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Disability, Family and Caregiving: A Qualitative Analysis in the Indian Context

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Abstract

The concept of disability has long been associated with social superstition and neglect since ancient times. However, in the contemporary context, disability is interpreted through multiple perspectives, among which educational, technological and rights-based approaches are significant. Sensory disabilities are a category that has received limited attention in the Indian context, particularly concerning the parenting experiences of parents with sensory disabilities. Even in sociological research, there is very little discussion or exploration of this topic. Therefore, the present article focuses on analyzing the various experiences of parenthood in such families. One of the objectives of this article is to highlight how care and affection are expressed by parents with disabilities toward their children, while another aim is to examine how they manage the processes of socialization in raising their children.

A total of eight families were selected, consisting of four families with visually impaired parents and four with hearing-impaired parents. The study was conducted using a qualitative case study method, incorporating in-depth interviews and descriptive analysis. The findings show that in such families, parenthood is shaped through a combination of family support networks and adaptive caregiving practices. Some families have faced various structural barriers such as communication problems, economic limitations and social stigma, while in some other families, the opposite has been observed, where parents, through their personal resilience, have succeeded in establishing their children. However, in every family, parents have adopted various innovative and creative methods in the upbringing and socialization of their children. This article indicates that childcare and upbringing are not merely biological processes; rather, they are processes formed within family relationships and social contexts. By presenting the experiences and realities of parents with disabilities in raising their children, this article contributes to the sociological understanding of disability, family life and care practices.

Keywords: Sensory disabilities, parenthood, social model of disability, caregiving practices, family dynamics, India.

1. Introduction

The existence of human society cannot be imagined without the family. Whether large or small, ancient or modern, in all societies, the family remains the fundamental social institution where the processes of reproduction, child-rearing and care take place. Since the family is the primary school of human life, both a mother and a father play crucial roles in the development, value formation and socialization of their child within it. However, the experiences of fatherhood and motherhood can vary depending on social, cultural and structural circumstances. One such subject that has been relatively less discussed in sociological research is the parenting experience of persons with disabilities, particularly those with sensory disabilities such as visual and hearing impairments. Therefore, the primary focus of this article is to explore the lived experiences of parents within these two categories as they navigate the complexities of raising their children.

Although the family has been a classical subject of discussion in sociological research, one particular aspect has long remained neglected: the parenting experiences of individuals with disabilities. Specifically, academic discourse on the domestic lives of persons with sensory disabilities such as visual and hearing impairments is extremely limited. Historically, disability has been explained primarily through the medical model of disability. In this model, disability was viewed as a physical 'deficit' or 'incapacity' of the individual, the sole solution for which was thought to be medical treatment or rehabilitation (Oliver, 1990; Barnes & Mercer, 2003). However, this perspective has been increasingly challenged within contemporary sociological approaches that seek to locate disability within broader social structures and lived experiences.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2011), disability is defined as a complex phenomenon resulting from the interaction between an individual's health condition and the environmental or personal barriers they face, such as inaccessible infrastructure or negative social attitudes. Expanding on this, sensory disabilities are a specific category within this broader spectrum, referring to the significant impairment of one or more of the senses, most commonly sight or hearing. As outlined by the United Nations

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), sensory disabilities involve long-term physical or intellectual impairments that, when coupled with societal obstacles, may hinder a person's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

The parenting experiences of persons with sensory disabilities challenge many prevailing assumptions within society, particularly those related to ability, independence and the capacity to provide care. In many social contexts, individuals with disabilities are often perceived as dependent or incapable of fulfilling conventional familial roles. As a result, parents with disabilities frequently encounter doubt, social stigma and discrimination in the process of raising their children (Prilleltensky, 2003). However, such perceptions tend to overlook the diverse strategies and adaptive practices through which these parents care for their children and manage family responsibilities.

Sensory disabilities, particularly visual and hearing impairments, introduce distinct dimensions to parenting practices. For instance, visually impaired parents may rely on alternative methods to monitor their children's activities, assist with education and ensure their safety in everyday life. Similarly, hearing-impaired parents may face challenges in responding to auditory cues such as a child's crying or verbal communication. Nevertheless, research indicates that such parents often develop effective caregiving approaches through tactile communication, visual cues and strong relational bonds within the family (Llewellyn & McConnell, 2002). In the Indian context, expectations surrounding parenthood are deeply shaped by cultural values, family structures and gender roles. Parenting is often understood as a responsibility that involves constant supervision, emotional care and economic stability. Within this framework, parents with disabilities frequently face heightened scrutiny and criticism from family members, society and institutional structures. Despite these challenges, many parents with disabilities actively engage in childcare and adopt creative strategies to navigate both their personal limitations and broader social barriers.

