

Mothering Amidst Neurodiversity: A Systematic Review of Global and Indian Perspectives on Autism Care and Support

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Abstract: This systematic literature review synthesizes findings from 46 studies examining the lived experiences, stressors, and support systems of mothers raising children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) across diverse cultural contexts. Mothers of children with ASD face heightened psychological stress and caregiving burden, often intensified by social stigma, financial strain, and insufficient institutional support. Family and spousal support consistently emerged as key protective factors, mitigating depressive symptoms and emotional exhaustion (Nirbhay N. Singh G. E.-S., 2020) (Prinu Jose, 2018) (Yulina Eva Riany, 2021). While formal support systems such as schools and health services were frequently reported as inadequate, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic (Roberto Marcone, 2023), community-based interventions, such as inclusive music programs, promoted social engagement and emotional relief (Miriam D. Lense, 2020). Online platforms, particularly social media, provided mothers with emotional validation and shared knowledge in low-resource settings (Siti Hajar Mohd Roffeei, 2015). Additionally, psychological resilience, self-compassion, and perceived social support were closely associated with posttraumatic growth (Mona Tawakkul Ebrahim, 2021) (Buchhol, 2023). Crucially, the presence of services alone did not ensure positive outcomes; the emotional quality and relevance of those supports played a determining role (Jocelyn Kuhn, 2017). The findings highlight the need for multi-layered, culturally sensitive support systems for maternal caregivers in neurodiverse families.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Mothers, Caregiving, Coping Strategies, Social Support, Systematic Literature Review, Parental Stress, Community-based Interventions, Neurodiversity, Cultural Contexts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex neurodevelopmental condition characterized by challenges in social communication, restricted interests, and repetitive behaviors (Association, 2013). Globally, the prevalence of ASD has increased significantly, with recent estimates suggesting that 1 in 100 children are affected ((WHO), 2022). In the Indian context, the prevalence is estimated at around 1 in 68 children (Arora, 2018), although underdiagnosis remains a concern due to limited awareness, stigma, and disparities in access to diagnostic services (Daley, 2002) (Desai, 2012)

The burden of caregiving in families of children with ASD disproportionately falls on mothers, who often serve as the primary caregivers. This responsibility entails not only managing the child's developmental and behavioral challenges but also navigating inadequate support systems, societal stigma, and financial constraints (Ravindran, 2012) (Singh, 2017) Despite growing attention to neurodiversity, maternal caregivers frequently experience elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion (Prinu Jose, 2018) (Yulina Eva Riany, 2021)

This systematic literature reviews 46 studies synthesizing global and Indian research to examine the lived experiences of mothers raising children with ASD. It aims to understand the stressors they face, the coping strategies they employ, and the formal and informal support systems available to them. Through this review, we seek to highlight culturally grounded insights that can inform inclusive policy and community-based interventions.

2. METHODOLOGY

SEARCH STRATEGY

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across databases including PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Sciences. The search terms used were: "Resilience in Mothers," "autism spectrum disorder," "Lived Experiences of Mothers", "Challenges Faced by ASD Mother", "Coping Strategies", "Support Systems", and "ASD in India."

The Inclusion Criteria for the study encompassed empirical research published between 2012 and 2025, incorporating qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies that focused on resilience or coping strategies among mothers of children with ASD. Only open-access full-text PDFs of research conducted in urban areas were considered, with at least ten studies from India.

Exclusion Criteria eliminated studies not in English, those not specifically addressing mothers or resilience, articles unrelated to the study's objectives, and research outside neuroscience, social sciences, and psychology.

PRISMA FLOW DIAGRAM

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) diagram is a visual representation used to illustrate the selection process in systematic literature reviews. In the context of a study on resilience and mental health in mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder, the PRISMA diagram highlights the stages of the review, including the number of studies identified through database searches, screened for relevance, assessed for eligibility through full text reviews, and finally included in the analysis. It provides transparency and clarity regarding inclusion and exclusion criteria, ensuring the methodological rigor of the review.

IDENTIFICATION- A comprehensive search across multiple databases identified a total of 6,885 studies, including 1,011 from Scopus, 376 from Web of Science, 5,468 from PubMed, and 30 from registers (17 from the *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* and 13 from *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*). Of these, 6,660 studies were excluded prior to screening due to ineligibility identified through automation tools and other criteria, leaving 225 studies for further review.

