Readability Research

Research Summarised


What did the researchers do?
The researchers investigated variables or factors present among parents with intellectual disabilities that had contact with child protection and compared them to parents with intellectual disabilities who had no contact with child protection. The study was done in a largely rural area across the South West of the UK.

Reason for the study
The researchers noted increasing numbers of parents with intellectual disabilities on the caseloads of social workers and the removal of children from these families as key reasons for this research. The researchers placed importance on identifying which variables or factors might lead to child abuse or neglect to inform decisions about the types of service support these families are offered. Previous studies of this kind have used smaller numbers of participants, and most have examined one factor rather than a combination of factors.

What did the researchers find?
The researchers found that families are more likely to be involved with child protection when:

1) The mother with intellectual disabilities has experienced emotional abuse and physical neglect herself as a child.
2) The mother has special needs in addition to her intellectual disabilities (in particular, physical disability).
3) There is a child with special needs in the household.
4) The mother has an intellectual disabilities and her male partner does not.
5) The male partner has a history of criminal activity or anti-social behaviour.

The following variables or factors were not found to be associated with child protection involvement:

1) IQ of the primary caregiver
2) age of the parent
3) levels of support
4) resources
5) state benefits
6) employment
7) access to amenities.

Study limitations
The sample for this study was 101 families with 172 children living with their parents in the South West of the UK.
The researchers noted that the study findings may not generalise to other groups of parents with intellectual disabilities.

**How could this research be used?**

While this work doesn’t suggest direct implications for practice, the researchers recommended future research to produce regression weightings for each factor in the analysis to explain the overall effect-to-risk for children.

**About the researchers**

Sue McGaw (Cornwall Partnership NHS Trust, Chy Govenek, Truro, Cornwall TR4 9LD, UK) is the Head of the Special Parenting Service at Cornwall Partnership Trust in the UK, and is contact person for this research.

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