Understanding the caregiving practices of parents with disabilities is therefore crucial, as it not only enriches sociological knowledge but also challenges dominant societal assumptions about disability and dependency. By examining the everyday parenting experiences of visually and hearing-impaired parents, it becomes possible to highlight their capabilities, resilience and adaptive caregiving strategies.

The aim of this study is to analyze the experiences of parenthood in families where both parents have sensory disabilities. The research is based on a qualitative case study of eight families, including four with visually impaired parents and four with hearing-impaired parents. It explores how these parents carry out childcare responsibilities, communicate with their children and negotiate their position within the broader social environment. Through an analysis of everyday caregiving practices, this study seeks to deepen sociological understandings of disability, family life and parenthood in contemporary society.

2. Literature Review

The social model of disability has significantly transformed the nature of sociological research on disability. According to Michael Oliver (1990), disability arises when individuals with physical or mental impairments encounter physical, social and institutional barriers that restrict their active participation in everyday life. This perspective has opened new avenues for analyzing the experiences of persons with disabilities within various social institutions such as education, employment and family life. In this context, the parenting experiences of persons with disabilities have increasingly emerged as an important area of sociological inquiry. Several studies have explored how parents with disabilities negotiate these social perceptions. For instance, Llewellyn and McConnell (2002) point out that parents with disabilities develop adaptive strategies to overcome barriers in childcare and household responsibilities. These strategies include reliance on family support, creative problem-solving techniques and the use of assistive technologies. Their research also highlights that due to prevailing social attitudes, the parenting abilities of persons with disabilities are often underestimated, even though in practice their caregiving capacity can be highly effective.

Another key theme in the literature is the relationship between disability and social stigma. Drawing on the work of Erving Goffman (1963), disability can be understood as a socially constructed stigma that shapes the interaction between persons with disabilities and wider society. Such stigma often leads to discrimination, social isolation and limited participation in various social domains. In the context of parenting, these stigmatizing attitudes can generate negative perceptions about the ability of persons with disabilities to raise children not only within society and institutions but sometimes even within families themselves. Research on disabled parenting has also emphasized the importance of support networks. According to Tom Shakespeare (2006), family members, relatives and community-based support systems play a crucial role in assisting parents with disabilities in childcare and daily activities. These support structures can help mitigate structural barriers and enable parents to fulfil their caregiving responsibilities more effectively.

Studies focusing on sensory disabilities, such as visual and hearing impairments, highlight additional complexities in parenting. For example, visually impaired parents may face challenges related to mobility, monitoring children's activities and providing educational support. However, research shows that such parents often ensure their children's safety and well-being through tactile communication, spatial awareness and structured daily routines (Groce, 2004). These adaptive practices demonstrate that parenting is not solely dependent on vision but can also be effectively shaped through alternative sensory experiences.

Similarly, hearing-impaired parents may encounter barriers in family communication. Since verbal interaction is often central to parenting practices, hearing impairment can create difficulties in responding to a child's cries or spoken communication. Nevertheless, studies indicate that deaf parents effectively communicate with their children through sign language, gestures and facial expressions (Marschark & Spencer, 2010). In many cases, these forms of communication can even strengthen emotional bonding within the family. Beyond communication, researchers have also examined the role of children in families where parents have disabilities. Some studies suggest that children growing up in such families often develop qualities such as empathy, responsibility and independence from an early age (Aldridge & Becker, 2003). These children frequently participate in daily household activities and may assist their parents in social situations. However, scholars caution against viewing children merely as caregivers, emphasizing that the primary responsibility of childcare should remain with the parents.