SCREENING- A total of 225 studies were initially screened for relevance based on their titles and abstracts, resulting in the exclusion of 54 duplicate entries. Of the remaining 171 studies, 37 were excluded due to restricted access, while 88 were eliminated based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

ELIGIBILITY- A comprehensive review of 46 studies was conducted which were eligible for review based on the criteria.

INCLUDED- 46 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in this systematic review.

3. DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The 46 studies reviewed in this systematic literature analysis span a wide range of geographical, disciplinary, and methodological contexts, offering a broad understanding of maternal experiences in raising children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Geographic-Distribution:

The studies reflect a global scope, with a strong representation from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). India had the highest representation with **eight studies**, followed by **five from the United States**, **four each from Saudi Arabia and Malaysia**, and **three from Pakistan**. Additional contributions came from countries such as **Poland, South Africa, Indonesia, Tunisia, Greece, Egypt, and Canada**, illustrating cross-cultural diversity in maternal caregiving experiences.

Disciplinary-Representation:

The majority of the research was rooted in **psychology**, followed by **social work, education, and public health**. This reflects a predominantly mental health-focused lens in exploring ASD caregiving, with relatively fewer studies adopting a sociological or policy-oriented perspective.

Methodological-Trends:

Most studies used **qualitative methodologies**, particularly **phenomenological designs** to explore lived experiences. Studies examining **resilience, coping mechanisms, or support systems** frequently employed **cross-sectional survey designs**. A few studies used **mixed-method approaches**, integrating interviews with standardized scales for psychological assessment.

Data-Collection-Tools:

Semi-structured interviews were the most common data collection method in qualitative studies, often supplemented with field notes and thematic analysis. For quantitative studies, tools like the **Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-25)**, **Parental Stress Index (PSI)**, and **Beck Depression Inventory (BDI)** were frequently employed to measure resilience, stress, and emotional well-being.

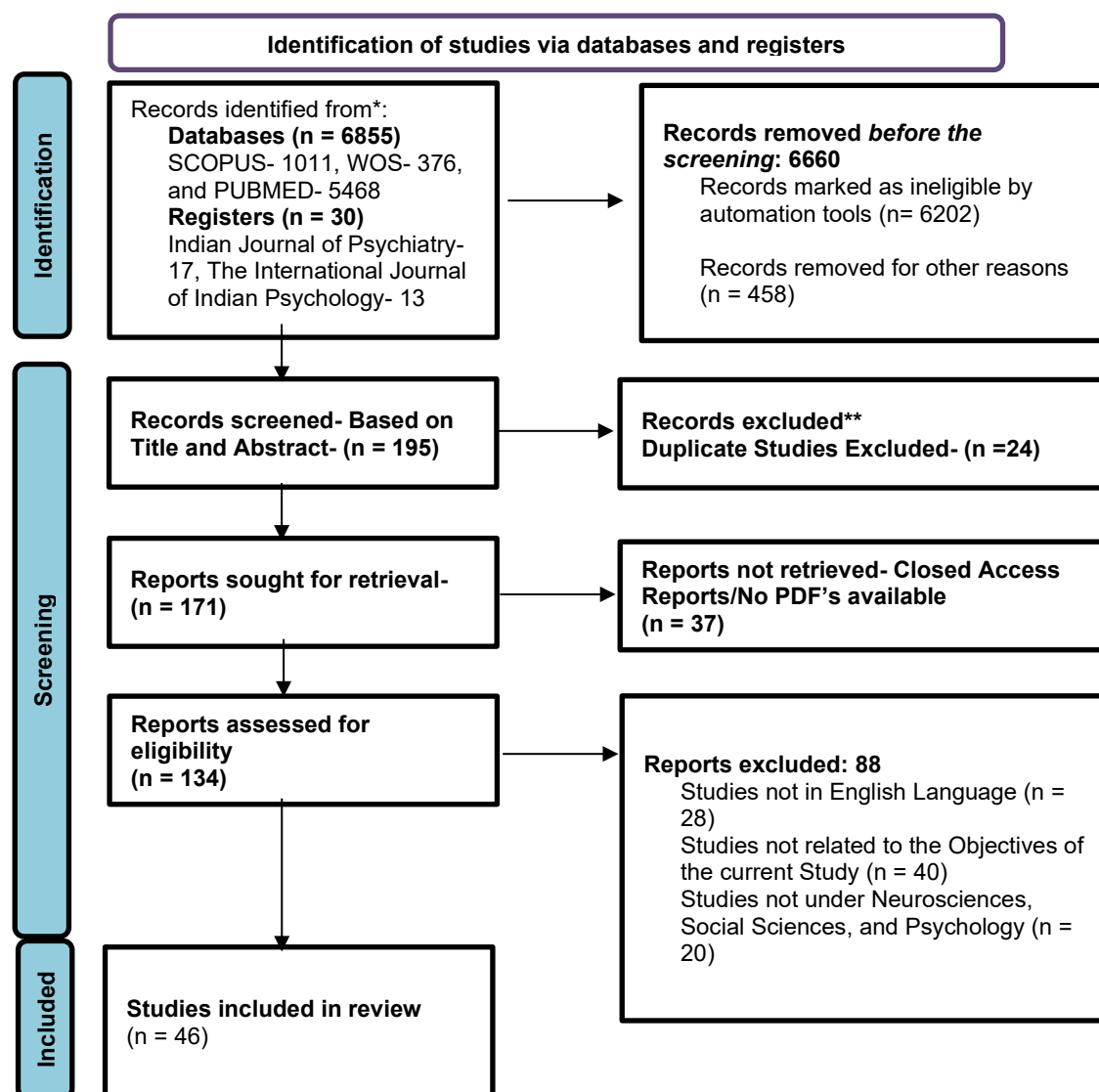
Analytical-Approaches:

Qualitative studies predominantly used **thematic analysis** or **interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA)**, while quantitative studies reported descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, and regression models. Only a small subset of studies included longitudinal or intervention-based designs, pointing to a methodological gap in tracking long-term caregiving trajectories.

Sample-Characteristics:

The focus was largely on **mothers as primary caregivers**, with few studies including fathers or extended family members. Most participants were from **urban or peri-urban areas**, limiting generalizability to rural populations.

PRISMA 2020 FLOW DIAGRAM FOR NEW SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS WHICH INCLUDED SEARCHES OF DATABASES AND REGISTERS ONLY



*Consider, if feasible to do so, reporting the number of records identified from each database or register searched (rather than the total number across all databases/registers).

****If automation tools were used, indicate how many records were excluded by a human and how many were excluded by automation tools.**

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A Synthesis of Autism Spectrum Disorder Research in India: Diagnostic, Intervention, and Caregiver Perspectives

Research on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in India over the past decade has spanned multiple domains, including risk factors, diagnostic practices, intervention strategies, communication tools, and caregiver challenges. Despite the increasing prevalence of ASD and growing awareness, the Indian context presents unique challenges due to cultural, structural, and systemic limitations.

1. Risk Factors and Epidemiological Concerns

In an early investigation into prenatal risk factors, (Madhu Mamidala, 2013) conducted an epidemiological study that found a significant association between maternal hormonal interventions and ASD. The study highlighted the growing use of assisted reproductive technologies in India and postulated that disturbances in the fetal environment due to hormonal imbalances may influence fetal neurodevelopment. The authors emphasized the need for further quantitative research, including dosage assessments and evaluations of genetic predisposition. (Madhu Mamidala, 2013)

2. Diagnosis, Screening, and Professional Knowledge

The diagnostic landscape in India has been critically examined across several studies. (Punam Uke, 2024) provided a comprehensive review of diagnostic tools and screening practices, underscoring the utility of instruments like the Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT) and the Indian Scale for Assessment of Autism (ISAA). The review also emphasized the barriers posed by stigma, lack of awareness, and late identification of early symptoms, which are prevalent in the Indian context.

(Atika Jain, 2020) assessed cross-disciplinary differences in knowledge and beliefs among healthcare professionals and students. They found that although basic awareness of ASD was present across groups, there was significant variability in beliefs and practices, underscoring the need for standardized professional training and updates on recent diagnostic criteria.

Methodological critiques of diagnostic research have also emerged. (Devavrat Harshe, 2020) pointed out flaws in a national survey study, particularly the lack of piloting and psychometric validation of the tools used. Such issues raise concerns about the reliability of prevalence estimates and diagnostic data emerging from India.

