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**Title: Perceived burden and coping strategies employed by parental caregiver of individual with moderate grade mental retardation**

### **ABSTRACT**

There is an increased emphasis on the caregiving difficulties encountered by those parents with mentally retarded (MR) offspring. Attributed to the world trend of de-institutionalization, the care role to people with mental retardation has increasingly shifted to their parents. Parents have mostly taken up the lifelong care role in providing the demanding and time-spent caregiving to the MR offspring, which might affect their own health beings and the health of the entire family.

Little attention has been given to the caregiving burden and coping of parental caregivers in Hong Kong who have offspring with MR. This study, using a descriptive qualitative approach, aimed to explore the perceived burden and coping strategies employed by parental caregiver of individual with moderate grade mental retardation. Eight local parental caregivers of offspring with a primary diagnosis of moderate grade MR were recruited purposively. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the use of interview guide. Content analysis was performed to analyze the data. The results identified themes of caregivers' perceived burden and the use of coping strategies respectively. The three themes of perceived burdens of parental caregivers were forced abandon of irreplaceable caregiving role, lack of acceptance of the disability and the compromised life of caregivers. The three themes of coping strategies that were employed in caregiving were responding to distress induced from perceived burden, addressing problem to reduce perceived burden and creating meaning to perceived burden.

These findings facilitate nurses to further understand the perceived caregiving burden and the employed coping strategies of parental caregivers in caring their MR offspring. It suggests that extended care and support are necessary for the parental caregivers of MR offspring.