Although these studies provide valuable insights, research on parenthood among parents with disabilities remains limited globally, particularly in developing nations. A significant portion of the existing literature is rooted in Western contexts, where social services, assistive technologies and institutional support systems differ substantially from those in countries like India. Therefore, there is a need for context-specific research to understand how parents with disabilities raise their children within diverse socio-cultural and economic settings. In the Indian context, disability is often intertwined with social stigma, economic constraints and a lack of institutional support. According to Groce (2004), persons with disabilities in developing countries face multiple barriers in education, employment and social participation. These structural challenges can also shape their family life and parenting experiences. Despite this, empirical research on parenting among persons with disabilities in India remains relatively scarce.

3. Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the parenting experiences of parents with sensory disabilities within their family settings. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for understanding complex social experiences and everyday practices that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative methods. Since the primary objective of this study is to examine how visually impaired and hearing-impaired parents manage caregiving responsibilities within their families, a qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of their lived experiences, coping strategies and social interactions.

3.1. Research Design

This study is based on a multiple case study approach, which enables a detailed examination of individual family experiences within their social contexts. The case study method is widely used in sociological research because it allows for the analysis of real-life situations where the boundaries between phenomena and their social context are not clearly distinguishable (Yin, 2014). By focusing on specific families, this research seeks to understand the everyday dynamics of caregiving, parenting practices and social relationships among parents with sensory disabilities. A total of eight families were selected for this study. Among them, four families have visually impaired parents, while the remaining four include hearing-impaired parents. This comparative framework provides an opportunity to identify both similarities and differences in caregiving experiences across different types of sensory disabilities.

3.2. Sampling

Participants in this study were selected using the snowball sampling method. In qualitative research, this approach is often used when initial participants help the researcher identify other suitable participants, thereby gradually expanding the sample through a network (Patton, 2002). This method is particularly effective when studying relatively small and specific populations, such as parents with sensory disabilities. The selected families represent diverse socio-economic backgrounds and family structures. Some participants live in joint family settings, while others belong to nuclear families. This diversity has enabled the study to capture variations in support systems, caregiving practices and family dynamics in greater depth.

3.3. Data Collection

The primary method of data collection in this study was in-depth interviews. This method allows participants to articulate their personal experiences, challenges and coping mechanisms in detail. Through open-ended questions, participants were encouraged to describe their parenting experiences, caregiving responsibilities, communication practices and their relationships with family members and social institutions. Wherever possible, interviews were conducted with both parents to gain a more comprehensive understanding of shared caregiving roles within the family. In addition to parenting practices, the interviews explored several related themes, including experiences of pregnancy and childbirth, early childcare practices, parent–child communication, support from relatives and extended family members, social attitudes and stigma related to disability and children’s educational support.

In many instances, participants shared personal memories and lived experiences, which provided rich insights into their everyday realities. These narratives helped illuminate the emotional, social and practical dimensions of parenting among parents with disabilities.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were carefully considered throughout the research process. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary and all participants were informed about the purpose of the research prior to the interviews. They were assured that their identities would remain confidential and that the information they provided would be used solely for academic purposes. To protect participants’ privacy, pseudonyms were used in all research documents. Additionally, efforts were made to ensure that participants felt comfortable during the interviews and they were given the freedom to decline answering any question if they wished.

3.5. Limitations of the Study

Although the qualitative case study approach provides rich and detailed insights into the experiences of parents with disabilities, the findings of this study are based on a relatively small sample size. Consequently, the results may not be statistically generalizable to all families with parents having sensory disabilities. However, the primary objective of qualitative research is not statistical generalization, but rather to develop a profound sociological understanding of specific lived experiences. Despite this limitation, the study offers significant insights into the everyday realities of visually and hearing-impaired parents, highlighting the importance of adaptive caregiving practices and the role of social support systems in shaping their parenting journeys.

4. Findings and Analysis

The findings of this study demonstrate that the parenting experiences of parents with sensory disabilities are shaped through a complex interplay of personal resilience, adaptive caregiving strategies and social support systems. Although participants encountered diverse barriers—such as communication challenges, economic constraints and social stigma—they exhibited considerable agency and capability in managing daily caregiving responsibilities. Through the analysis of eight case studies, several critical dimensions of caregiving practices among visually and hearing-impaired parents have emerged.

4.1. Everyday Caregiving Practices

One of the most significant findings of this study is that parents with sensory disabilities actively participate in the daily care of their children. Contrary to the prevailing societal misconception that individuals with disabilities are inherently dependent on others or incapable of fulfilling familial roles, the case studies in this research fundamentally challenge these notions. The findings demonstrate that these parents exercise considerable autonomy and agency in performing their responsibilities independently.

