

# Level of Perceived Stress and Coping Strategies of Parents Caring for Children with Special Educational Needs During Lockdown of COVID-19

Babar Javid, Hifsa Batool, Abid Masood Khan, Farah Zainab, Saleha Ashraf

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## Abstract:

The COVID-19 plague has become an open danger for individual's physical wellbeing and lives. It has likewise set off a wide variety of psychological issues, for example, panic issue, tension and discouragement. During the lockdown time frame, strain, nervousness and other negative feelings started to raise in the nation, and immediately spread and repeat among the individuals from the entire society (Lima et al., 2020). Pakistan as a multi-ethnic nation in which each person has his or her own way of life. In addition, Pakistani culture is considered by a diversity of social and economic situations. In this context, it is likely to shake the stress level of guardians caring for the children with special educational needs (SEN). In consequence of COVID-19, the socio-economic status of families is affected, as are parents caring for children with special needs. This state may also shake the level of stress among caretakers of children with special educational needs.

Stress denotes to "pressures on an individual that are in some way perceived as excessive or intolerable and also to the psychological and physical changes in response to those pressures i.e., the pattern of specific and non-specific responses an individual makes to the stimulus events that disturb his/her equilibrium and that exceed their ability to cope" (Zimbardo, 2004). Coping techniques are explicit activities, both conduct and mental, that people utilize to ace, endure, diminish, or limit upsetting occasions (Watson, Logan and Tomer, 2008). Previous researchers have demonstrated that coping assumes an urgent job in adjustment to unpleasant life occasions. Coping systems are characterized into dynamic and avoidant techniques. (Coyne and Racioppo, 2000).

The nearness of a child with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in the family makes extra needs, regardless of whether the family can address the issues or not is reliant on number of components like nature of the occasion, the family assets and its impression of the occasion. Study has demonstrated that families, who are productive in adapting to having an exceptional child, can prepare their interior and outer methods for help to manage the unique needs of their child. Assets that go about as facilitators to viable adapting can be of two kinds: inward adapting methodologies (i.e., adapting through inactive evaluation, changing, profound and strict help) and outer adapting procedures (i.e., adapting through utilization of social help or formal help). Guardians realize their kids best and the best for their youngsters (King et al., 2002).

Keeping in mind these circumstances, current study intended to find out the level of stress prevailing among parents caring for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) during lockdown of COVID-19 and to find out the coping mechanism among parents under stress. Population of study is parents caring for children with special educational needs. Sample consisted

of N=100 parents are selected through purposive sampling technique. It is an exploratory research and survey method is used to collect the data. The perceived stress scale and brief COPE inventory are used as tool of study. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) Cohen, and Williamson, (1988) is 10 item questionnaires designed to assess the degree to which situations in one's life are assessed as stressful. The Alpha reliability was found to be 0.70. Brief COPE Inventory is constructed by (Carver et al., 1989), having 28 items is also an instrument of study. The Alpha reliability was found to be 0.70. Parents having age range from 25 years to 55 years are selected as population. Both quantitative and Qualitative methods are used to make results.

During lockdown of COVID-19 it was not an easy task for researchers to approach the sample of study face to face so the data was collected telephonically. Parents were informed briefly about the purpose of research. Consent of parents was taken before administration of tool. Questions were asked in Urdu language so that respondents can understand each statement easily. Responses of parents were recorded over sheet of paper.

Statistical analysis found out in this study that parents caring for children with Special Educational Needs are showing moderate to high level of perceived stress during the lockdown of COVID-19 according to the PSS-10 and the most commonly employed coping mechanism was found to be religion (25%) followed by self-blame (15%), use of informational support (14%), behavioral disengagement(13%), self-distraction (10%), positive reframing (7%), humor (6%), planning and acceptance both are (5%). So, it was indicated that the parents having children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) most commonly use the religion as coping strategy to overcome the stress level among the lockdown of COVID-19. So, it is indicated that the parents caring for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) most commonly use the religion as coping strategy to overcome the stress level among the lockdown of COVID-19. It is also found out that mother and father have significant difference in perceived stress but no significant difference in employing coping mechanism of stress. It is interesting to know that parents living in urban and rural areas have significant difference in perceived stress but there is no significant difference in using coping strategies to rule out stress. Parent's age and educational level does not affect level of stress and coping mechanism.

High level of stress is common among parents caring for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) during lockdown of COVID-19. Parents employed a variety of coping strategies, among which religion was most common. Stress management and coping skills training of parents would be more effective if it is taken to the part of education of Special Needs Children. Keeping in mind findings of this study psychologist may use religion and other coping strategies to bring good output of their psychotherapy. Such training methodologies are being used in the programmes of International day of Person with Disabilities day and annual result day. Such programs can be developed occasionally with a much more dedication from school administration and participation and support of parents as well.

Name: Babar Javid<sup>1</sup>, Hifsa Batool<sup>2</sup>, Abid Masood Khan<sup>2</sup>, Farah Zainab<sup>3</sup>, Saleha Ashraf<sup>2</sup>

Affiliation: <sup>1</sup>Diagnostic Ultrasound Radiology Department Combined Military Hospital, Fatima Ultrasound Center, Pakistan, <sup>2</sup>Govt. Special Education Department, Pakistan

<sup>3</sup>Public finance, MS Business administration, Pakistan, Email: babar.javid2018@gmail.com