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**Self-Compassion & Mental Health Wellbeing -
An Exploratory study among Parents of Children with
Autism Spectrum Disorder & Intellectual Disability
For**

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Introduction

Self compassion is linked to the wellbeing of parents and adds to better caregiving. It is an emotional regulation strategy where painful or distressing feelings are held in awareness with kindness, understanding and a sense of shared humanity.

Here, the researchers aimed to study the levels of Mindful Self Compassion among parents of children with ASD and ID.

Research Questions

In this exploratory study, the researchers intended to study Mindful Self Compassion among parents of children with ASD and ID. The following research questions were framed -

A. Does Self - Compassion scores (Self Kindness, Self Judgement, Common Humanity, Isolation, Mindfulness, Over Identification) vary among parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Intellectual Disability (ID).

B. Does Self - Compassion scores (Self Kindness, Self Judgement, Common Humanity, Isolation, Mindfulness, Over Identification) and DASS scores (Depression, Anxiety and Stress) vary based on the gender of the parents.

C. Does Self - Compassion scores (Self Kindness, Self Judgement, Common Humanity, Isolation, Mindfulness, Over Identification) and DASS scores (Depression, Anxiety and Stress) vary based on the disability of the children and gender of the parents.

D. Does DASS scores (Depression, Anxiety and Stress) vary among parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Intellectual Disability (ID).

Methodology

The exploratory study was conducted on a total of 62 parents (30 parents of children with ASD and ID respectively), who were selected using convenient sampling. The Self Compassion Scale (SCS) and Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale - DASS 21 were administered to collect data.

Key Findings

The present research studied mindful self compassion among 62 parents of children with ASD and ID, using the Self compassion Scale and DASS 21. Data Analysis revealed the self compassion levels in significance with gender of parents of children with ASD and ID.

Mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder scored highest on Mindfulness and lowest on Self Kindness. Fathers of children with Intellectual Disability scored highest on Self Kindness, Isolation, Mindfulness and Over-Identification while mothers of children with Intellectual Disability scored highest on Mindfulness and lowest on Self Judgement. Both parents of children with Intellectual Disability scored lowest on Self Judgement. Mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder had the highest scores on Depression while fathers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder had the highest scores on Anxiety and Stress.

Self Compassion & Mental Health Wellbeing among Parents of children with ASD & ID

Chief Investigators
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Conceptual Framework

Self Compassion works on the lines of the ideology that one should treat oneself as they would treat others. Self Compassion, a concept really popular in India works on three main tenets, namely:



Objectives

- To identify the Self Compassion levels of parents of children with ASD and ID.
- To screen the Depression, Anxiety and Stress levels of parents of children with disabilities with their Self Compassion levels.
- To explore the individual self compassion factors of parents of children with ASD and ID.
- To lay the foundation of a pilot training module on self compassion for parents of children with ASD and ID.



Sample

- Parents of children with ASD (N=32) and ID (N=30)
- Gender of the parents of children with ASD and ID, (Fathers N= 30, Mothers N= 32)
- Fathers of children with ASD (15), Fathers of children with ID (15)
- Mothers of children with ASD (17), Mothers of children with ID (15)

Significance of the study

- Focusing on the self compassion among parents of children with ASD and ID, the study signifies:
- Earlier parental studies work on the deficit model, with researchers solely focusing on the struggles of parents
- No Indian studies on Mindful Self Compassion with parents of children with ASD and ID

Tools

- Self Compassion Scale (SCS) by Dr. Kristen Neff (2003) in English. Hindi translation, and published by Verma & Tiwari (2017)
- Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale - DASS 21 by Peter Lovibond, and the version translated into Hindi by Singh, B. et al. (2013)

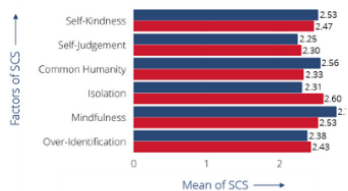
Results

Self Compassion Factors	Parents of children with			
	Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)- 32		Intellectual Disability (ID) - 30	
	Father - 15	Mother - 17	Father - 15	Mother - 15
Self Kindness			↓	↓
Self Judgement				
Common Humanity				
Isolation	↑	↓		
Mindfulness		↑		↑
Overidentification	↓		↑	

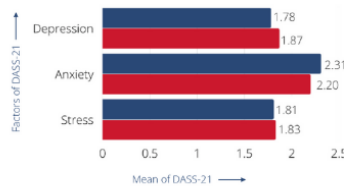
Table depicting results of SCS among Parents of children with ASD and Parents of children with ID.

Factors	Parents of children with			
	Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)- 32		Intellectual Disability (ID) - 30	
	Father - 15	Mother - 17	Father - 15	Mother - 15
Depression				↓
Anxiety	↑	↑	↑	↑
Stress	↓	↓	↓	

Table depicting results of DASS-21 among Parents of children with ASD and Parents of children with ID.



Gender differences of parents on SCS



Gender differences of parents on DASS-21

Recommendations

- Mindful Self Compassion training modules for parents of Children with Disabilities (CwD).
- Training modules to help parents cope with the mental health challenges that they might be facing as seen in their scores of DASS-21.
- Rendering coping strategies to fathers is recommended.
- Developing a self compassion scale in regional languages, to gain a better understanding of the experiences of parents of children with special needs .
- Development of a detailed research study on variables such as age of parents and various other types of disabilities such as children with learning disability, cerebral palsy etc.
- Development of support groups for parents of children with special needs .
- Training for special educators on mindful self compassion as they work both with children with special needs and their parents.