

Challenges Faced by Caregivers: The Impact of Stress, Anxiety, and Depression in Raising Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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ABSTRACT

In the current context of the ongoing pandemic, children in families who have ASD often get important challenges and chaotic circumstances. Caregivers examine the huge role in providing the excellent care with respect to these children. This research study examines the stress, depression, and nervousness experienced by caregivers of autistic child attending special schools in Chennai. The study aims to describe the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics and assess their pressure and anxiety levels, and depression. Additionally, it seeks to determine any statistically key connections or differences between certain sociodemographic characteristics of the responder and the resulting factor. The chosen studies framework is descriptive. The study population includes caregivers children with autism registered in three special schools in Chennai. Out of 250 children registered in these schools, 200 caregivers were selected through a lottery method and simple random sampling. A semi-structured questionnaire was developed to gather information about the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics, and the DASS-42 items were used to study the level of pressure, nervousness, and depression. The gathered data was tested capitalizing on the SPSS, and the outcomes are shown in Section VI of the research findings. In the propose scenario of pandemic situations, in consequence of family with child identified with autism, with ASD, who may have a challenging and extremely chaotic existence, caregivers are crucial to giving the best care possible. In this research study, the stress, nervousness, and depression including caretakers of autistic child in special education schools in Chennai are examined. In addition to describing the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics and measuring their levels of pressure, Nervousness, and depression, the paper aims to identify the statistically significant relationship or difference between a subset of respondents' sociodemographic characteristics and dependent variables. The chosen research design is descriptive. The paper's universe is made up of caretakers of autistic children enrolled in three special schools in Chennai, of the 250 special children enrolled in these schools, 200 Children's caregivers were chosen and applied the lottery method and simple random sampling. A semi-structured questionnaire was created to study more about the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics, and the DASS-42 items were used. The questionnaire approach used with the SPSS was utilized to examine the data that was recorded, and the outcomes are included to the research findings in Section VI.

Key Words: ASD, Caregivers, DASS, SPSS, ASDC, Special Schools.

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I. Introduction

Child identified with ASD current limited and repetitive behavior, as well as Problems in Social engagement and Interpersonal communication [1]. Changing the connections and organization of nerve cells and their synapses has an impact on how the brain processes information. Autism is linked to the pressure and support provider challenges and is likened to children who have physical, developmental, and intellectual problems [2,3]. The pressures placed on caregivers among child with ASD are linked to a higher level of pressure, anxiety and depression throughout caregivers overall [4].

When characterizing children with autism, the first thing to do is to describe their involvement with their caregivers nonverbally [5]. Several children experience with autism both expressive and receptive problems. When youngster hears the television, for example, they may be selective in

their hearing and not react to spoken attempts to interact with them. Stereotypical activities, including spinning, walking on the toes, finger gestures before the eyes, and hand or finger movements, are frequently observed by caregivers. Another noteworthy finding for child with ASD may be a reluctance to embrace, touch, or make eye contact actions that are common in everyday life [6].

Care providers of child with ASD encounter numerous challenges, which often lead to enhanced levels of psychological distress, such as pressure, nervousness, and depression [7]. A research from special schools in Chennai highlights a troubling statistic: 60% of caregivers with ASD child endure extreme anxiety, stress, and sadness. Furthermore, many families navigating this path report significant stress, underscoring the urgent need for support. Alarmingly, the result disclose a powerful connection between signs of depression and the

extreme stage of psychological strain experienced by 80% of caretakers of autistic child^[8,9]. This data illustrates the essential requirement for focused initiatives and resources to assist these dedicated caregivers^[10].

