. This study aimed to assess the role of social support in reducing perceived stress levels among mothers of children with special needs and to explore how different forms of support influence mental health outcomes.

**Materials and Methods:** A cross-sectional analytical design was utilized, and data were collected from various rehabilitation and special education centers. The study sample included 110 mothers of children with developmental, physical, or intellectual disabilities. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire comprising sections on sociodemographic information, caregiving characteristics, and perceived social support measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). Stress levels were evaluated using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 29.0, employing descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analyses.

**Results:** Results indicated a significant negative correlation between perceived social support and caregiving stress ( $r = -0.58$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Mothers who reported higher levels of emotional and instrumental support from family and community networks demonstrated significantly lower stress scores and better mental health outcomes. Formal support, such as counseling and participation in parent support groups, further enhanced coping capacity. Sociodemographic variables such as marital status, education level, and employment were found to moderate the relationship between social support and stress.

**Conclusions:** Social support plays a vital role in reducing caregiving stress and promoting psychological well-being among mothers of children with special needs. Strengthening community-based support systems and fostering peer support networks can help mothers manage caregiving demands more effectively and enhance their overall quality of life.

### Keywords:

Social support, caregiving stress, mothers, children with special needs, mental health.