

## PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING BETWEEN PARENTS OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN AND NORMAL CHILDREN

SAHIL MEHINDIRATTA

Research Scholar

PROF. (DR.) PREETI DIXIT

Professor

Department of Psychology  
Kalinga University Raipur (C. G.)

### Abstract:

*The present research was designed to study the psychological wellbeing of parents has kids with autism and normal children in relation to their gender. Data was collected from a sample of 200 parents of mentally challenged children studying in various special schools in Ambala and Karnal districts of Haryana. Descriptive survey method was used. The results showed that fathers having a higher level of psychological well-being. Mothers' low psychological well-being is linked to their heavier care-giving responsibilities; more hours spent tending to their kids and tasks, and less free time. Also, significant gender wise differences are noted in the psychological well-being of parents of ASD children.*

### Keyword: -

Parents,  
Mentally  
Challenged  
Children,  
Stress Coping  
Ability

### Introduction

"The idea of psychological well-being, which has to do with how individuals feel about their daily activities, is one that may be partially shaped. One definition of positive psychological wellbeing is an experience distinct from negative mental states or psychological stresses, such as anxiety, sadness, frustration, emotional weariness, discontent, and dissatisfaction" (Jahoda, 1958; Warr, 1978).

Psychological well-being is a concept rooted in Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow's theories. Maslow posits that human behaviour is driven by self-actualization, while Rogers suggests interpersonal traits like empathy, respect, and authenticity promote this process. Central psychological well-being entails fulfilling the innate human need for self-actualization and creating environments that support this drive. Subjective well-being, also known as emotional well-being, is a concept that suggests people's assessments of their lives encapsulate

happiness. Objective frameworks for understanding social and psychological well-being are essential for understanding human potential.

Researchers suggest that social and psychological well-being provide conceptual frameworks for understanding human functioning. A comprehensive mental health picture combines objective assessments of psychological and social well-being with subjective accounts of emotional well-being. Emotional well-being includes subjective experiences of contentment and life satisfaction, while psychological well-being focuses on coping with existential issues and evolving. A concept of psychological well-being, developed by Ryff, includes positive outcomes such as self-assessment, personal development, and environmental mastery.

Ryff's (1989) concept of well-being focuses on four key components: self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, and objective in lifestyle. Self-acceptance is considered the most reliable marker of psychological fitness and an indicator of developing wisdom and peak performance. Positive relationships with others are also crucial for mental health, as they foster strong feelings of compassion and empathy.

Autonomy is emphasized as a key factor in psychological well-being, as it involves self-actualization and defiance of acculturation. A functioning individual has a personal place of evaluation, assessing themselves based on their own standards rather than seeking validation from others. Individualization is seen as a release from collective beliefs, anxieties, and rules, and life-span developmentists view this process as a way to feel liberated from the rules that regulate daily existence.

Environmental mastery is essential for mental health, as it involves choosing or creating environments suitable for one's psychological condition. Mature people need to be involved in significant activities outside of themselves, and growth throughout life depends on their ability to modify and control complex environments. Effective aging emphasizes the importance of knowledge of the outside world and involvement in it.

Mental wellbeing includes beliefs providing direction and meaning in life, being purposeful, focused, and having a clear sense of life's purpose. Lifelong growth concepts emphasize the need for continuous growth and accepting new challenges at different stages of life. These criteria differ from empirical measures of well-being like pleasure and life satisfaction, which are theoretically unfounded.

## Concept of Autism

Deficits in social interaction, communication skills, and behavioural functioning are hallmarks of autism, a pervasive developmental disease that first appears at three years of age (American-Psychiatric-Association, 1994). Severe, pervasive behavioural deficits and peculiar behavioural patterns are characteristics of this disorder. Some examples of these include abnormally restrictive and repetitive behaviour, interests, and activities, in addition to descriptive deficits during social communication (American Psychological Association, 1994; Schriebman, 1998; Zwaigenbaum et al. 2009). Both the diagnosed person and his or her family are severely affected for the rest of their lives by this disorder.

Autism, derived from the Greek word *autos*, refers to a condition where children are self-absorbed and do not notice others. The term was first used by Leo Kanner in the 1939s and later by Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleulcr in 1911. Children with autism exhibit hypersensitivity to stimuli, a compulsive need for homogeneity, strong rote thinking, and limited spontaneous activity. Some may also experience speech impairments, affecting their social interaction skills. The lack of connectedness may be related to a mother's emotional insensitivity and lack of availability, leading to the medical community blaming mothers' emotional insensitivity and lack of availability for the development of autism.

