Journal of Mental Health Issues and Behavior
Vol: 03, No. 02, July-Dec 2023
ISSN: 2799-1261, DOI: 10.55529/jmhib.34.1.9

Research Paper

Influence of emotional maturity and resilience in coping among parents of kids with autism and intellectual disability

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Article Info

Article History:
Received: 08 March 2023
Revised: 15 May 2023
Accepted: 22 May 2023
Published: 05 July 2023

Keywords:
Emotional Maturity
Resilience
Coping
Parents of Children with Autism
Intellectual Disability

ABSTRACT

Background: Parenting a child with autism or intellectual disability represents a significant life transformation that places heightened demands on caregivers, requiring greater tolerance and effective coping strategies to manage rising expectations.
Objective: To examine the influence of emotional maturity and resilience on coping, and to identify differences in emotional maturity, resilience, and coping by gender, residence, and type of child disability among parents of children with autism and intellectual disability.
Methods: Cross-sectional study of 246 parents of children with autism or intellectual disability recruited from Thendral Vidyalaya School, Madurai, and nearby schools. Participants completed the Emotional Maturity Scale, Resilience Scale for Adults, and Brief-COPE questionnaire, together with sociodemographic measures; correlation, t-test, and linear regression analyses were performed on 243 valid responses (63.4% male, 52% urban; 65.9% intellectual disability, 34.1% autism).
Results: Emotional maturity and resilience were significantly positively correlated ($r=.494$, $p<0.01$), while both were inversely correlated with coping (emotional maturity–coping $r=-.266$; resilience–coping $r=-.258$, $p<0.01$). No significant group differences emerged for emotional maturity overall, but resilience differed significantly by nature of disability ($p<.001$) and coping differed significantly by gender ($p=.006$). Linear regression indicated emotional maturity and resilience together explained minimal variance in coping ($R^2=.082$), suggesting limited predictive effect.
Conclusion: Emotional maturity and resilience are positively related to each other but show weak, inverse associations with coping among parents of children with autism and intellectual disability, and gender and disability type moderate specific outcomes. Targeted psychosocial support addressing coping strategies, beyond emotional maturity and resilience alone, is warranted for these caregivers.

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Journal of Mental Health Issues and Behavior (JMHIB)

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, parents' parenting styles tend to focus on three main objectives: ensuring the child's health and safety, preparing kids for adulthood, and passing down cultural values. Most parents now find raising children, especially those with special needs like autism and intellectual disabilities, to be a difficult undertaking. Parents use coping mechanisms like behavioural and cognitive techniques to deal with emergencies and stressful situations. Having the ability to bounce back and use coping mechanisms to mould one's personality, attitude, and behaviour is crucial. The impact of parent of children with autism (autism spectrum disorder is a development disorder that affects communication and behaviour, Kanner 1943) and intellectual disabled (individual below average IQ level) on resilience, emotional maturity and coping strategies were in the need of the study.

According to [1], Sinclair, R.R., and Oliver, C.M. 2003, [2], resilience is a dispositional quality that enables people to overcome challenges and flourish in the face of them. The capacity to use thinking and action to maintain or restore internal or external equilibrium when it is seriously threatened [3]. In order to achieve a comprehensive adjustment to the environment, one must bounce back or recover from stressful circumstances [4], [5], [6], [7] classified resilience models as compensatory, protective, and challenge that explain how resilience factors operate to alter the trajectory from risk exposure to negative outcome. "A process in which the personality continuously strives for greater sense of emotional health, both intra-psychically and intra-personally," is how emotional maturity is defined. Emotional maturity is described by the American Psychological Association as "a high and appropriate level of emotional control and expression." On the other hand, emotional immaturity is "a tendency to express emotions without restraint or disproportionately to the situation." In other words, emotionally inappropriate or out-of-control behaviour can be regarded as immature. It resembles emotional responses you may anticipate seeing in a youngster more so than an adult.

"Continually changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as tasking or exceeding the resources of the person" is how Folkman and Lazarus (1974) characterized coping. It is a word used specifically for the mobilization of conscious and voluntary acts, as opposed to "defense mechanisms," which are adaptive subconscious or unconscious responses that both strive to decrease or tolerate stress (Venner M., 1988) whilst others describe this style of coping as avoidance [8]. Task- or problem-focused coping, which refers to deliberate efforts to manage stress, is a typical phrase for approach-oriented coping, whereas escapism or emotion-focused coping is a common term for avoidance-oriented coping-focused coping, which refers to techniques such emotional outbursts or rumination [9], Endler and Parker, 1990).

