

Coping Strategies and Quality of Life among Parents of Children in Special Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the influence of coping strategies on the quality of life among parents of children in special education. Guided by the objectives of assessing quality of life, identifying coping strategies, and determining the relationship and influence between the two, the research employed a descriptive comparative design. A total of 200 parents from special education schools in and around Hassan district were selected through convenient sampling. Data were collected using the WHO Quality of Life Scale (Kannada Version) and the Coping Strategies Scale by A.K. Srivatsa. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis were utilized for data analysis. The results revealed significant inter-correlations between certain coping strategies, such as a negative correlation between behavioural and cognitive-avoidance strategies. However, no significant relationship was found between any coping strategy and overall quality of life. Furthermore, regression analysis indicated that coping strategies did not significantly predict quality of life, accounting for only 0.7% of the variance. These findings suggest that while coping strategies may interact with one another, they do not have a significant direct influence on the quality of life among this population, highlighting the need to explore additional factors that may impact parental well-being.

Keywords: *Coping Strategies Quality of Life, Parents of Children in Special Education*

Parenting a child with special needs presents unique challenges that can significantly impact parents' quality of life (QoL) and necessitate various coping strategies (Smith & Brown, 2020). Special education children often require continuous care, specialized education plans, and emotional support, which can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and a decrease in overall well-being among parents (Gupta, 2019). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines quality of life as an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns (WHO, 1997). Coping strategies, as psychological mechanisms, play a crucial role in helping parents manage stress and maintain a balanced life (Srivatsa, 2018). The present study explores the relationship between quality of life and coping strategies among Parents of Children in Special Education, investigating how different coping mechanisms influence their well-being.

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Numerous studies have highlighted the compromised quality of life among parents of children with disabilities due to the physical, emotional, and financial burden involved (Bailey et al., 2019). Research suggests that parents of children with autism, cerebral palsy, and intellectual disabilities report lower QoL compared to parents of typically developing children (Dardas & Ahmad, 2015). The WHO Quality of Life (WHOQOL) scale has been widely used to assess different dimensions of well-being, including physical, psychological, social, and environmental domains (WHO, 1997).

Coping strategies refer to the behavioral and cognitive efforts employed by individuals to manage stressful situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Srivatsa (2018) identified different coping mechanisms, such as problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and avoidance strategies, which parents use to deal with stress. Studies indicate that problem-focused coping, such as seeking social support and engaging in problem-solving, is associated with better psychological well-being (Hastings & Brown, 2020). Conversely, avoidance and emotion-focused coping strategies, such as denial or emotional withdrawal, are linked to poorer QoL and higher stress levels (Risdal & Singer, 2018).

Empirical research suggests a significant correlation between coping strategies and quality of life among caregivers of children with disabilities (Benson, 2018). Adaptive coping strategies, such as positive reframing and seeking support, have been found to enhance life satisfaction and reduce stress (Smith et al., 2021). In contrast, maladaptive coping strategies, such as self-blame and avoidance, are negatively associated with psychological well-being (Kuhaneck et al., 2019). This highlights the need for targeted interventions to promote effective coping mechanisms among Parents of Children in Special Education.

Several studies have examined the predictive role of coping strategies in determining QoL outcomes (Kenny & McGilloway, 2017). Research indicates that resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms significantly contribute to better health, reduced stress, and improved emotional stability (Shattnawi et al., 2020). The effectiveness of coping strategies may also vary based on demographic factors such as socioeconomic status, cultural beliefs, and available support systems (Lai et al., 2021). Interventions focusing on equipping parents with effective coping skills can serve as an essential tool for improving their overall well-being.

Understanding the interplay between quality of life and coping strategies among Parents of Children in Special Education is crucial for designing support systems that enhance parental well-being. This study aims to provide empirical insights into the coping mechanisms that best contribute to improved quality of life, utilizing standardized measures such as the WHOQOL (Kannada version) and the Coping Strategies Scale by Srivatsa. The findings will offer valuable implications for mental health professionals, educators, and policymakers in developing targeted interventions.

METHOD

Statement of the research problem: To study the influence of coping strategies on the quality of life among Parents of Children in Special Education.

Objectives

1. To assess the quality of life among Parents of Children in Special Education.
2. To examine the coping strategies used by Parents of Children in Special Education.

