

Abstract

The process of puberty involves physical maturation during which adolescents reach sexual maturity and can reproduce and having to deal with pubertal issues at this stage can be very difficult for adolescents who suffer from physical or developmental disabilities. The current study was conducted to study the experiences of parents dealing with pubertal issues of Intellectually Disabled Autistic Adolescents. The sample was selected from special institutes, both government and private, of Lahore, by using purposive sampling strategy. Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS) and Slosson Intelligence Test (SIT) were used as screening instruments. Semi-structured interviews were conducted from parents of 3 Intellectually disabled female autistic adolescents and 3 Intellectually disabled male autistic adolescents ($N=6$). Analysis of the transcripts were done by using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Themes of information about the onset of puberty, pubertal transitions, challenges, parental feelings, sensual information, reactions on sexual activities, strength or weakness, psychological progress, male family members' support, approaches to pubertal issues, institutional support and recommendations were found. Although the themes are presented separately, they are interrelated and do not occur as a distinct aspect of emotional and social challenges by parents in their daily life with respect to puberty of ASD adolescents. This research was conducted on moderate and severe intellectually disabled autistic adolescents, so, future researches should aim at studying profound and mild autistic adolescents too. Moreover, future researchers should utilize this study to create an intervention plan that focus solely on how to provide pubertal information to these children, before they enter the pubertal stages.

Keywords: Intellectual Disability, Autism, Puberty, Pubertal Issues, Parents, Emotional Challenges, Social Challenges, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis