

COPING BEHAVIOR AMONG PARENTS OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN

Dr. Tengsy Thomas* | Prof. Manu KJ**

*Lecturer, King Saud University College of Nursing, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

**Professor, Principal, Indiana college of Nursing, Mangalore, Karnataka, India.

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ABSTRACT:

To measure the stress experienced by parents of autistic children, a descriptive survey design was used. Kerala's Adarsh Charitable Trust in Ernakulam is where the samples were obtained from. For the study, a convenient sampling method was used to choose a sample of 30 parents. More than half of them held a degree, and the majority (36.7 %) of them fell into the age range of 26 to 30 years. Only 33.33 % of the parents had full-time jobs, while the majority (83.3 %) belonged to nuclear families. Most (70 %) of the parents had just two children, and (36.7 %) of the parents had less than Rs. 30,000 annual incomes. To determine the relationship between variables, descriptive statistics and chi-square statistics were used in the data analysis. According to the survey, the majority (83.33 %) of parents of children with autism have average coping with a few (3.34 %) with poor coping and most (79.44 %) of them used emotion-based coping and few (67.36 %) used action-based coping. There was no correlation between the ability to cope and some demographic factors as age, education, employment, family income, child's gender, and the presence of support groups.

Key words: Autism, Parents, Coping behavior, Children.

ABOUT AUTHORS



Dr. Tengsy Thomas, Lecturer, King Saud Bin Abdul Aziz University, Saudi Arabia, Riyadh.



Prof Manu KJ, Principal, Indiana college of Nursing, Mangalore, Karnataka, India.

INTRODUCTION

Children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) exhibit stereotyped and limited behavioral patterns, as well as problems in communicating verbally and socially. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Significant stress and difficulties in providing care have been reported by parents and other caregivers of children with ASD. Research on how parents and other child caretakers cope with stress is still scarce. Parental stress coping research has shown that problem-focused coping (45.9 %) and social support (37.8 %) are the most effective coping mechanisms. (Lai & Oei, 2014) The two most effective coping mechanisms utilized by parents were information searching and self-education regarding autism and acceptance and/or faith. (Ayyash et al., 2023). There is proof that coping is essential for controlling, minimizing, or tolerating stress as well as for deciding whether a stressful situation results in an adaptive or maladaptive process. (Brown et al., 2020). Researchers have shown that parents employ a variety of coping strategies when caring for their child with ASD, including assistance from friends, family, social support groups, other parents of children with ASD, service providers, advocacy, and religion. (Siah & Tan, n.d). Additionally, a parent's capacity to handle high levels of stress depends on the potency and quantity of coping mechanisms they use to handle the demands of stressors connected to an ASD child. (Zablotsky et al., 2013). Coping mechanisms are one of the factors that might shield parents of autistic children from emotional disturbances. Parents of autistic children confront several challenges every day. Iadarola et al., 2019).

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Parents of children with ASD reported worse QoL and lower levels of positive reappraisal coping in response to high levels of parental stress (Ni'matuzahroh et al., 2021). According to earlier studies, parents who are more intolerant of uncertainty and who use coping mechanisms may also experience greater levels of anxiety and sadness themselves. (Cai et al.2020). Having a child with autism affects the entire family, without a doubt. Daily routines will be ignored because children with autism will require greater assistance, which will impact how daily living is conducted in the home. Maybe even the parents' professions would be put on hold to care for their kids. The thing that stresses parents out the most is when there are delays or communication barriers. Families face a variety of difficulties. It can be demanding to deal with the obligations of raising a child who has autism. Parents' worries about their capacity to handle their child's behavioral issues, high levels of parental fatigue, concerns for the child's future and independence, hindered careers, and unresolved financial issues all contribute to this stress. (N et al., 2022).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Assessment of the level of coping among parents of children with autism in a selected special school with a view to developing an information booklet.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess the level of coping of parents of children with autism
- To find out the association between level of coping and selected demographic variables.

METHODOLOGY

To find out how parents of autistic children cope, a quantitative descriptive survey approach was used. 30 parents of autistic children who were between the ages of 20 and 50 participated in the study. The Adarsh Charitable trust school in Ernakulam served as the study's location. Convenience sampling was used to choose the sample. A self-administered coping measure was developed and used in the current investigation based on the aims. The prepared tool with the blueprint was handed to the subject matter experts, and the split-half approach was used to establish dependability. The investigator administered and oversaw the coping scale and demographic proforma.

RESULTS

Description of samples according to demographic variables of parents of children with Autism.

Most of the parents (36.7 %) were between the ages of 26, and Most of parents (66.7 %) had a degree. 83.3 percent of respondents were from nuclear families. Less than half of the parents (33.3 %) did not have a job, whereas 33 % had a full-time job. Most of the families made more than 30,000 Rupees a month in family income. Just 3.3 % of parents had more than two children and the other 70 % had less than two children. Within a 5-kilometer radius, health services were accessible to 50 % of the parents. 56.7 % of households had access to a support network. Less than half of them (36.7 %) had kids between the ages of 3 and 5 and 80 % of the children were boys.