III. Review of Literature

Caring for others is often seen as a long-term source of pressure that may adversely affect a caregiver's mental, emotional, and physical health. This study emphasizes that the challenges of caregiving are complex and complicated by various conflicting demands. Caregivers frequently encounter multiple stressful situations simultaneously, leading to persistent pressure, which can have harmful effects on their health. Caregiving is a demanding role that often leads to long-term strain, negatively affecting psychological and physical health. This study emphasizes that caregivers face complex challenges and competing demands, which contribute to ongoing stress. It's vital to acknowledge these difficulties to better support caregivers and enhance their well-being.

This study highlights that the challenges of care-giving are complex and compounded by various conflicting demands. Caregivers often face multiple stressful situations simultaneously and experience prolonged stress, which can lead to harmful effects on their health and well-being. The involvement of being a caregiver is frequently seen as a long-term source of stress, which frequently has detrimental psychological, behavioral, and physiological repercussions on the caregiver's everyday life and overall health. According to this study, the burden of caregiving is intricate and complicated by several conflicting demands. Because caregivers frequently deal with several stressful situations at once and endure prolonged, continuous stress, they might experience harmful health impacts.

Omar A. Al-Farsi (2016) Directed research to investigate how care provider of child with CASD, those caring for child with cognitive disabilities, and parents of normally growing children compare in their scores on the 21-item scale for depression, nervousness, and pressure. Understanding these differences is essential for delivering focused assistance and resources to caregivers facing unique challenges. There are good reasons to think about how to support this vulnerable population of family caregivers. The primary caregiver reported anxiety/depression 40% of the time and pain/discomfort 42%. child with ASD had a significantly poor standard of living, with caregivers primarily experiencing connection issues with the child (84%) and integrating attention to everyday projects (51%).

Whitmore KE's (2016) integrative review

compellingly demonstrates that temporary care can substantially reduce pressure for caregivers of child with ASD. This research highlights the critical connection between temporary care and improved well-being among caregivers. Importantly, those care for children with ASD shared experiencing notably increased pressure and anxiety, and sadness relative to caregivers in the control group, underscoring the critical requirement for efficient support measures like respite care.

Margaret F. Bevans (2012) concludes that the care giving load for a loved one is complicated by a few conflicting priorities and has psychological, behavioral, and physiological impacts. The prevailing burden and associated variables of psychological strain in caretakers of child with ASD, Both burden interviews and questionnaires were used in this cross-sectional descriptive study. Considering the study

According to **Leontine W. Ten Hoppen (2019)**, primary and secondary caregivers of child with ASD find fulfilment in caring for for their affected child.

Tiraya Lerthattasilp (2015) found that the present research findings regarding the incidence of psychological strain and the significant burden on parents of autistic children with poor Months after diagnosis, the count of caregiver issues, duration of engagement with child with ASD, and their communication issues and strange or repetitive behaviors were all elements linked to the burden. Female parents of children with ASD normally endure long-term pressure on par with war troops. According to recent studies, respite care may help caregivers feel less stressed. But further knowledge about this link is required. Research Methodology

This research is dedicated to exploring the extent of depressive states, nervousness and pressure faced by care provider of child with ASD studying in special schools in Chennai. Our objectives are to thoroughly examine the socio demographic characteristics of these parents, assess their level of pressure, anxiety, and depression, and discover whether there are important from a statistical perspective correlations or differences between certain socio demographic factors and their mental health outcomes. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for providing better support to families in this community.

A well-crafted research design acts as a crucial "blueprint" that enables researchers to effectively tackle their research questions and navigate the various stages of their study. This paper focuses on a target population of 250 parents of autistic children enrolled in special schools in Chennai,

providing a vital perspective on the challenges they face. To collect meaningful data, we developed a semi-structured questionnaire aimed at capturing the socio-demographic characteristics of these respondents. Moreover, we utilized the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-42) to thoroughly measure the mental health of caregivers.

IV. Hypothesis developed for the Study

Hypothesis 1: A statistically significant relationship is present between the respondents' age and their stage of depression, highlighting the significance of managing psychological well-being in various age groups.

Hypothesis 2: A significant connection between respondents' age and their anxiety levels, highlighting the importance of managing psychological well-being in various age groups.