Resilience was characterized by Rutter as a degree of protection against psychosocial risk situations [10], [11]. This method focuses on a variety of outcomes, not only positive ones; it does not automatically assume that protection comes from happy experiences or that the solution resides in what the person does in the moment to deal with the negative event (how he or she copes with it) [10]. Resilience models that explain how resilience elements work to change the trajectory from risk exposure to negative result fall into three main categories: compensatory, protective, and challenging [7]. Coping is defined as the thoughts and behaviors mobilized to manage internal and external stressful situation [12]. Coping is generally categorized into four major categories which are,

- Problem-focused

- Emotion-focused
- Meaning-focused
- Social coping

There are certain factors that involved in shaping or directing the coping style of an individual, Resilience and emotional maturity tend to plays a vital role in bouncing back when coping with adversity or stress and shaping personality, attitude and behaviour. The comprehensive revision of these variables and its impact on coping skills of parents with children of autism and intellectual disability might give us an understanding about which dimension of resilience and emotional maturity connected to which type of coping skills.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study Design

The research design employed here is correlational research design under quantitative research method to investigate the relationship between emotional maturity, resilience and coping.

2.2 Participants and Settings

The population to be assessed and analyzed here are parents of children with autism and intellectual disability. Convenient sampling and snowball sampling is used for recruiting a stipulated sample from an entire population. Data has been collected from parents of children with autism and intellectual disability who belongs to Thendral Vidyalaya Special School located at Madurai, Tamil Nadu by the use of convenient sampling and nearby special Schools with The Aid of Snowball Sampling.

2.3 Tools Used

2.3.1 Emotional Maturity Scale

The Emotional Maturity Scale, established in 1984 by Drs. Yashvir Singh and Mahesh Bhargava, consists of 48 items that are meant to assess emotional stability, emotional development, social adjustment, personality integration, and independence. The Likert scale has five points, ranging from very lot (1) to never (5). Internal consistency and the test-retest procedure were used to evaluate the scale's dependability. Between the two tests, the product moment r was.75, and the scale was validated using outside standards.

2.3.2 Resilience Scale for Adults

Resilience Scale for Adults is a multidimensional measure created by Friborg in 2003 for measuring protective resilience factor. It consists of three interpersonal factors, including social competence, personal competence, and structured style, as well as two interpersonal factors, including social resources and family cohesion. Responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) on a five-point Likert scale. The RSA has undergone considerable research via a number of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, normed across varied cultural and ethnic groups, and adequate internal consistency across subscales.

2.3.3 Brief-Cope Questionnaire

The Brief COPE is a 28-item self-report survey that was created in 1997 by C.S. Carver. It consists of subscales such avoidant coping, problem-focused coping, and emotion-focused coping. Responses like "I haven't doing this at all, A little bit, A medium amount, and I've been doing this a lot" show how much a person uses a certain coping method. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the Brief COPE scale's internal consistency, and the intraclass correlation coefficient was used to determine test-retest reliability.

2.4 Statistical Analysis

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Mean and Standard Deviation are used.

- **Inferential Statistics:** Independent sample t test is used to differentiate the means of two groups that are independent in terms of gender, residence and nature of disability associated with the children, Correlation is used to find the relationship between variables such as emotional maturity, resilience and coping and Regression analysis is used to estimate the effect of coping with emotional maturity and resilience.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis was done for 243 members, among which 156 participants were male (63.4%) and remaining 90 are female (36.6%). 128 participants belong to urban population (52%) and remaining 118 group falls under rural population (48%). In the aspect of nature of difficulty associated with the children, 162 members (65.9%) have children with intellectual disability and 84 members (34.1%) have children with autism. Correlation is tested among variables emotional maturity, resilience and coping among parents of children with autism and intellectual disability. The correlation is significant at 0.01 level and there exist significant positive relationship between variables emotional maturity and resilience at r = .494**. There also exists an inverse relationship between the variables emotional maturity and coping at r = -.266** and resilience and coping at r = -.258**.