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3. To determine the relationship between quality of life and coping strategies among Parents of Children in Special Education.
4. To analyze the influence of coping strategies on the quality of life among Parents of Children in Special Education.

Hypotheses

1. There is a significant relationship between quality of life and coping strategies among Parents of Children in Special Education.
2. Different coping strategies significantly influence the quality of life among Parents of Children in Special Education.

Operational Definitions

- **Quality of Life (QoL):** The overall well-being and satisfaction of Parents of Children in Special Education, assessed using the WHO Quality of Life Scale (Kannada Version).
- **Coping Strategies:** The various methods parents employ to manage stress and challenges related to raising a special education child, measured using the Coping Strategies Scale by A. K. Srivatsa.
- **Special Education Children:** Children who require specialized educational interventions due to developmental, cognitive, or physical disabilities.

Research Design

The study adopted a **descriptive comparative design** to analyze the relationship between quality of life and coping strategies among Parents of Children in Special Education.

Sampling Design

- **Sample Size:** 200 Parents of Children in Special Education.
- **Sampling Technique:** Convenient sampling method was used to select participants from special schools.
- **Geographical Location:** Data was collected in and around Hassan district from various special education schools.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Parents of children enrolled in special education schools.
2. Parents who provided informed consent for participation in the study.
3. Parents who were fluent in Kannada (as the WHO-QoL scale Kannada version was used).

Tools Used

1. **WHO Quality of Life Scale (Kannada Version):** A standardized scale to assess quality of life across physical, psychological, social, and environmental domains. The WHOQOL is a quality-of-life assessment developed by the WHOQOL Group with fifteen international field centres, simultaneously, in an attempt to develop a quality-of-life assessment that would be applicable cross-culturally.
2. **Coping Strategies Scale (A. K. Srivatsa):** A validated instrument to measure different coping mechanisms used by parents. The tool used is a standardized device to assess coping. The scale contains 50 items to be rated on five-point scale, describing values of coping behaviour. The reliability of the test: Test- retest reliability is 0.92 and the split half reliability is 0.69 to 0.78. Validity of the test:

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Content validity median is 0.34 to 0.39 at the significance at 0.01. Concurrent validity on MH inventory 0.19 to 0.39 at significance level 0.05.

Statistical Procedures

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Mean, standard deviation, and percentages were used to summarize the data.
- **Correlation Analysis:** Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to examine the relationship between quality of life and coping strategies.
- **Regression Analysis:** Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive influence of coping strategies on quality of life.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

In analyzing the results of this study, the focus centers on exploring the relationship between quality of life and coping strategies among parents of children in special education. Specifically, the analysis aims to determine whether a significant correlation exists between these two variables, as well as how different coping strategies may influence overall quality of life. To achieve this, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between coping strategies and quality of life. Additionally, regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which various coping strategies serve as predictors of quality of life outcomes. The findings provide valuable insights into the psychological and emotional dynamics faced by these parents and underscore the importance of effective coping mechanisms in enhancing their well-being.

Table 1 Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Coping Approaches and Quality of Life Scores

		Behavioural Approach	Cognitive approach	Cognitive-Behavioural approach	Behavioural-Avoidance Approach	Cognitive-Avoidance Approach	Score on Quality of Life
Behavioural Approach	Pearson Correlation	1	-.115	.064	-.099	.170	-.076
	Sig.		.106	.367	.163	.016	.286
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
Cognitive approach	Pearson Correlation	-.115	1	-.087	.121	.084	.020
	Sig.	.106		.222	.089	.238	.776
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
Cognitive-Behavioural approach	Pearson Correlation	.064	-.087	1	-.071	-.140	.007
	Sig.	.367	.222		.316	.048	.926
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
Behavioural-Avoidance Approach	Pearson Correlation	-.099	.121	-.071	1	.070	.045
	Sig.	.163	.089	.316		.324	.524
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
Cognitive-Avoidance Approach	Pearson Correlation	.170*	.084	-.140*	.070*	1	-.015*
	Sig.	.016	.238	.048	.324		.830
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
Score on Quality of Life	Pearson Correlation	-.076	.020	.007	.045	-.015	1
	Sig.	.286	.776	.926	.524	.830	
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200

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A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between coping strategies and quality of life scores among parents of children in special education. The results indicated the following correlations:

