



## A Study on the Psychological well Being Among The Parents of Children with Autism

### KEYWORDS

Autism, Psychological Well Being,

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**ABSTRACT** *The present investigation is an attempt to study the Psychological Well Being among the father and mother of children (boys) aged around 5 to 10 years, with Autism. The sample consisted of 50 upper middle class parents of children with Autism. Their age ranged between 25 and 50, belonging to the Chennai city. The Psychological Well Being Scale by Harold Dupy (1984) was assessed on the sample. The obtained data was subjected to t test and results revealed that fathers' Psychological Wellbeing is better than the mothers' Psychological Wellbeing of children with Autism.*

### INTRODUCTION

**Autism** is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by impaired social interaction verbal and non-verbal communication, and restricted and repetitive behavior. Parents usually notice signs in the first two years of their child's life (Myers SM, 2007)<sup>1</sup>. These signs often develop gradually, though some children with autism reach their developmental milestones at a normal pace and then regress (Stefanatos GA, 2008)<sup>2</sup>. The diagnostic criteria require that symptoms become apparent in early childhood, typically before age three (DSM, 2013)<sup>3</sup>. Parents raising a child with a developmental disability face challenges that are not shared by parents of typically developing children (Stoneman, 1997)<sup>4</sup>. There is, however, substantial evidence that the challenges parents face and the ways in which they deal with these challenges vary with the nature of the child's disability (Dunst, Trivette, & Cross, (1986)<sup>5</sup>; Gallagher, Beckman, & Cross, (1983)<sup>6</sup>; Walker, Van Slyke, & Newbrough, (1992)<sup>7</sup>). Recognition of children with Autistic Disorder has increased remarkably leaving significant numbers of children along with their parents, are in need of extensive support services. Indeed, it has been found that parenting a child with Autistic Disorder can disturb the whole family's life and result in several economic, social, physical and psychological problems (Hartley et al., (2010)<sup>8</sup>; Parish, Seltzer, Greenberg, & Floyd, 2004; Shu, (2009)<sup>9</sup>). Therefore, it is important to consider the mental health of the parents in the interventions proposed for children with Autistic Disorder.

### Psychological Well Being

A mental condition characterized by pleasant feelings of good health, exhilaration, high self-esteem and confidence, often associated with regular physical activity.

**Hadopp et.al, (2003)<sup>10</sup>, Johnosn et al., (2003)<sup>11</sup>** demonstrated that parents of children with developmental disabilities experience higher levels of stress than parents of typically developing children

**Webster et.al, (2008)<sup>12</sup>** found that the scores in the Parenting Stress Index were above 85th percentile in over 40% of parents of children with developmental delay, indicating significant parenting stress.

**Almansour et al, (2013)<sup>13</sup>** evidenced that autism is associated with burden and stress for parents/caregivers of the affected child. The demands placed by the disability con-

tribute to a higher overall incidence of depression and anxiety among parents/caregivers.

**Sharpley, et al. (1997)<sup>14</sup>** found in a survey of 219 parents of children with autism, that more than 80% reported sometimes being "stretched beyond their limits," with mothers reporting higher stress levels than fathers.

**Estes et al. (2009)<sup>15</sup>** investigated the child characteristics influence maternal parenting stress and psychological distress. Participants were mothers of preschool-aged children with ASD and mothers of children with DD (developmental delay without autism). Evidence for higher levels of parenting stress and psychological distress was found in mothers in the ASD group, and children's problem behavior was associated with increased parenting stress and psychological distress in mothers in both groups.

**Schieve, et al. (2007)<sup>16</sup>** studied the parents or other caregivers for children with ASD reported their recent feelings about their life sacrifices to care for their child, their difficulty caring for their child, their frustration with their child's actions, and their anger toward their child. Responses were compiled using the Aggravation in Parenting Scale. Parents of children with autism were compared with parents of children with special health-care needs with other developmental problems, children with special health-care needs without developmental problems, and developmentally normal children. Parents of children with autism were significantly more likely to score in the "high aggravation" range than any other parent sample

**Dabrowska (2010)<sup>17</sup>** administered the Questionnaire of Resources and Stress (QRS) to 162 parents of preschool children with autism; predicted that the level of stress would be higher in parents of children with autism than in parents of children with Down's syndrome or in typically developing children. Parents of children with autism also scored higher than Down's parents on three QRS scales (e.g., limits on family opportunities), and higher than parents of typically developing children, on nine out of eleven scales. It found that mothers of children with ASD felt more stress than fathers.