Hypothesis 3: A statistically significant connection is present between respondents' age and their stress condition, emphasizing the significance of understanding how age influences stress.

V. Analysis and Interpretations

The study of the caregiver's observations of ASD children's is the subject of analysis and interpretation. The data gathered is integrated table-wise, and the findings are compared as follows:

Table 1. Distribution of participants by information on age, gender, and educational background, marital status, and occupational status.

S. No	Variables	n:200	%
1	Age	30-40 years	40.5
		41-55 years	48.5
2	Gender	Male	40.0
		Female	60.0
3	Education	Primary	1.5
		Upper Primary	26.0
		SSLC	13.5
		HSC	23.0
		Under Graduation	21.5
		Post Graduation	13.5
4	Marital status	Married	98.0
		Widow	2.0
5	Occupation	Daily wages	36.0
		Private sector	58.5

A digit of 200 parents of autistic children were included as a sample using randomly chosen sample through a lottery method. Data was collected using a pre-structured interview schedule, with questions organized based on the study's objectives.

Hypothesis 4: A notable and statistically substantial variation in depression comparative levels for males and females respondents, highlighting a critical issue that warrants attention.

Hypothesis 5: A notable difference is observed between male and female respondents when it comes to anxiety levels, highlighting the need for targeted approaches in addressing mental health.

Hypothesis 6: A difference of statistical importance in stress levels exists among men and women respondents, demonstrating the urgency of addressing this issue.

Government	4	2.0
Business	7	3.5

In a comprehensive analysis of the respondents' demographics, we discovered compelling insights, more than half (51.5%) are in the prime age bracket of 30 to 40 years. Notably, women make up a significant portion, with nearly two-thirds (60.0%) of respondents identifying as female. Educationally, over one-fourth (26.0%) have achieved upper primary qualifications, showcasing a solid foundation for further growth. Marital status indicates stability, with an impressive 98.0% of respondents being married. Furthermore, a substantial portion (58.5%) is engaged in the dynamic private sector, contributing to a thriving economy. Overall, the average age of 41 years underscores the wealth of experience this group brings to the table.

Table 2. Distribution of participants by their monthly income, age of ASDC, type of ASDC, received education, and illness of ASDC.

S. No	Variables	n:200	%
1	Monthly income	1400-2500 INR	63.0
		2501-4200 INR	37.0
2	Age of ASDC	3-10 years	37.0
		11-20 years	62.0
		21-30 years	1.0

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3	Type of ASDC	years		
		Mild	6	3.0
		Moderate	126	63.0
		Severe	65	32.5
4	Received Education	Very Severe	3	1.5
		ABA	22	11.0
		VBA	171	85.5
5	Illness of ASDC	RDI	7	3.5
		Fever	84	42.0
		Strokes	35	17.5
		Fits	54	27.0
		Stomach Pain	27	13.5

About the monthly income, age of autism spectrum disorder children's, type of ASDC, received an education, and illness of ASDC, nearly two-thirds (63.0 percent) of the respondents earned 1400- 2500 INR monthly, less than two-thirds (62.0 percent) of respondents were taking care of 11-20-year- old autistic person, nearly two-thirds (63.0 percent) of the respondents were caring moderate level of the autistic person, the vast majority (85.5 percent) of the respondents have received Verbal Behavior Analysis education and less half (42.0 percent) of the respondents' autistic person was suffering from fever.

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents by their level of depression, anxiety, and stress (in percentage)

S. No	Sub-scales	Normal	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Extremely severe
1	Depression	14.0	14.0	27.0	3.5	41.5
2	Anxiety	29.5	0.0	26.0	26.5	18.0
3	Stress	17.0	3.5	36.0	18.0	25.5

When assessing the mental health of the respondents, the findings reveal a concerning trend: nearly half (41.5 percent) are grappling with extremely severe levels of depression. Furthermore, while over one-fourth (29.5 percent) reported normal anxiety levels, a significant portion more than one-third (36.0 percent) is facing moderate level of stress.

