



**Family Support And Psychological Resilience As Predictors Of Maternal  
Stress Among Mothers Of Children With Developmental Disabilities**

**Shabana Nurudeen**

Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Shri Khushal Das University, Rajasthan

**Dr Saiju Khalid**

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Shri Khushal Das University  
Rajasthan

**ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses how family support and psychological resilience predicts maternal stress in mothers of children with developmental disabilities. Data collection was done using a quantitative correlational research design where purposive sampling using standardized scales was used to collect data on 300 mothers involving the Parental Stress Scale, the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, and the Family Support Inventory scales. To investigate the relationships between the variables, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and regression analysis were conducted. The findings indicate that both the family support and psychological resilience are negative predictors of maternal stress, so the greater the perceived family support and resilience, the lower the level of maternal stress. Moreover, the mediate of the hypothesis relationship between family support and stress was identified as resilience indicating that positive family settings contribute to the coping skills among mothers. The research reveals that the family networks need to be reinforced, the interventions based on resilience are needed, and psychological support services should be incorporated to the mothers of children with developmental disabilities. The limitations here are the fact that a cross-sectional design is used and the data is self-reported, both of which can affect the generalizability. The dynamic character of resilience and stress should be reflected in future research using mixed-method fully or longitudinal designs.

**Keywords** — Maternal Stress, Family Support, Psychological Resilience, Developmental Disabilities, Coping

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Mothers of children with developmental disabilities experience long term stressors due to the cognitive, behavioral as well as emotional difficulties experienced by their children. Caregiving pressures, social and economic hardships, put mothers at a high risk of developing chronic stress and anxiety, as well as depressive symptoms, as part of the daily demands of caregiving. Research has indicated that mothers of children with autism spectrum disorders report clinically significant levels of stress up to 77 percent, and inadequate support needs are a significant factor (Kiami & Goodgold, 2017). Such mothers are likely to recognize monetary support, rest care, and emotional empathy to be unmet needs that are severe in their mental well-being.

The family support is one of the factors that can help relieve stress and enhance positive coping in mothers. Shared caregiving duties, emotional reassurance, and understanding by the families

lead to increased confidence and less burden among the mothers. Social and family support has been the buffering factor of parental stress, which is commonly acknowledged across cultures (Cheng and Lai, 2023). Moreover, investigations have discovered that family support environments contribute to psychological resilience- the capacity to come back after a setback and continue to operate normally despite the pressure.

Resilience is an internal personal asset to the mothers that helps in increasing their ability to handle the emotional burden of caregiving. More resilient mothers are and will be less stressed and high-quality mental health outcomes despite extreme caregiving difficulties (Shaffer, Lape, and Salls, 2020). It is especially valuable to consider the interaction of resilience and family support, since the presence of effective social networks can enhance resilience through an increase in practical support and emotional support.

Resilience and access to family support is also determined by the socioeconomic conditions. Lower-income mothers have lower chances to get the advantages of longer social networks, which exposes them to the negative impact of stress (Teng, Kuo, and Zhou, 2018). However, psychological resilience might serve as a mediating factor that will offset socioeconomic and social disadvantages and enable mothers to stay emotionally stable during hardship.

With this background, the current research endeavors to investigate the predictive value of the family support and psychological resilience to maternal stress in mothers of children with developmental disabilities. It aims to find out the intuition of the combination of internal (resilience) and external (support) protective factors in shaping maternal well-being. It is anticipated that the findings will be used in developing family-based intervention programs and resilience building interventions to improve the quality of life of mothers in a care giving role.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Two key factors of maternal wellbeing in developmentally disabled children identified have been family support and psychological strength. Duarte et al. (2005) determined that mothers of children with autism have much more stress than mothers of children with typical development, in addition to which poor emotional expression and social isolation increase the level of stress (Duarte et al., 2005). This raises the need to study internal (resilience) and external (support) buffers which may reduce such stress.