3. Communication and Augmentative Technology

One of the pioneering contributions to culturally adapted intervention tools comes from (Sudha Srinivasan, 2022) who developed the Jellow Communicator, a child-friendly augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) system tailored to India's socio-cultural and linguistic diversity. Their pilot study in Mumbai demonstrated improvements in communication among children with ASD, with a significant increase in spontaneous requesting behavior and high caregiver satisfaction. The study supports the scalability of both low-tech and high-tech AAC systems for children with communication challenges (Sudha Srinivasan, 2022)

Complementing this, (Murugesan Krupa, 2019) investigated mother-child interactions and found distinct linguistic patterns in speech directed at children with ASD. Mothers of children with ASD used more imperative utterances and dominated interactions, while mothers of typically developing children engaged more in responsive and interrogative communication. These findings point to the need for caregiver training in communication strategies that foster reciprocal interaction.

4. Intervention Strategies: Low-Resource and Parent-Mediated Models

Given India's constraints in trained personnel and infrastructure, low-intensity and parent-mediated interventions have garnered attention. (M. K. C. Nair, 2014) conducted a large-scale naturalistic study demonstrating that even low-intensity, clinic-based interventions can reduce ASD symptoms. However, they cautioned that the absence of a control group and lack of data on intervention "dosage" limit causal inferences.

Similarly, (Kirthika Rajaraman, 2021) demonstrated that the SCoPE-EDITT program, a parent-mediated early intervention model, led to significant improvements in joint attention, imitation, and cognitive development over a 9-month period. The results underscore the efficacy of empowering caregivers as co-therapists, especially in resource-limited settings.

(Dimpi Mhatre, 2015) provided a long-term perspective on intervention outcomes, finding that lower baseline symptom severity and higher maternal education and parental involvement were stronger predictors of favorable outcomes in speech and independent functioning than early therapy onset. However, the authors noted that reliance on parent-reported telephone interviews and unvalidated questionnaires could introduce bias.

5. Caregiver Challenges and Psychological Well-being

The psychological toll on mothers of children with ASD is a recurring theme in Indian research. (Shebna A Khader, 2020), using the Symptom Checklist-90-R, found that depression and anxiety were the most common psychopathologies among mothers attending outpatient clinics. The authors advocate for early psychological support for mothers to improve both caregiver mental health and child outcomes.

A broader synthesis of caregiver experiences is provided by (N. Venkata Tejo Prasanna, 2024), who conducted a narrative review of qualitative studies. Their review noted a dearth of in-depth qualitative research and highlighted common challenges faced by Indian caregivers, including stigma, financial burden, lack of services, and emotional strain. They called for further qualitative investigations to inform policy and intervention design.

Together, these studies offer a multidimensional understanding of ASD in India. From epidemiological risk factors and diagnostic practices to intervention models and caregiver well-being, the research underscores the urgent need for context-sensitive, scalable, and interdisciplinary approaches. While promising innovations such as the Jellow Communicator and parent-mediated therapies demonstrate localized effectiveness, significant gaps persist in early screening, professional training, and caregiver mental health services. A national framework that integrates evidence-based practices with cultural relevance and resource adaptability is crucial for improving outcomes for individuals with ASD and their families in India.

Support Systems for Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Cross-Cultural Synthesis

Mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) consistently face elevated levels of stress, psychological burden, and emotional vulnerability. Across cultural contexts, research has demonstrated the profound role that support systems including family, community, institutional, and online networks play in buffering maternal stress and enhancing overall psychological resilience and well-being.

Family and Spousal Support as Critical Protective Factors

Empirical studies have consistently highlighted family support, especially from spouses and close relatives, as a significant protective factor against depression and stress in mothers of children with ASD. In India, (Nirbhay N. Singh, 2020) found that subjective burden significantly predicted depression, and that medium to high levels of family support not only reduced depression directly but also moderated the effect of burden on psychological outcomes. Similarly, (Prinu Jose, 2018), in a Kerala-based study, demonstrated that spousal support was a key determinant of maternal stress levels. When spousal support was high, the stress levels varied according to the severity of the child's condition; in contrast, low spousal support resulted in consistently elevated maternal stress, regardless of the child's functioning (Prinu Jose, 2018)

Parallel findings have emerged in cross-cultural contexts. In Indonesia, (Yulina Eva Riany, 2021) found that support from husbands and extended family significantly predicted lower levels of parenting stress among mothers of children with ASD and ADHD. Likewise, (Buchhol, 2023), examining mothers in Poland, reported statistically significant positive correlations between emotional and instrumental support and multiple dimensions of psychological resilience. These findings reinforce the importance of familial and spousal involvement in enhancing maternal coping capacities.