Table 4. Relationship between the age of the respondents and depression, anxiety, and stress.

S. No	Variables	r	Strength	P
1	Age with Depression	-.247	Weak	<0.01
2	Age with	-	Very	<0.05

3	Age with Stress	-.151	Weak	<0.01
		.209		

the Karl Pearson correlation coefficient for statistical testing reveals a compelling and statistically significant linear relationship between respondents' age and their levels of depression ($p < 0.01$). This negative correlation suggests that as respondents age, their depression levels decrease. In essence, older individuals tend to experience lower levels of depression, highlighting the profound impact of age on mental well-being. By understanding this relationship, we can better address the needs of different age groups in mental health interventions.

The relationship between age and depression among respondents shows a noteworthy trend. A statistically important negative correlation was identified, suggesting that as respondents grow older, their levels of depression generally decrease [$r = -0.247, p < 0.01$]. The observation points to the potential positive influence of aging on mental well-being.

The relationship between respondents' age and anxiety is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), revealing a noteworthy negative correlation. This implies that as individuals age, their levels of anxiety tend to diminish. In essence, older individuals often report experiencing less anxiety, demonstrating the positive impact of age is associated with lower the anxiety.

The relationship observed is quite weak but noteworthy. A statistically meaningful negative correlation exists between the age of the respondents and their anxiety levels, represented by an r value of [$r = -.151, p < 0.05$]. This indicates that as respondents grow older, their anxiety tends to decrease, highlighting a potential trend that merits further exploration.

The age of respondents demonstrates a strong, statistically significant relationship with stress levels ($p < 0.01$). This relationship is negative, suggesting that as respondents grow older, their stress levels tend to decrease. Essentially, increased age is associated with a notable reduction in stress, highlighting the potential for greater emotional resilience in older individuals. The relationship between respondents' age and stress is notably weak yet significant. Research shows a statistically significant negative correlation, with a coefficient of [$r = -.209, p < 0.01$]. This indicates that as individuals grow older, they generally experience lower levels of stress. Such findings highlight the potential for increased age to contribute positively to stress management.

Table 5. The difference between the male and female of the respondents with regard to depression,

S. No	Sub-scales		M	S. D	t	P
1	Depression	Male	15.23	7.050	6.595	<0.01
		Female	24.63	13.009		
2	Anxiety	Male	12.13	4.702	3.741	<0.01
		Female	15.60	8.389		
3	Stress	Male	19.33	6.242	4.754	<0.01
		Female	25.17	11.078		

The independent sample 't' test results reveal a striking disparity in depression scores between caregivers of different genders. Female caregivers demonstrated a considerably higher average score of (24.63±13.009), compared to their male counterparts, who reported a mean score of (15.23±7.050). This difference is statistically significant as well as associated with [t=6.595, p<0.01], but also highlights a critical issue that demands attention. Clearly, female caregivers are grappling and rising Mental health difficulty , underscoring the strong need for targeted assistance and intervention for this vulnerable group.

Female caregivers demonstrate a significant need for tailored support measures of (15.60±8.389) in comparison to their male counterparts, who scored mean (12.13±4.702). The statistical analysis

V. Results

The results of this study reveal a concerning trend, with fewer than 50% of respondents (41.5 percent) demonstrating extremely severe levels of depression. Moreover, over a quarter (29.5 percent) showed standard Emotional tension scores, during more than one-third (36.0 percent) experienced moderate stress levels (see Table 3).