Autism is a neurological condition characterized by significant differences in sensory systems and varying reactions to stimuli. It is often diagnosed early in life, allowing for early psychotherapy. However, some people reject the idea of autism treatment due to concerns about potential harm or the potential for side effects. Most autistic individuals have slightly larger brains compared to non-autistic individuals. Signs of autism include non-communication, failure to establish social bonds, a preference for parents, limited language skills, strange or extreme reactions to objects, and limited-range repetitive activities. Autism can cause mild to severe symptoms, with symptoms appearing in the first few months of life or after several months of normal growth. About 7 out of 10 autistic children and teenagers also experience mental retardation or other brain-related issues.

Autism spectrum disorders can manifest as dysfunctional, intellectually impaired, or minimal symptoms. The two main categories are "low-functioning autism" (LFA) and "high functioning autism" (HFA), but neither term is widely accepted by professionals or literature. This disparity can lead to service providers refusing to work with high-IQ

autistic individuals or failing to recognize the intellectual capacity of many LFA autistic people. Some doctors view autism as a serious communication issue, not diagnosing autistic people who can write or speak. The under-diagnosis of many "high-functioning" autistic individuals and those with comparatively high IQs contributes to the notion that "autism implies retardation." Better diagnostics are likely a contributing factor to the rise in LFA diagnoses, while the rise in HFA diagnoses is less steep. Many believe that the desire for services through schools and treatments, combined with the spectrum nature of impairments, is causing an over diagnosis of ASDs.

### **Reviews of Related Study**

Juyal,S,L & Bhatnagar. (2021) investigated how early assistance for kids with intellectual challenges affected the parents' emotional health The differences between moms and fathers in the same location were also examined in this study. The study included 60 parents from different centres in the Indian state of Uttarakhand's districts of Dehradun, Haridwar, and Rishikesh. Purposing sample methodology was used in this investigation. A pre-post quasi-experimental technique was used for the inquiry. Both a paired and an independent "t" test were used to analyse the data. The results demonstrated that parents' psychological well-being benefited from early intervention for kids with intellectual challenges. Mothers showed considerably poorer "psychological well-being during the pre-test and higher psychological well-being during the post-test compared to their father counterparts".

Abid, N. (2024) evaluated the efficacy of a psycho-educational therapy created in Tunisia to support parents whose children have ASD. Three socio-educational autism institutes of Tunisia conducted a randomized controlled experiment. From the month of November 2020 to January of 2022, the control group of parents whose children attended the same centres but did not receive any special parent intervention (n = 31) was compared to the study's parent participants, who were families of kids having ASD aged 3 to 8 years (N = 31). The "Blue Hope" curriculum consists of eight training sessions that are given both in-person and virtually. Findings indicated that preschoolers with ASD who participated in the program had much better communication and less behavioural issues; a noteworthy improvement was observed at the 6-month mark. Parental anxiety and depression were positively impacted by the program as well; at follow-up, there were notable and favourable improvements in the overall score and the scores for anxiety and depression when compared to the

baseline. According to these results, the "Blue Hope" program may provide parents of autistic children in Tunisia with an affordable and beneficial option. It may also serve as a springboard for the creation and enhancement of parent education initiatives in low-income nations.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH**

The study focuses on parents of children autism. Most research on anxiety and coping mechanisms among parents is based on mother stories, with fathers and male caregivers often excluded. This study aims to fill this knowledge gap by including both parents, aiming to understand gender disparities and their potential origins. The majority of research on parents of autistic focuses on negative elements like parenting stress, but the study incorporates positive elements like psychological well-being. The research aims to compare the psychological wellness of parents of children with ASD.

### **Objective**

1. To find out if the psychological wellbeing of parents of kids with autism and normal children in relation to gender

### **Hypotheses**

1. Families of autistic children will perform worse on psychological wellbeing than families for kids having normal children.
2. Fathers of children with autism, or normal development tend to perform psychological health tests than mothers do.

### **Methodology**

The investigator adopted descriptive survey method for the study. Data was collected from a sample of 200 parents of ASD children from different schools of Ambala and Karnal district in Haryana state using random sampling technique.