By comparing means of two groups using t test, it was found that there is no significant difference in emotional maturity, resilience and coping in terms of gender, residence and nature of disability associated with the children with exception in resilience (.000) and coping (.006), where there is significant difference in terms of nature of disability associated with the children and gender respectively. Linear regression analysis of variables was performed to predict the effect of emotional maturity and resilience on coping among parents of children with autism and intellectual disability. The linear regression analysis is .082 which shows that emotional maturity and resilience has not affect on coping. Table 1 shows correlation between emotional maturity, resilience and coping among parents with children with autism and intellectual disability, Table 2 shows descriptive statistics and t test of emotional maturity, resilience and coping among parents of children with autism and intellectual disability, Table 3 shows regression analysis of coping with emotional maturity and resilience among parents of children with autism and intellectual disability

Table 1. Correlation Matrix (Emotional Maturity, Resilience, Coping)

Variables	Emotional Maturity	Resilience	Coping
Emotional Maturity	1	.494**	-.266**
Resilience		1	-.258**
Coping			1

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and t-test Results

Variables	Category		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t - value	Sig.
Emotional Maturity	Gender	Male	156	174.10	53.764	.040	.756
		Female	90	174.38	53.860		
	Residence	Rural	118	123.69	56.050	1.031	.166
		Urban	128	123.67	51.405		
	Nature of disability	Autism	84	170.67	48.498	.742	.043
		ID	162	176.03	56.250		
Resilience	Gender	Male	156	122.79	29.503	.663	.011
		Female	90	125.92	24.055		
	Residence	Rural	118	123.69	29.428	.007	.110
		Urban	128	123.67	25.935		
	Nature of disability	Autism	84	129.37	19.366	2.347	.000
		ID	162	120.73	30.676		

Coping	Gender	Male	156	62.66	22.024	1.656	.006
		Female	90	67.19	18.045		
	Residence	Rural	118	65.75	19.959	1.038	.491
		Urban	128	63.00	21.420		
	Nature of disability	Autism	84	63.30	18.494	.554	.039
		ID	162	64.85	21.843		

Table 3. Model Summary (Regression)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std Error of the Estimate
1	.303	.092	.085	19.840

Table 4. ANOVA (Regression)

MODEL 1	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	9689.769	2	4844.884	12.309	.000
Residual	95647.499	243	393.611		
Total	105337.268	245			

Table 5. Coefficients (Regression)

MODEL 1	Un-standard Coefficients		Standard Coefficient Beta	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
Constant	92.224	6.009		15.347	.000
Emotional Maturity	-.071	.027	-.183	-2.603	.010
Resilience	-.126	.053	-.168	-2.389	.018

3.1 Discussion

The study aimed to investigate the influence of emotional maturity and resilience on coping among parents of children with autism and intellectual disability and to find difference in emotional maturity, resilience and coping among parents of children with autism and intellectual disability in terms of nature of disability associated with the children and gender respectively. The study includes 246 members among which 156 participants were male (63.4%) and remaining 90 are female (36.6%). 128 participants belong to urban population (52%) and remaining 118 group falls under rural population (48%). In the aspect of nature of difficulty associated with the children, 162 members (65.9%) have children with intellectual disability and 84 members (34.1%) have children with autism. The results of correlation analysis shows that correlation is significant at 0.01 level and there exist significant positive relationship between variables emotional maturity and resilience at r = .494**. Emotional resilience involves being able to regulate emotions at times of stress which also one of the aspects of emotional maturity, hence it makes sense with the positive association between variables. This is in consistent with the research which states that emotional maturity and resilience have significant positive correlation among non-juvenile delinquents [12].

There also exists an inverse relationship between the variables emotional maturity and coping at r = -.266**. Though the variables emotional maturity, resilience and coping seems to be interrelated, it is not necessary for an emotionally mature or resilient individual to adopt positive coping strategies because the demands of the stressful situation, risk and protective factor varies. This is supported by the research study which states that positive reappraisal coping was found negatively correlated with emotional maturity [13] & resilience and coping at r = -.258**. This is in accordance with the research study which states that lower levels of resilience associated with an increased use of emotional coping styles [14]. The results of t test shows that there is no significant gender difference in emotional maturity (.756) and resilience (.011) among parents of children with autism and intellectual disability, since p > 0.05 which means hypothesis is rejected. Since, the emotional maturity and resilience are factors which is prominently

structured by individual's environment such as protective factor, risk factor, parenting and societal aspects like learning and modelling. It shows that there are no gender differences in emotional maturity and resilience among parents of children with autism and intellectual disability which is in consistent with the research study that indicates that gender doesn't play a significant role in determining the emotional maturity and resilience [15], [16].