Perceived Social Support and Community Integration

Beyond family, social support from institutions and the community has shown variable but important effects. In a study from southern Italy, (Roberto Marcone, 2023) noted that low perceived support from schools, health services, and NGOs was associated with high levels of parental stress, an issue exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Community-level interventions, such as the parent-child music program examined by (Miriam D. Lense, 2020) may serve as innovative

approaches to fostering community inclusion, increasing positive affect in caregivers, and building cross-family social relationships. These programs not only benefit families of children with ASD but also foster acceptance and attitudinal change in families of typically developing (TD) children, thereby promoting inclusive social attitudes.

Findings from Southeast Europe also underscore regional complexities in institutional support. (Jelena Medaković, 2024) reported that caregivers in Croatia, North Macedonia, and Serbia, though facing multiple challenges, generally expressed satisfaction with available services, indicating variability in perception and access across different socio-political landscapes.

Online Social Networks and Virtual Support

In contexts where in-person support is limited, online communities have emerged as valuable sources of emotional and informational aid. (Siti Hajar Mohd Roffeei, 2015) found that Facebook-based groups for parents of children with ASD primarily provided informational (30.7%) and emotional (27.8%) support, facilitating coping and social connection. Such virtual platforms help caregivers mitigate isolation, share practical advice, and emotionally process challenges, especially important in regions where stigma or logistical barriers hinder in-person support-seeking behaviors.

Psychological Resilience, Self-Compassion, and Posttraumatic Growth

Resilience and self-compassion have also been identified as internal buffers enhancing the efficacy of external support systems. (Mona Tawakkul Ebrahim, 2021) explored posttraumatic growth (PTG) in Saudi mothers of children with ASD and found that both social support and resilience significantly predicted PTG, enabling mothers to reframe their experiences and derive psychological benefit. Similarly, (Yulina Eva Riany, 2021) found that self-compassion independently reduced parenting stress, suggesting that internal emotional regulation may complement social supports in promoting maternal well-being.

The broader concept of resilience also appears central to quality of life in caregivers and individuals with chronic conditions. (Hanoch Ben-David, 2020) reported that ego-resiliency mediated the relationship between disability and health-related quality of life (HRQoL) among individuals with multiple sclerosis, emphasizing that resilience may be a better predictor of well-being than the degree of disability itself. Though not specific to ASD, the findings suggest the transferability of resilience frameworks across neurodevelopmental and neurological contexts.

Post-Diagnostic and Early Support Needs

The period immediately following a child's diagnosis represents a critical window for support. (Aspasia Stacey Rabba, 2019) found that parents, particularly mothers, articulated intense emotional needs within the first 24 months of an ASD diagnosis. The study emphasized the necessity for tailored family support programs grounded in caregiver feedback to address emotional, informational, and systemic gaps in this early stage.

Support Quality vs. Quantity: A Systems Perspective

Interestingly, the quality of support may outweigh its structural availability. (Jocelyn Kuhn, 2017), employing Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, found that while most mothers of adolescents with ASD had strong systemic connections, these were not always associated with improved psychological well-being. In contrast, stressful or weak connections were significantly related to higher depressive symptoms, stress, and caregiver burden. These findings point to the importance of meaningful, responsive support rather than merely structural connectivity within systems.

Across diverse sociocultural settings, support systems, both formal and informal play a foundational role in mitigating psychological stress and enhancing the resilience of mothers raising children with ASD. Family and spousal support consistently emerge as the most robust predictors of maternal well-being. However, institutional and community-based interventions, online support networks, and internal coping mechanisms such as self-compassion and psychological resilience are equally critical in shaping caregiving experiences.

Future intervention models should adopt multi-layered, eco-systemic approaches that incorporate cultural nuances, empower family networks, facilitate inclusive community programs, and build emotional competencies in caregivers. A holistic understanding of maternal support systems is essential for promoting both caregiver mental health and optimal developmental outcomes for children with ASD.

