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## Coping Pattern and Related Selected Factors Among Parents of Children with Autism Attending to a Special School in Northern Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

**Background/Objectives:** In Sri Lanka 1 in 93 children is affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and this reflects high level of prevalence in Sri Lanka compared to global median ASD prevalence which is 1 child out of 160. Parents of children with ASD experience greater levels of stress, anxiety, and depression than parents of children without ASD. And this psychological impact is multifactorial. Study objective of this study was to assess the coping responses among parents of autism children, and to identify the relationship between the coping mechanism and the socio demographic factors.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional descriptive study was carried out in 91 parents of ASD children who attended to Mathavam, a centre for neuro developmental disorders in Jaffna of Northern Sri Lanka. An Interviewer administered questionnaire which contained socio demographic and economic details, brief COPE inventory scales were used for data collection and the data analysis was performed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-21). Ethical approval obtained from local Ethics Review committee.

**Results:** Mean age of the study participants was 39.1 (SD 6.6) years and the mean age the kids was 6.3 years. Among the coping strategies, frequent involvement with religious activities, acceptance of the condition, venting, making instrumental support, and emotional support, were the common coping mechanisms. Use of self-distraction, substance use, behavioural disengagement, and humour and self-blame were observed as less practiced coping practices in this study.

The identified main coping strategies were not influenced by neither sex of the parent or child. There was no statistical significance identified with these coping mechanisms and religion of the parent or with severity of the disease condition.

**Conclusions:** This study results highlighted the different mechanisms of coping adapted by parents which were not related to their socio demographic characteristics.

**Keywords:** Autism, Coping, Parents of ASD children, Northern Sri Lanka