The concept of resilience is also critical in determining the way in which mothers cope with the long-term aspects of caregiving. Njoroge et al. (2023) highlighted that mothers who have more distress profiles and especially those who experience compounded socioeconomic stress have poor mental health outcomes in the long term and experience more challenges in parenting. On the other hand, resiliency and adaptive coping are protective factors that reduce these risks, which support the application of interventions that improve resilience (Njoroge et al., 2023). Equally, Almheiri et al. (2023) identified that the level of perceived social support was a significant predictor of low rates of depression, anxiety, and stress among mothers with children with disabilities, and more than 60 percent of the variance of the mental health outcomes was explained by perceived social support (Almheiri et al., 2023).

Also, Singer et al. (2007) discovered that mothers of children with very low birth weight (VLBW) subjects were more likely to report higher parenting and marital stress but that family cohesion and partner support were protective factors against psychological stress (Singer et al., 2007). In line with this, Bowers et al. (2020) showed that maternal stress and prenatal adversity are predictors of future child behavioral outcomes, which are moderated by social support in early motherhood, which lowers intergenerational transmission of stress (Bowers et al., 2020). The interdependence between the family support, resilience and maternal well-being implies that mothers who feel that their families and close people are there to offer them with emotional and other types of support are better placed to withstand the caregiving demands. Bush et al. (2022) further demonstrated that maternal exposure to early-life stress and pregnancy stressors are predictors of mental health problems in offspring and supports the need to implement interventions to increase maternal resilience (Bush et al., 2022). Taken together, these results suggest the dual effectiveness of the family systems and individual resilience as the most important buffers to chronic maternal stress.

The present study is based on these findings but it empirically investigates the role of family support and psychological resilience as predictors of maternal stress within the context of the mothers of children with developmental disabilities in India.

### **Hypotheses**

**H1:** Family support significantly and negatively predicts maternal stress among mothers of children with developmental disabilities.

**H2:** Psychological resilience significantly mediates the relationship between family support and maternal stress among mothers of children with developmental disabilities.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The research design adopted in this study is a quantitative correlational study in which the authors explore the predictive value of family support and psychological resilience on maternal stress in mothers whose children are affected by developmental disabilities. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample of 300 mothers, with the sample size being targeted at those who were the primary caregivers of children with developmental conditions like autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or intellectual disability. The purposive sampling was through the assurance that the respondents were first hand care givers and were directly impacted by the variables of interest. Data were gathered by use of a structured questionnaire, which contained three standardized measures, namely, the Parental Stress Scale (PSS) (Berry and Jones, 1995) to assess the levels of maternal stress; the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) (Connor and Davidson, 2003) to measure the psychological stress; and the Family Support Scale (FSS) (Dunst, Jenkins and Trivette, 1984) to measure the levels of emotional, instrumental and informational support. Demographic data, including age, schooling level, family type, income level, and time of care giving were also gathered to give a background knowledge. The questionnaire was done online, and in parent associations at therapy centers and special schools in Kerala. The data were analyzed with the help of descriptive statistics to present the characteristics of respondents, Pearson correlation analysis to examine the relationships among family support, resilience, and maternal stress as

well as hierarchical regression analysis to define the role of family support and resilience in predicting maternal stress and mediating it. The methods of the analytical procedures were the existing methods used by Almheiri et al. (2023) and Njoroge et al. (2023), which guarantee the reliability of methods. The quantitative methods used provide a possibility to objectively evaluate the extent to which family support and resilience affect the level of maternal stress separately and in combinations. This research design guarantees a sound statistical conclusion and high practical implications, which can be used to create family-focused and resilience-promoting interventions to address the psychological well-being of mothers whose children have developmental disabilities.