### **Tool used**

1. Personal Data Sheet
2. General Well-being Test- by Verma, Dubey, and Gupta

### **Statistical techniques used**

To test the hypothesis, Percentage, t test and ANOVA were used for the analysis of data

### Analysis & Interpretation

Table 1.1 shows the means, standard deviations, standard error of means, and number for the psychological well-being variables for parents of children who have autism, and normal children.

Sr. No.	Variables		PCWA	PNC	Total
1	Psychological Well-being	Mean	10.15	15.11	12.76
		Standard Deviation	2.85	2.31	3.42
		Std. Error of Mean	.32	.26	.22
		N	100	100	200

PCWA = Parents of Children with Autism; PNC = Parents of Normal Children.

### 1.2 ASSESSMENT OF PHYSICAL WELL-BEING VARIABLE BETWEEN PARENTS OF AUTISMOUS CHILDREN AND NORMAL CHILDREN

Table 1.2 summarizes the findings of a one-way ANOVA using the variable of psychological well-being as the dependent variable and the group membership as the independent variable.

Sr. No.	Variables		Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	P	Partial Eta Square
1	Psychological Well-being	Between Groups	993.33	2	496.663	65.39	.001	.356
		Within Groups	1800.14	298	7.596			

		Total	2793.46					

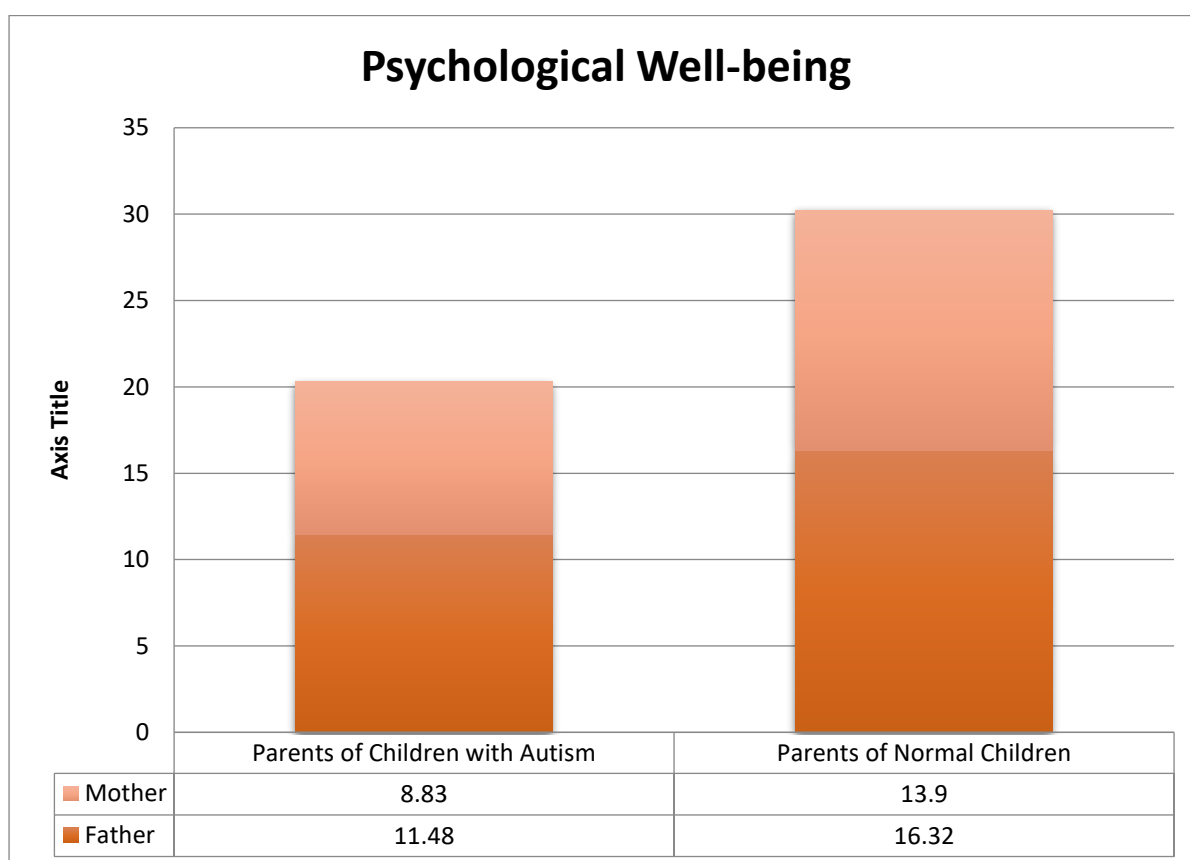
There were significant variations ( $F(2, 198) = 65.39, P < .001$ ) amongst families for kids with autism, intellectual disabilities, and typical kids in Table 4.4's psychological well-being variable. It was shown that 35.6% of the difference in psychological well-being could be explained by group participation. Furthermore, Scheffe's Post-hoc analysis revealed that families with kids without any issues ( $M = 15.11$ ) scored higher on the psychological health scale than did parents of autistic children ( $M = 10.15$ ). the average score on the psychological health measure was found to be lower for families of autistic children than for families with kids without any issues. Compared to parents of children with ASD and parents of typical children, it can be seen that parents of autistic children had worse psychological well-being.