There is significant gender difference in coping (.006) among parents of children with autism and intellectual disability, since $p < 0.05$ which means hypothesis is accepted. In general coping styles differ in various aspects, men tend to prefer some type of coping while women tend to prefer other types, so the measured dimensions might be the ones which is more preferred coping styles by men. It shows that there is gender difference in coping among parents of children with autism and intellectual disability which is in accordance with the research study that states that there is observed gender difference in the use of coping strategies (Megan 2008). In terms of residence, there is no significant difference in emotional maturity (.116), resilience (.110) and coping (.491) among parents of children with autism and intellectual disability, since $p > 0.05$ which means hypothesis is rejected.

This indifference might be due to rural places also compete with urban places in the aspect of development with the help of globalization. So, people in both areas gets comparatively similar level of exposure which influence their learning and this in turn shapes their attitude, behaviour and personality. This is in consistent with the research studies that states there is no significant difference in the emotional maturity in terms of residence among undergraduate students [17]. By considering nature of disability associated with the children, there is no significant differences in emotional maturity (.043) and coping (.039) where $p > 0.05$ among parents of children with autism and intellectual disability which means hypothesis is rejected. In terms of resilience (.000), there is significant difference among parents of children with autism and intellectual disability where $p < 0.05$ which means hypothesis is accepted.

By comparing the symptoms of ASD and intellectual disability, Intellectual disability seems to be more severe and they have long term impairment in their functioning adversely than ASD. So, parents of children with intellectual disability lack the tendency to bounce from the adversities such as developmental delays, movement related problems, social life and vocational life of their children. The results of linear regression analysis are .082 which shows that emotional maturity and resilience have not effect on coping.

Though all the terms looks interrelated, it is not necessary for the individual to be effective in coping if they are efficient in emotional maturity and resilience owing to the strategies they adopt which influenced by their protective and risk factors as per demands of the stressful situation which is in consistent with the research studies that states that positive reappraisal coping were found negatively correlated with emotional maturity and higher levels of resilience seemed not to further the positive effect of the adoption of task-oriented coping styles [13], [18].

3.2 Limitations

The inclusion of parents of children with other disabilities could be given consideration to analyses significant differences [19], [20]. The sample has been collected from a specific city only [21], cultural differences has not been discussed. Socio economic status and educational background of parents has not been considered [22].

4. CONCLUSION

According to the study, there is a strong correlation between the traits of emotional maturity, resilience, and coping in parents of autistic and intellectually disabled children. With the exception of coping and resilience, which indicate that there are significant differences in terms of gender and the type of disability associated with the children, parents of children with autism and intellectual disabilities will not exhibit significantly different levels of emotional maturity, resilience, or coping. In the end, it is determined that emotional development and resiliency have little impact on coping.

Acknowledgments

The authors have no specific acknowledgments to make for this research.

Funding Information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Author Contributions Statement

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
Dharshini B	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dr. S. Punithavathi	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

C : **C**onceptualization
M : **M**ethodology
So : **So**ftware
Va : **Va**lidation
Fo : **Fo**rmal analysis
I : **I**nvestigation
R : **R**esources
D : **D**ata Curation
O : Writing - **O**riginal Draft
E : Writing - Review & **E**diting
Vi : **Vi**sualization
Su : **Su**pervision
P : **P**roject administration
Fu : **Fu**nding acquisition

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Informed Consent

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their voluntary consent was obtained prior to data collection.

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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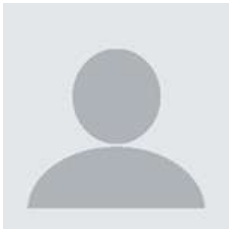
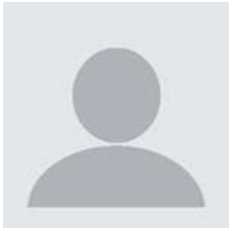
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How to Cite: Dharshini B, Dr. S. Punithavathi. (2023). Influence of emotional maturity and resilience in coping among parents of kids with autism and intellectual disability. Journal of Mental Health Issues and Behavior (JMHIB), 3(2), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.55529/jmhib.34.1.9

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	**Dr. S. Punithavathi,** serves as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at PSG College of Arts and Science in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India. The same department runs an M.Sc. program in Applied Psychology and a Ph.D. program. Her work includes research and supervision in areas like clinical psychology and developmental psychology. The study focuses on parents of children who have autism and intellectual disability. That project uses well-known psychometric measures. These include the Emotional Maturity Scale, the Resilience Scale for Adults, and the Brief-COPE inventory.