Challenges Faced by Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Cross-Cultural Synthesis

Mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) face a multifaceted range of challenges that encompass psychological distress, financial strain, systemic inadequacies, and sociocultural barriers. Across diverse geographical and cultural contexts, studies have consistently shown that these mothers are often the primary caregivers, bearing the brunt of caregiving responsibilities with limited structural and psychosocial support.

A prominent theme in the literature is the initial emotional response to diagnosis, which is frequently characterized by denial, grief, confusion, and psychological turmoil. Studies from Tunisia and Malaysia found that mothers often experience denial and emotional rejection upon learning of their child's diagnosis, which can delay adjustment and acceptance (Nihed Abid, 2022) (Hazlina Abdullah, 2022). This is often compounded by a lack of understanding and awareness about ASD, both within families and the broader community, leading to misconceptions, stigma, and emotional isolation (Vasiliki Zarokanellou, 2022) (Hazlina Abdullah, 2022).

Psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, and chronic stress, is a recurring challenge. In a large U.S.-based study, parents of children with ASD reported significantly higher levels of psychological distress, particularly symptoms such as hyperarousal and loneliness, compared to parents of neurotypical children during the COVID-19 pandemic (Luther G. Kalb, 2021). Similar findings have been observed globally. In Egypt, mothers reported a pervasive sense of psychosocial burden due to the continuous care needs of their children, exacerbated by inadequate access to education and healthcare services (Ahmed Hashem El-Monshed, 2021). (Brian Lovell, 2012) documented psychophysiological consequences of caregiver stress, including elevated inflammation markers such as C-reactive protein, illustrating the physical health implications of long-term caregiving stress.

Structural and systemic limitations in healthcare and education services further intensify maternal challenges. In Tunisia and Egypt, high costs, long wait times, and insufficient specialized services contribute to the burden (Nihed Abid, 2022) (Ahmed Hashem El-Monshed, 2021). Malaysian studies underscore similar concerns, noting that mothers often face lengthy delays in diagnosis and a general lack of accessible and coordinated support services (Nihed Abid, 2022). Even in contexts with relatively better resources, such as Greece, gaps in public awareness and social attitudes continue to hinder effective integration and support (Vasiliki Zarokanellou, 2022).

An important but under-discussed challenge is the unmet need for structured psychosocial and financial support. In Tunisia, although informal support from extended family was sometimes available, mothers reported significant gaps in financial aid and training programs to help them navigate their caregiving responsibilities (Nihed Abid, 2022). In Canada, caregiver burden was closely associated with perceptions of unmet service needs, regardless of the child's level of impairment (Vanessa M. Vogan, 2014).

The demanding nature of treatment adherence also contributes to stress. (Aimee K. Rovane, 2020) found that higher adherence to treatment correlated with lower parental stress, but only when treatment was perceived as less demanding. This suggests that overly complex or rigid intervention programs may inadvertently increase caregiver strain. Furthermore, machine learning models developed by (Hangnyoung Choi, 2023) identified several predictive factors of parenting stress, reinforcing the need for personalized and timely interventions.

Social isolation and stigma remain critical concerns. Due to negative societal attitudes, many mothers experience exclusion from social gatherings, community events, and even educational systems, as highlighted in multiple studies across Asia and Africa (Ahmed Hashem El-Monshed, 2021) (Nihed Abid, 2022) (Hazlina Abdullah, 2022). Religious or cultural beliefs may also impact how mothers perceive and cope with ASD. For instance, some South African mothers interpreted their child's condition through the lens of traditional beliefs such as witchcraft, further complicating access to evidence-based interventions (Hilda N. Shilubane, 2020).

Finally, caregiver satisfaction with healthcare services plays a significant role in shaping maternal well-being. (Nihed Abid, 2022) demonstrated that dissatisfaction with healthcare processes, including delayed consultations was strongly associated with lower caregiver satisfaction in Malaysia, pointing to the urgent need to streamline healthcare delivery systems for ASD.

In sum, the challenges faced by mothers of children with ASD are diverse and complex, spanning psychological, economic, social, and systemic domains. These difficulties are often exacerbated by cultural misconceptions, limited professional support, and a lack of inclusive services. There is a pressing need for comprehensive, culturally sensitive

interventions that address these challenges holistically, recognizing mothers as critical stakeholders in the long-term developmental outcomes of children with ASD.