### 1.3 EXAMINATION OF THE VARIABLE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG THE FATHERS AND MOTHERS OF AUTISTIC, AND NORMAL CHILDREN

Table 1.3 summarizes the findings of a paired t test for fathers and mothers of children with autism and normal children, using gender as the independent variable and psychological well-being as the dependent variable.

Sr. No.	Dependent	Psychological well-being					
			Father	Mother	T		Eta
1	Children with	Mean	11.4	8.83	7.91	.001	.62
		Standard	2.69	2.36			
		Std. Error of	.43	.38			
		N	50	50			
2	Parents of Normal	Mean	16.3	13.9	7.03	.001	.56
		Standard	2.08	1.85			
		Std. Error of	.33	.29			
		N	50	50			

Table 1.3 demonstrated a statistically significant difference in the psychological well-being variable ratings between dads and mothers of autistic children ( $t(1, 49) = 7.91$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The mean score of dads of autistic children was found to be higher ( $M = 11.48$ ) than that of their counterparts ( $M = 8.83$ ). A substantial impact size was demonstrated by the eta square statistic (.62). Gender was shown to account for 62% of the variation in psychological well-being among parents of children with autism spectrum disorders.



It was observed that there is a significant difference between the psychological well-being ratings of mothers and dads in a group of parents with many children ( $t(1, 49) = 7.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Fathers' mean score ( $M = 16.32$ ) was found to be higher than mothers' ( $M = 13.90$ ). Additionally, a substantial impact size was demonstrated by the eta square statistic (.56). It was also observed that, for parents of typical children, gender accounted for 56% of the variance in psychological well-being.



## Discussion and Conclusions

The research discovered substantial difference in psychological wellbeing of moms and dads of autistic kids, women having a lower level of well-being ( $M = 8.83$ ) and fathers having a higher level ( $M = 11.48$ ). Mothers' low psychological well-being is linked to their heavier care-giving responsibilities; more hours spent tending to their kids and tasks, and less free time. Moreover, moms who have an autistic child face increased stigma, which may have a detrimental effect on their mental health.

In line with other studies that suggested moms had lower psychological well-being, the study also discovered that dads of ASD children had more psychologically well than mothers. This runs counter to earlier research, which revealed no changes in the wellbeing of dads and moms of children with intellectual disabilities. Mothers & fathers expressed better satisfaction and quality in their marriages. Mothers with ASD children may have poorer mental health owing to the stigma and greater strain of child care.

## References

- I. Abid, N., Gaddour, N. & Hmissa, S. (2024) Effectiveness of a training program among parents of preschool children with ASD in Tunisia: a randomized controlled trial. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* **11**, 532
- American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-IV*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- Jahoda, M. (1958). *Current Concept of Positive Mental Health*. New York: Basic Books.
- IV. Juyal, S, L & Bhatnagar, R. (2021) PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING OF PARENTS IN RELATION TO EARLY INTERVENTION OF THEIR INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED CHILDREN. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 9, (13).
- Ryff's (1989) Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, 1069-1081.
- V. Schriebman, L. (1998). Brief report: The case for social and behavioral intervention research. *Journal of Autism & Developmental Disorders*, 26, 247-250.
- VI. Warr, P. (1978). A study of psychological well-being, *British Journal of Psychology*, 69, 111-121.
- Zwaigenbaum, L., Bryson, S., Lord, C., Rogers, S., Carter, A., Carver, L., et al. (2009). Clinical assessment and management of toddlers with suspected autism spectrum disorder: Insights from studies of high-risk infants. *Pediatrics*, 123(5), 1383-139.



Contributors Details:

Sahil Mehindiratta

Prof. (Dr.) Preeti Dixit