Description of the level of coping of parents of children with Autism

To assess the level of coping of parents of children with autism, a self-administered coping scale was administered. Based on the tool the coping levels were arbitrarily classified into three levels as Good, Average and Poor.

Table 1: Description of the level of coping of parents of children with Autism

Level of coping	Percentage
Poor	3.34 %
Average	83.33%
Good	13.33%

Data presented in table 1 shows that the majority (83.33 %) of parents of children with autism have average coping with a very few (3.34 %) with poor coping and the rest reported good (13.3 %) coping level.

Area wise range of the level of coping

The assessment tool on coping assessed the diverse types of coping such as emotion based and action-based coping. The data revealed most of them were having emotion-based coping (79.44 %) and just (67.36 %) adopted action-based coping.

Table 2: Maximum score obtained, range of scores, mean, median and SD of the level of coping of parents of children with autism.

Maximum score	Range	Mean	Median	SD
50	28-43	36.53	37	196.74

The data presented in Table 2 shows that the Maximum score, range of scores, mean, median, and standard deviation of the level of coping of parents of children with autism were estimated as 50, 28-43, 36.53, 37, 196.74 respectively.

Association of the level of coping of parents of children with Autism with selected demographic variables.

When the degree of coping of parents was compared to the chosen factors using chi-square analysis, it was shown that there was no significant correlation between the two. At the 0.05 level of significance, the estimated Chi-square value (age in years 1.3, family type 0.6048, job status 0.51, number of children 0.460, and presence of support group 0.16) was lower than the value listed in the table. H₀ was accepted as the null hypothesis as a result.

Chi-square was computed between the level of coping of parents and the selected variables showed that there existed no significant association between the level of coping and the selected demographic variables. The calculated Chi-square value (age in years 1.3, type of family 0.6048, employment status 0.51, number of children 0.460, and availability of support group 0.16) was less than the tabled value at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis H₀ was accepted.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the current study revealed a majority (79.44 %) used emotion-based coping and these findings are supported by another study that states majority of parents used emotion focused coping. (Mohammad et al., 2022). The majority (83.33 %) of parents of children with autism had an average coping, the findings of the study is supported by another study where the findings revealed that the mean coping strategies was (68.81 %). (Mohammad et al., 2022). Other studies like Samadi (2020) also reported moderate coping and good feeling in parents of autistic children. In the current study, there existed no significant association between the demographic variables and coping strategies which is in contrast with the previous research which stated sociodemographic factors influenced the coping strategies of parents. (Mohammad et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

As a widespread developmental impairment, autism has a significant influence on many facets of a child's life. Most of the mothers (66.7 %) had a degree, and almost half of them (36.7 %) were in the 26-to-30-year age range. Most parents (83.3 %) had a nuclear family, and 80 % of children were boys. Nearly 50 % of the samples were jobless, compared to 63.3 % of participants' wives who were working, 30 % of families were with an average family income of Rs. 30,000. Most of the families (70 %) had two children, and slightly over half (56.7 %) of the parents had access to a support group. The present research found that the majority of (83.33 %) of parents of autistic children indicated average coping, a very small percentage (3.34 %) reported bad coping, and an average (13.3 %) reported good coping. The majority (79.44 %) used emotion-based coping and just 67.36 % of them used action-based coping; there was no correlation between the ability to cope and some demographic factors as age, education, employment, family income, child's gender, and the presence of support groups.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the study had several implications for nursing practice, nursing administration, and research.

NURSING PRACTICE:

The knowledge of the level of coping of parents is important in nursing practice as the nurses must provide appropriate teaching on coping strategies and to families with children with ASD. It helps nurses to educate

parents on sound therapies and approaches to provide them with skills needed to directly address the parent's confidence level and to reduce stress.

NURSING EDUCATION:

The preparation of student nurses in the development of skills to be an excellent professional nurse is based on the implementation of the curriculum. The current evidence enables us to include the various coping measures adopted for such parents in the curriculum.

NURSING RESEARCH

In nursing research, these are helpful to develop new knowledge and approaches towards various coping measures to provide comprehensive nursing care applying evidence-based approaches.

NURSING ADMINISTRATION

More relaxation and coping strategies can be implemented as additional facilities to be provided to the parents for coping with Autism. The department can allot psychologist and counseling support for such parents either at home or in the hospital. Policies can be included to have a comprehensive management including psychological interventions for patients and their families rather than just physical care.

LIMITATIONS

1. Due to a small sample size, generalization is restricted.
2. The study was conducted only in one setting as Adarsh charitable trust, Kerala.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The study can be done on a large sample for the generalization of findings.
2. An interventional study can be done on the effectiveness of a structured coping program on parents of children with Autism.

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