Coping Strategies Adopted by Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Synthesis of Empirical Evidence

Mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) encounter significant psychosocial challenges that necessitate the development and use of various coping strategies. These coping mechanisms, influenced by sociocultural contexts, psychological resilience, and systemic support, vary widely across geographical regions and personal circumstances.

A recurring theme in the literature is the early adoption of maladaptive or avoidant coping strategies by mothers upon learning of their child's diagnosis. For instance, in a study conducted in Karachi, Pakistan, mothers initially resorted to escape and avoidance behaviors, such as withdrawing from social interactions, before gradually accepting their reality and adapting to caregiving routines (Juveriah Furrukh, 2020). Similarly, in Croatia during the COVID-19 lockdown, mothers of children with ASD and ADHD predominantly used passive appraisal strategies, characterized by avoidance and denial, which were associated with elevated stress levels (Daniela Cvitković, 2024). Emotion-focused coping mechanisms such as denial, avoidance, and escape are consistently linked with higher psychological distress (Shabnam Rasoulpoor, 2023), whereas problem-focused strategies tend to yield more favorable mental health outcomes.

Resilience-based and psychosocial interventions have been shown to enhance adaptive coping. Parent training programs, for example, have demonstrated efficacy in decreasing avoidance-based coping and fostering positive appraisal and emotional regulation (Naoko Iida, 2018). Likewise, resiliency training significantly reduced perceived stress and promoted the use of problem-focused coping strategies in Iranian mothers (Nooshin Kord, 2020). The role of psychological capital, comprising self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism, has also emerged as a significant predictor of psychological well-being, particularly in non-employed mothers in Saudi Arabia (Nawal A. Al Eid, 2024).

Spirituality and religiosity represent culturally salient coping resources in several contexts. In Iran, high levels of spiritual-religious well-being, particularly transcendent hope and spiritual connectedness, were inversely related to perceived stigma among caregivers (Mahmoud Shokouhi-Tabar, 2025). Similarly, in South Africa, religious practices such as prayer and community support from church networks were commonly reported coping strategies (Hilda N. Shilubane, 2020). These findings underscore the importance of culturally tailored interventions that incorporate spiritual dimensions into caregiver support frameworks.

Despite the high prevalence of psychological distress, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and impaired quality of life, many mothers demonstrate notable psychological resilience. In India, mothers of children with ASD showed positive coping styles even amidst elevated levels of psychological distress, highlighting the duality of vulnerability and strength (Nivedhitha Selvakumar, 2020). Another Indian study emphasized that social withdrawal and reintegration were part of the cyclical adaptation process, with unmet needs in social and healthcare services exacerbating parental burden (Gauri Divan, 2012).

Social support emerges as a consistently protective factor. In Slovenia, mothers who utilized positive reinterpretation and growth as coping mechanisms reported higher levels of life satisfaction and lower levels of depression and anxiety; perceived social support was significantly negatively correlated with psychological distress ((Demšar & Bakračević, 2021). Findings from a secondary analysis by (Nirbhay N. Singh G. E.-S., 2020) further support the notion that caregiver-focused mindfulness training can enhance overall well-being and indirectly benefit child development outcomes through spillover effects.

Interestingly, some studies have suggested that the process of caregiving for a child with autism may cultivate specific emotional competencies. For example, (Manon Manicacci, 2019) argue that the sustained emotional attunement required in caregiving may foster enhanced emotional intelligence among mothers, thereby equipping them with more refined emotional coping tools.

4. CONCLUSION

However, it is crucial to note the limitations across these studies, including small sample sizes, lack of control groups, reliance on self-reported data, and homogenous participant pools (Naoko Iida, 2018) (Juveriah Furrukh, 2020).

Additionally, many studies focused on mothers with long-standing caregiving experience, potentially overlooking the unique challenges faced by newly informed mothers (Juveriah Furrukh, 2020)

Overall, the literature underscores that mothers adopt a spectrum of coping strategies ranging from maladaptive avoidance to adaptive problem-solving, spiritual engagement, and emotional intelligence. Interventions that bolster psychological capital, provide structured training, and enhance social support particularly those sensitive to cultural and contextual nuances—are crucial in improving maternal mental health and caregiving outcomes.

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