The study indicates that both visually and hearing-impaired parents perform various everyday caregiving tasks independently. For visually impaired parents specifically, caregiving is characterized by a high degree of self-reliance, as they utilize their own adaptive skills to manage parental responsibilities. One mother described her experience as follows: "I taught my daughter everything myself, Bengali and English alphabets. From a very young age, her education started with me. Later, when it was time to learn writing, I arranged a private tutor, but the initial learning was completely done by me." This reflects that despite being visually impaired, the mother played a central role in her child's early education, which is an important aspect of caregiving. Moreover, active participation is also observed in physical caregiving. In another family, a father stated: "Feeding the child, bathing, dressing—my wife used to do everything and I helped whenever I was at home. From teaching our child how to walk to toilet training, we managed everything on our own." This statement indicates the presence of shared responsibility and agency in parenting.

On the other hand, in the case of hearing-impaired parents, although certain limitations existed, they continued caregiving by adopting alternative methods. One mother described her experience as follows: "At night when my daughter used to cry, we could not understand. Many times we had to keep her with Soumili's aunt. When she cried, her aunt would hear and call us and then we would go and take care of her." In this instance, caregiving was effectively sustained through a robust extended support system.

Thus, it is evident that parents with disabilities are far from being passive recipients of aid; rather, they are active agents in their children's upbringing. Their caregiving practices demonstrate a high degree of agency, adaptability and emotional commitment, fundamentally challenging dominant ability-based assumptions in society.

4.2. Communication and Interaction within the Family

For parents with sensory disabilities, communication emerges as a critical dimension of family life. Since communication serves as the foundation for socialization, emotional bonding and daily interaction, the presence of a disability necessitates the development of alternative communicative strategies. This study demonstrates that parents with visual and hearing impairments have successfully constructed effective communication systems, effectively navigating their sensory limitations to maintain familial connections.

For visually impaired parents, communication primarily depends on sound, touch and sensory awareness. One parent stated: "My husband and I can understand when our child enters the room by hearing footsteps. What he is doing, where he is going—we understand everything through sound. When Kushal calls us, we respond immediately; this is how we maintain communication with him." Another visually impaired mother also emphasized emotional communication and said: "My relationship with my daughter is like a friendship. We play, talk and enjoy together. She tells me everything and I understand everything about her." These narratives indicate that communication transcends the mere exchange of information, functioning as a vital tool for emotional bonding.

On the other hand, in the case of hearing-impaired parents, communication mainly depends on visual signals and gestures. One parent described: "Our daughter has seen from childhood that we communicate through gestures. So gradually she learned to understand us. We use hand signs and facial expressions to communicate and now she understands everything." This shows that communication is a learning process where the child also adapts to the parents. However, communication barriers are also evident, especially due to hearing limitations. One mother stated: "At night when we were asleep, many times we could not understand if our child was crying. When others heard and came to call us, only then we realized that the child needed something and then we took care of her." This highlights that while sensory limitations create significant communicative gaps, extended family support serves as a crucial bridge.

Consequently, communication within these families is dynamic rather than static, continuously shaped by everyday experiences and mutual adaptation. It is a multi-dimensional process where sound, touch, gestures and emotions intersect. Children raised in such environments develop a familiarity with diverse communicative forms, which plays a pivotal role in their social and emotional development.

4.3. Role of Extended Family Support

Another significant dimension emerging from this study is the pivotal role of extended family support. For parents with sensory disabilities, the involvement of kin in child-rearing often becomes an indispensable component. Particularly within joint family structures or in proximity to relatives, a supportive framework is established that compensates for certain parental limitations.

In hearing-impaired families, the role of extended family is clearly visible. One mother stated: "My daughter's language learning, education, even toilet training everything was done by her aunt. My daughter used to call her 'mother'; she took full responsibility for her care." Similarly, in another case, extended family took complete responsibility for raising the child. One mother stated: "My brother and sister-in-law raised my daughter as their own. Since they had no children, they gave her everything. Education, care everything was done by them. I used to visit my daughter occasionally at my parental home." Such cases illustrate the transformation of biological parenting into 'social parenting'.