- Behavioural Approach: There was a significant negative correlation with the Cognitive-Avoidance Approach ($r = -0.170$, $p = 0.016$), suggesting that as the use of the behavioural approach increases, the cognitive-avoidance strategy decreases.
- Cognitive Approach: No significant correlations were found with other coping strategies or quality of life scores (all $p > 0.05$).
- Cognitive-Behavioural Approach: A significant negative correlation was found with the Cognitive-Avoidance Approach ($r = -0.140$, $p = 0.048$), indicating that higher cognitive-behavioural strategies are associated with lower cognitive-avoidance strategies.
- Behavioural-Avoidance Approach: No significant correlations were found with other coping strategies or quality of life scores (all $p > 0.05$).
- Cognitive-Avoidance Approach: A significant positive correlation was found with the Behavioural Approach ($r = 0.170$, $p = 0.016$), indicating that higher cognitive-avoidance strategies are associated with increased use of behavioural strategies.
- Score on Quality of Life: No significant correlations were found with any coping strategies (all $p > 0.05$).

These findings suggest that while some coping strategies are significantly correlated with each other, the overall relationship with quality of life scores is not significant, indicating that other factors may influence quality of life among this population.

Table-2 Regression Analysis

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.086 ^a	.007	-.018	8.325

a. Predictors: (Constant), Cognitive-Avoidance Approach, Behavioural-Avoidance Approach, Cognitive approach, Cognitive-Behavioural approach, Behavioural Approach

Table-3 Showing Analysis of Variance results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	101.300	5	20.260	.292	.917 ^b
	Residual	13445.080	194	69.305		
	Total	13546.380	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Score on Quality of Life

b. Predictors: (Constant), Cognitive-Avoidance Approach, Behavioural-Avoidance Approach, Cognitive approach, Cognitive-Behavioural approach, Behavioural Approach

Table 4 Showing Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	66.933	26.007			
	Behavioural Approach	-.374	.388	-.071	.011	
	Cognitive approach	.082	.663	.009	.337	
	Cognitive-Behavioural approach	.095	.491	.014	.901	
	Behavioural-Avoidance Approach	.290	.546	.039	.847	
	Cognitive-Avoidance Approach	-.077	1.219	-.005	.596	
					.950	

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A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of various coping strategies on the quality of life among parents of children in special education. The model did not significantly predict the quality of life, $F(5,194) = 0.292$, $p = 0.917$. The R^2 value was 0.007, indicating that only 0.7% of the variance in quality of life scores could be explained by the coping strategies included in the model. None of the individual coping strategies were statistically significant predictors of quality of life, with p -values ranging from 0.337 to 0.950. Hence the results are not according to the hypothesis Different coping strategies significantly influence the quality of life among Parents of Children in Special Education.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to explore the relationship between coping strategies and quality of life among parents of children in special education. The findings revealed that while certain coping strategies were significantly interrelated, none demonstrated a significant association with overall quality of life scores. Specifically, the Pearson correlation analysis indicated no statistically significant correlation between any individual coping strategy and quality of life (all $p > .05$), suggesting that coping strategies alone may not directly influence the well-being of these parents.

Additionally, the multiple regression analysis further supported this conclusion, showing that the set of coping strategies assessed—namely behavioural, cognitive, cognitive-behavioural, behavioural-avoidance, and cognitive-avoidance approaches—did not significantly predict quality of life outcomes, $F(5, 194) = 0.292$, $p = .917$. The low R^2 value (.007) indicates that these coping strategies accounted for less than 1% of the variance in quality of life. These findings contradict the initial hypothesis that different coping strategies would significantly influence the quality of life among parents of children in special education.

The lack of significant association may suggest that quality of life in this population is influenced by a broader range of psychosocial, economic, and contextual factors beyond individual coping mechanisms. Past research has emphasized the complex interplay of stress, social support, and socio-demographic variables in shaping parental well-being (Bailey et al., 2007; Weiss et al., 2013). It is also possible that while coping strategies might mediate certain stress-related outcomes, their direct impact on overall quality of life is limited or indirect.

Future studies should consider incorporating a broader ecological perspective, examining the roles of external support systems, financial strain, access to services, and parental mental health, as these may serve as more potent predictors of well-being in this demographic (Resch et al., 2010). Moreover, qualitative approaches might provide deeper insight into how parents perceive and utilize coping mechanisms in their daily lives.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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