### OBJECTIVE

To determine whether there is a difference between the parents of children with Autism on their Psychological Well Being

**HYPOTHESES**

There will be no significant difference between the father and mother of children with Autism on their **Anxiety**.

There will be no significant difference between the father and mother of children with Autism on their **Depressed Mood**.

There will be no significant difference between the father and mother of children with Autism on their **Positive Well Being**.

There will be no significant difference between the father and mother of children with Autism on their **Self Control**.

There will be no significant difference between the father and mother of children with Autism on their **General Health**.

There will be no significant difference between the father and mother of children with Autism on their **Vitality**.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Sample**

The sample consisted of 25 couple of parents (father & mother) from upper middle class of children with Autism. Their age ranged between 25 and 50, belonging to the Chennai city. Children (boys) age range was between 5 and 10 years.

**Description of the Tools**

**The Psychological Well Being Scale**

This scale is used to measure the Psychological Well Being of Parents of children with Autism. The Psychological Well Being Index is by Harold Dupuy (1984) was used. This questionnaire contains 22 statements constituting 6 dimensions and it's a 6 point scale with appropriate answers to each question is documented.

**Administration**

The Questionnaire was given out to the subjects and the following were informed to them as instruction- Here are some questions try to decide according to the options, there are no right or wrong answers provided as to which represent your way of acting or feeling or how things have been going with you. Then put a tick (✓) in the appropriate to indicate your answer as to which best applies to you.

**Scoring**

Affective Groups	Items	Range
Anxiety	5,8,17,19 and 22	0-25
Depressed Mood	3, 7 and 11	0-15
Positive Well Being	1,9,15 and 20	0-20
Self Control	4,14 and 18	0-15
General Health	2,10 and 13	0-15
Vitality	6,12,16 and 21	0-20

**STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

't' value was computed in order to evaluate the difference between fathers and mothers of children with Autism.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Table I shows the Mean, Standard Deviation, t- value, and the level of significance among the Parents of children with Autism on their **Psychological Well Being**.

Variables	Groups	No. of subs	Mean	SD	t - value	Level of significance
Anxiety	Fathers	25	12.4	2.50	3.48	<b>0.0011</b> s < 0.05
	Mothers	25	10	2.45		
Depressed Mood	Fathers	25	11.6	2.02	5.87	0.0001
	Mothers	25	8.40	1.78		
Positive Well Being	Fathers	25	11.2	2.95	1.96	0.055 Ns
	Mothers	25	9.40	3.64		
Self Control	Fathers	25	8.64	1.52	6.94	0.0001
	Mothers	25	14.8	4.14		
General Health	Fathers	25	11.9	2.18	6.69	0.0001
	Mothers	25	7.04	2.92		
Vitality	Fathers	25	13.2	3.17	1.47	0.15 Ns
	Mothers	25	12	2.77		

**Table I**

The above table shows the data of Parents (fathers & mothers) of children with Autism on their Psychological Wellbeing. On Anxiety and Depressed Mood there is a significant difference between the fathers and mothers which was shown by the mean values. In other words fathers have less anxiety and depressed mood than the mothers of children with Autism. On Positive Wellbeing and Vitality there is no significant difference between fathers and mothers of children with Autism. On the dimension of Self Control the mothers have shown better control than the fathers which was seen by the mean values. Hence, the hypothesis 1, 2, 4 and 5 which stated that there will be no significant difference between the fathers and mothers on the above mentioned dimensions are rejected and the hypothesis 3 and 6 on the mentioned dimensions are accepted. The present study concluded that the parents' stressful factors could be the concern over the permanency of the condition, low level of social support, poor acceptance of autistic behaviour by the society and other family members.

**CONCLUSIONS**

It is thus clear from the study that the fathers of children with Autism have shown reduced Anxiety, Depressed Mood, better in Positive Well-being, General Health, Vitality and less Self- control when compare to mothers of children with Autism.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study can be extended to examine difference between the parents of boys and girls children with Autism.

This study can be extended to implement the coping strategies for parents of children with Autism.

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