In visually impaired families as well, extended family plays a significant role. One father stated: "My wife and I both work in the railway, so when we went to work, we had to leave our child with family members. My mother, that is, the child's grandmother, used to feed and take care of her. Since it was a joint family, other members also helped. Without their support, it would have been very difficult." This suggests that caregiving in these contexts is a collective process involving multiple family members. However, extended family support is not always positive. In some cases, family conflicts affect caregiving. One mother stated: "There were constant conflicts with my sister-in-law. I had to do all the household work, but no one understood my situation. Because of this, we eventually had to live separately." This shows that extended family can be both a source of support and a site of conflict.

Thus, extended family acts both as a support system and as a space of tension. Caregiving in such contexts becomes a collective family process deeply connected with kinship relations, emotional bonds and social structures.

4.4. Social Stigma and Structural Challenges

The lived experiences of parents with sensory disabilities underscore the pervasive impact of social stigma and structural inequalities. Within the broader societal framework, parents with disabilities are frequently marginalized and perceived through a lens of dependency, often deemed incapable of fulfilling parental responsibilities. Such prejudicial attitudes profoundly influence various dimensions of their lives, including familial cohesion, self-identity and social integration.

A father with visual impairment articulated the precarious nature of his economic condition: “Our income is not fixed. I sell goods on trains—some days I earn 200 rupees, some days 400. With this money, we have to run the household and manage everything for our children.” This narrative exemplifies how economic instability serves as a critical structural barrier, further complicating the parenting journey for those within marginalized economic strata.

Furthermore, the detrimental impact of societal attitudes extends into the professional sphere, further complicating the lived realities of these parents. One participant recounted: “People often think that I can see. But when they realize that I cannot, they make comments and mock me. I face these problems even at work.” This narrative reflects the pervasive nature of stigma and discrimination encountered in daily social interactions. However, in the face of such multifaceted challenges, participants demonstrated immense resilience and self-assurance, often asserting: “We are raising our children on our own. No matter what others say, we did not stop... this is our strength.” This indicates that for parents with sensory disabilities, parenting is not only a familial role but a powerful act of resistance against societal stigmatisation.

Consequently, the parenting experiences of parents with sensory disabilities are not merely a product of individual circumstances; rather, they are profoundly shaped by broader social structures, economic conditions and entrenched cultural attitudes. Despite enduring these multifaceted challenges, they continue to execute their parental roles with distinct agency, resilience and a profound sense of self-worth.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study offer critical insights into the parenting experiences of parents with sensory disabilities in the Indian context, revealing that caregiving is a dynamic, socially situated process. Rather than being defined solely by individual impairment, the experience of parenthood is shaped by a complex interplay of adaptive practices, kinship dynamics and broader socio-structural conditions. The following discussion situates these empirical findings within the larger sociological discourse, examining how parents with disabilities negotiate their roles amidst systemic barriers and supportive networks.

5.1. Reconstructing Parenting Capacity through Agency

Contradicting the medical model's traditional focus on 'deficit' or 'incapacity' (Oliver, 1990), the participants in this study demonstrated significant agency in managing childcare independently. The findings suggest that parenting competence is not a fixed biological trait but a socially embedded practice. While dominant societal narratives often portray persons with disabilities as perpetual recipients of care, this research highlights their roles as active providers of care. From early educational guidance such as teaching the alphabet to physical caregiving like bathing and feeding, parents with sensory disabilities actively reconstruct their familial roles. This proactive engagement effectively challenges the socially constructed notions of 'incapacity' and 'dependency' often associated with disability (Llewellyn & McConnell, 2002), proving that with determination and self-evolved methods, effective parenting is entirely achievable.

Furthermore, the study reveals a gendered dimension to caregiving within the Indian context. While both parents demonstrate significant agency, the primary burden of daily childcare and domestic labor often falls disproportionately on mothers with sensory disabilities. In the observed families, even when both parents are impaired, social expectations frequently reinforce traditional gender roles, positioning the mother as the central caregiver while the father's role is often linked more too economic provision or external navigation.