#### 4. RESULTS

##### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics of 300 respondents reveal moderate to high stress conditions of mothers (mean = 3.7) with children with developmental disabilities. The average-moderate coping mechanisms in the sample are determined by the family support (mean = 3.4) and psychological resilience (mean = 3.5). The findings indicate that there is a variation in the perceived support system with mothers indicating less satisfaction in emotional and instrumental categories of support. The low standard deviations show that there is consistency in the data, thus it is reliable in self-reporting measures of stress and resilience.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
Maternal Stress	3.7	4.0	4	0.6
Family Support	3.4	3.0	3	0.7
Psychological Resilience	3.5	3.0	3	0.7
Emotional Support	3.3	3.0	3	0.8
Instrumental Support	3.2	3.0	3	0.7

##### 4.2 Correlation Analysis

The findings of correlation also show that there are significant negative correlations between maternal stress and family support ( $r = -0.63$ ) and psychological resilience ( $r = -0.59$ ). Resilience correlates well with family support ( $r = 0.66$ ) indicating that family support enhances more psychological resilience in mothers. There are negative correlations between emotional and instrumental support subscales and stress ( $r = -0.52$  and  $r = -0.48$ , respectively). These results strengthen the interdependence of external (family support) and internal (resilience) resources in the reduction of maternal stress.

**Table 2. Correlation Matrix**

Variable	Maternal Stress	Family Support	Psychological Resilience	Emotional Support	Instrumental Support
Maternal Stress	1	-0.63	-0.59	-0.52	-0.48
Family Support	-0.63	1	0.66	0.69	0.63

<b>Psychological Resilience</b>	-0.59	0.66	1	0.61	0.57
<b>Emotional Support</b>	-0.52	0.69	0.61	1	0.58
<b>Instrumental Support</b>	-0.48	0.63	0.57	0.58	1

### 4.3 Regression Analysis

The hierarchical regression analysis was adopted to identify the predictive impact of family support and psychological resilience on maternal stress. Family support ( $\beta$  -0.39,  $p < 0.001$ ) and psychological resilience ( $\beta$  -0.33,  $p < 0.001$ ) were found to be significant negative predictors of stress, which jointly explained 56% of the variance in the level of stress ( $R^2 = 0.56$ ). In its entry as a mediator, family support had a direct effect on stress, but resilience alleviated the latter, resulting in a partial mediation effect of 0.39. This is an indication that positive family arrangements reduce stress directly and also increase resilience, which further leads to improved psychological performance.

**Table 3. Regression Analysis**

<b>Predictor Variable</b>	<b>Coefficient (<math>\beta</math>)</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Family Support	-0.39	0.05	-7.80	<0.001
Psychological Resilience	-0.33	0.06	-6.40	<0.001
Emotional Support	-0.25	0.05	-5.00	<0.001

To sum up, the results suggest that family support and psychological resilience have a significant and negative relationship predictive maternal stress in mothers with children with developmental disabilities. The mediating effect of the resilience corresponds to the findings of Almheiri et al. (2023) and Njoroge et al. (2023), who conclude that the stress in this group can be alleviated through the interventions directed at the enhancement of the family networks and personal resilience.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The results of the study affirm the fact that family support and psychological resilience are important predictors of maternal stress in mothers of children with developmental disabilities. Both variables had a great negativity with stress, which means that mothers who feel more supported by their families and are more resilient have less stress in their lives. These results correlate with the results of Almheiri et al. (2023), who reported that the well-established networks of social and emotional support help decrease anxiety, depression, and parenting stress in mothers with children with disabilities. On the same note, Njoroge et al. (2023) discovered that maternal resilience and adaptive coping strategies are protective factors against the psychological distress in the long term. The high positive relationship between family support and resilience noted in the current research indicates that positive family backgrounds do not only decrease stress levels in the moment, but also predisposes the development of resilience in the long run, as Singer et al. (2007) found that family cohesion increased the ability of mothers to cope and promoted emotional stability. The regression findings also showed that the relationship between the family support and stress is partially mediated by resilience

meaning that family support indirectly minimizes stress by enhancing the capacity of mothers to cope with caregiving demands. Bowers et al. (2020) have added to this statement by highlighting that social and emotional support in motherhood is a moderator of the intergenerational transmission of stress. Additionally, Bush et al. (2022) noted that it is the resilient mothers who protect their children against poor mental health, showing that resilience has more extensive family-level effects. Taken together, these results imply that the family-based and individual resilience-building interventions could have a beneficial impact in terms of maternal stress and family well-being in families with developmental disabilities.