Importantly, a significant statistical link exists between the respondents' age factor with measures of Mental health difficulty, Emotional tension, and work pressure. Specifically, the correlation between age and depression is weak yet significant (r = -0.247, p < 0.01), revealing that as age increase Mental health difficulty level tend to decrease. Similarly, a weak but statistically

VI. Suggestion

In light of the findings from this study, we strongly recommend implementing targeted strategies to enhance the training of children with ASD through Verbal Behavior Analysis. Additionally, it is crucial to offer comprehensive support for careprovider of child with ASD , resolving their unique pressures and needs. These steps will not only foster better outcomes for the children but also empower those who care for them.

1. To effectively address mental pressures challenges experienced by caregiver of

anxiety, and stress.

reveals a strong and meaningful difference in anxiety levels between genders, with [t=3.741, p<0.01]. These findings clearly indicate that female caregivers experience heightened anxiety, underscoring the need for targeted support and interventions for this group.

The independent samples t-test reveals a concerning trend: female caregivers exhibit a significantly higher mean score for depression (24.63 ± 13.009) than male caregivers, who have a mean score of (15.23 ± 7.050). The difference is not just noticeable, it is statistically significant, with a [t=6.595, p<0.01]. This evidence clearly indicates that female caregivers are facing greater challenges with depression, highlighting an urgent need for targeted support and intervention.

The data clearly indicates that female caregivers experience considerably higher work pressure compare to than male colleagues. The average stress score for female respondents was (25.17±11.078), while male respondents reported a lower average of (19.33±6.242). The difference between these scores is not just notable; it is statistically significant (t=4.754, p<0.01). This highlights an important issue: female caregivers face greater stress, which demands our attention and response.

significant relationship is observed between the link between age- emotional tension (r=-0.151, p<0.05) and age- work pressure (r=-0.209, p<0.01).These Observations point to the urgent demand for aming psychological well-being interventions, particularly among younger populations.

There are notable differences in depression levels between genders (t = 6.595, p < 0.01). Similarly, anxiety levels also show significant differences (t = 3.741, p < 0.01), as do stress levels (t = 4.754, p < 0.01). These Outcomes indicate a statistically relevant disparity in stress levels among the respondents based on gender.

children with ASD, is essential to conduct further research using experimental models.

2. This study sheds light on the significant challenges faced by caregivers experiencing depression, anxiety, and stress. To enhance our understanding, future research is essential and should focus on a larger sample of special schools. Special attention must be given to female caregivers, who frequently take on greater responsibilities

Providing care for children with ASD .than their male counterparts. This focus will ultimately lead to better support systems and resources for those who need it most.

3. The present study underscores the significant psychosocial and psychological challenges encountered by parents of children with ASD. It reveals alarmingly high intensity of

4.

VII. Conclusion

This research paper delivers a thorough analysis based on data collected regarding the demographic and social profile factors key features and the Mental health difficulty, Emotional tension, and work pressure scale from several autism schools in Chennai. The study aims to highlight the significant levels of Psychological downturn, emotional tension, and work pressure experienced by care providers of child with (ASD), emphasizing the an immediate requirement for focused support and intervention. The findings highlight that less than half of the respondents experienced extremely severe levels of depression, while over one-fourth indicated normal levels of emotional tension. Additionally, Over one-third of the participants experienced moderate levels of stress. The analysis also showed that as the age of the caregiver increases, the levels of Mental health difficulty, Emotional

depression, anxiety, and stress among these caregivers. To truly address and alleviate this burden, it is essential that we conduct a qualitative investigation in future studies. This research should aim to uncover the specific factors contributing to these mental health struggles, allowing us in order to better help parents of children with ASD.

tension, and work pressure tend to decrease. Notably, female caregivers reported increasing levels of Mental health difficulty, Emotional tension, and work pressure relative to their male colleagues.

The researcher has suggested ways to enhance both the socio-demographic and psychological conditions of caregivers responsible for individuals with ASD. These findings shed light on the extent of depression, Emotional tension, and work pressure experienced by care providers of child with ASD. The author recommends utilizing these insights to improve interventions focused on alleviating caregiver depression, anxiety, and stress, ultimately enhancing their psychological well-being.

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