5.2. Adaptive Strategies and Situated Communication

The study highlights how parents utilize what can be termed as “situated adaptation” (Groce, 2004) to navigate sensory limitations. Since traditional parenting often relies heavily on sight and sound, these parents develop alternative, highly effective communication systems. For visually impaired parents, this involves heightened auditory awareness and tactile communication, allowing them to monitor their child's safety and emotional needs without sight. Conversely, hearing-impaired parents utilize visual cues, facial expressions, and sign-based gestures to bridge the communication gap. These findings demonstrate that parenting is a resilient process of ongoing adjustment to environmental and sensory demands. It is not a rigid set of biological functions but a creative interaction where both the parent and the child adapt to each other’s unique modes of communication, thereby strengthening the emotional bond within the family.

5.3. The Duality of Family Support Networks

In the Indian context, kinship networks provide essential practical and emotional assistance, especially where institutional support is lacking (Shakespeare, 2006). However, the findings indicate that this support is often non-linear and complex. While extended family members frequently step in to assist with auditory-dependent tasks or language socialization, their involvement is not always purely supportive. The presence of internal family conflicts, issues of control and unequal expectations suggests that family structures can simultaneously act as a site of care and a source of tension. This duality reinforces the necessity of viewing family support not as a neutral safety net, but as a negotiated space influenced by power relations and traditional social norms. For many parents with sensory disabilities, navigating these intricate family dynamics is as integral to their parenting journey as the act of caregiving itself. The study thus underscores that while the family is a primary resource, it is also a domain where parental authority must be constantly asserted and negotiated.

5.4. Navigating Stigma, Structural Barriers and Emotional Resilience

Despite their demonstrable resilience, parents continue to grapple with what Goffman (1963) described as “spoiled identities” due to deep-seated societal stigma. The findings reveal that these parents face a “double burden”: the internal challenge of managing a disability and the external challenge of navigating economic uncertainty and social mockery. In many cases, their parenting abilities are unfairly scrutinized by neighbours, relatives, or even institutional actors.

However, this study finds that by investing intense emotional labour into their children, these parents transform caregiving into a profound source of dignity and self-worth. By successfully raising and socializing their children despite structural neglect, they effectively resist the labels of 'dependency' and 'risk' (Prilleltensky, 2003), asserting their right to be recognized as capable, moral and productive members of the social order.

6. Conclusion

Following its objectives, this study explored the lived experiences of parenthood among parents with sensory disabilities in India and highlighted the multifaceted challenges embedded within their everyday caregiving practices. The findings indicate that parenting in such contexts involves a continuous negotiation of practical responsibilities, communication barriers and broader structural constraints, which collectively shape parents' emotional and social experiences. These challenges are not merely individual deficits but are deeply rooted in pervasive social attitudes, institutional limitations and unequal access to resources. Consistent with sociological perspectives on disability, the study demonstrates that many of the difficulties encountered by parents arise from environmental and systemic barriers rather than impairment alone.

Despite these constraints, participants actively developed innovative adaptive strategies and maintained profound emotional engagement in raising their children, reflecting significant resilience and agency in everyday life. At the same time, the persistence of social stigma and limited institutional support highlights the urgent necessity for structural transformation. Without inclusive policies, accessible support systems and greater societal awareness, the burden on parents with sensory disabilities is likely to remain disproportionately high. In conclusion, parenting in such contexts is not defined by limitation but by adaptation, commitment and relational strength, underscoring the critical importance of building more inclusive and supportive social environments.

Recommendations

The findings of this study highlight the need for disability-inclusive policies and practices to support parents with sensory disabilities. Increasing social awareness is essential to challenge stigma and recognize their parenting capabilities. Training for professionals in healthcare, education and social services should focus on disability-sensitive communication and support. Accessible resources, such as audio materials, Braille and sign-based tools, should be made available for effective childcare and education. Strengthening family and community support systems, along with providing financial assistance and inclusive welfare schemes, can reduce the burden on parents. Overall, a more inclusive and responsive institutional framework is necessary to ensure equitable support for families with sensory disabilities.

Limitations

This study is based on a relatively small sample of eight families, which limits the generalizability of the findings. A larger sample size in future research could provide more diverse insights into the parenting experiences of parents with sensory disabilities. Additionally, this study focuses primarily on visual and hearing impairments, leaving scope to explore other forms of disability. Future research may also examine how disability intersects with demographic factors such as gender, class, education and rural–urban location, in order to better understand the varied experiences and challenges faced by different groups.

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