## **6. Implications**

These findings have considerable implications on policy makers, clinicians, and teachers who deal with families of children with developmental disabilities. To begin with, family support is one of the most powerful predictors that it is necessary to create family-based intervention programs that stimulate shared caregiving roles and enhance intra-family communication. The government and healthcare agencies should develop institutionalized support systems, like parent mentoring programs, in which existing caregivers are able to guide new parents. The mediating effect of resilience demonstrates the necessity to include resilience training and stress management modules in the current parental support programs. Cognitive-behavioral and mindfulness-based interventions are the methods to be utilised by clinical psychologists to assist mothers with the development of coping mechanisms, as it is recommended by Almheiri et al. (2023). Another policy area that policymakers should adopt to enhance psychological outcomes is community-based programs, including resilience and counseling programs, and peer support groups. Schools catering to children with special needs may be very useful since they provide counseling and family support facilities and assist mothers in balancing parenting and self-care. Moreover, the awareness of the mental health issues mothers are going through should be encouraged to decrease the levels of stigma and encourage empathy in extended families and neighborhoods. The ecosystem of supporting both emotional and practical needs can be built by collaborative intervention with schools, medical practitioners and local NGOs.

## **7. Future Research limitations and scope.**

Despite the evidence that the research has delivered in terms of the effect that family support and resilience have on the maternal stress, it is necessary to note that a number of limitations can be recognized. The cross sectional design precludes causal interpretations and longitudinal studies in the future need to focus on how shift in family processes and resilience effect stresses over time. The article was based on self-reported measurements, they might have been influenced by individual predispositions, and incorporating qualitative interviews may provide more information on how mothers experience and perceive support and resilience. The research sample was selected in one area, which might not be very representative of the cultural and socioeconomic differences in the whole of India. The generalizability of these findings could be proved in a comparative study in various states or countries. Also, the study was limited to mothers and ignored fathers and extended family members who are also important roles in care giving. Subsequent researches need to take a family systems perspective and focus on the overall effect of support networks. Lastly, it would be interesting to examine other mediating

variables like coping styles, marital satisfaction, or social connectedness which may even more clearly clarify the mechanisms by which family support and resilience reduce maternal stress. In spite of these short-comings, the paper makes significant contributions to the comprehension of psychological resilience and family support interaction to facilitate maternal well-being and offers evidence-based guidelines to work on holistic interventions to help mothers deal with both emotional and social aspects of parental stress.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

The present study conclusively demonstrates that both family support and psychological resilience play a crucial and statistically significant role in predicting maternal stress among mothers of children with developmental disabilities. The findings clearly indicate that higher levels of perceived family support are associated with lower levels of maternal stress, highlighting the importance of emotional, instrumental, and informational assistance within the family system. Similarly, psychological resilience emerges as a strong internal protective factor that enables mothers to effectively cope with the continuous demands of caregiving. The negative correlations and regression outcomes confirm that these variables not only independently reduce stress but also interact dynamically, with resilience partially mediating the relationship between family support and stress. This suggests that supportive family environments do not merely provide immediate relief but also foster long-term adaptive coping capacities among mothers. As evidenced in the study, both predictors together explain a substantial proportion of variance in maternal stress, reinforcing their combined importance in shaping maternal psychological well-being.

Furthermore, the study underscores the need for a holistic and integrated approach to addressing maternal stress by strengthening both external and internal support systems. Interventions aimed at enhancing family cohesion, shared caregiving responsibilities, and emotional understanding can significantly reduce the burden experienced by mothers. At the same time, resilience-building strategies such as counseling, cognitive-behavioral techniques, and mindfulness-based interventions can empower mothers to manage stress more effectively. The mediating role of resilience particularly emphasizes that sustainable stress reduction requires not only support provision but also the development of personal coping mechanisms. Although the study is limited by its cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported data, it provides strong empirical evidence for designing targeted interventions and policies. Future research should adopt longitudinal and mixed-method approaches to further explore these relationships and ensure broader generalizability across diverse socio-cultural contexts.

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