

# The Study of the Relationship between Coping Strategies and Thought Control Strategies with Mental Health of Parents Having Mental Retarded Children Compared with those Having Normal Children

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## ABSTRACT

The present study is aimed to study the relation between coping strategies, thought control strategies with mental health of parents having mental retarded children and those having normal children. Research methodology is correlative and 180 parents of normal children and 180 parents of mental retarded children were selected randomly as the sample. In order to collect data, Lazarous's questionnaire of coping strategies, Lezodavis's questionnaire of thought control strategies and general health questionnaire were used. T independent test, Pearson correlation coefficient and regression test have been used for data analysis. Results showed that there is a negative significant relation between thought control strategies and mental health of parents having mental retarded children and there is a direct relation between coping strategies and mental health. Results also showed that there is a significant difference in using coping strategies between parents having mental retarded children and those having normal children. They also showed that parents having mental retarded children are less mentally healthy compared those having normal children.

## Key Words

coping strategies, thought control strategies, mental health, mental retarded.

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## Introduction

Regarding problems their children face, parents having mental retarded children are subjected to many mental disorders, social abnormalities and interpersonal relations. A family with a mental retarded child influences on parental, marital, sisterhood and brotherhood systems and even on systems outside the family such as friends, neighbors, school and servicing institutions and imposes more pressure on inside the system, compromises the strength and consistency of inside the system and increases probability of disturbance in the system and causes stress in family micro systems. These effects influence on the mental retarded child too (Afrooz, 2003). Parents of mental retarded children use different strategies while facing problems. They use coping strategies in different situations. Coping strategies mean a set of cognitive and behavioral attempts of an individual that are used in a stressed condition and result in decrease in its difficulty (Dadsetan 1997). Coping is a permanent change in behavioral and cognitive attempts in order to control internal and external needs that are stressed and beyond personal sources (Lazarous, 1994). Thought control strategies mean a method for controlling unwanted and undesirable thoughts (Kaviani, 2001). Strategies people use to cope with disturbing thoughts are divided into five classes: punishment, reassessment, social control, anxiety, inattentiveness

(Welz, 1994). By studying thought control strategies and mental health of parents having mental retarded children, some approaches can be suggested for controlling undesirable and disturbing thoughts and we can help their mental health recovery. Health is one of the vital requirements of human which plays a critical role in sustainable development. In addition of physical health, human being has paid attention to other aspects of health including mental health. The concept of mental health includes internal feeling of goodness and self confidence, self reliance, competitive capacity, intergenerative dependence and self flourishing of potential emotional and thoughtful abilities (Shahmohammadi, 2001).

In the study called the relation between coping strategies and mental health of mothers of autistic children, Afshari.et.al (2006) showed that mothers having autism children had mental symptoms. It was also found that here was no significant relation between coping strategies focused on problem solving and emotion with mental health. But there was a relation between ineffective coping strategies and mental health. In a study so called effect of stress evaluation and encountering strategies with mental health, Mosavi nasab and Taqavi concluded that initial evaluation of stress explains amount of variance in encountering strategies. Evaluation of stress and encountering strategies explains amount of variance

in mental health. Ward and Bryant studied thought control strategies on acute mental pressure disorder. Results showed that participants with acute disorder use punishment and anxiety more than normal people. It was also found that normal people had used inattentiveness more than social control and reassessment. Amir& Kashman & Foa have studied thought control strategies in patients with obsessive compulsive disorder and compared them with normal people. Results showed that people with obsessive compulsive disorder used anxiety, punishment, reassessment and social control in order to control disturbing thoughts compared the second group whereas healthy people applied absent-mindedness since parents of mental retarded children have cognitive problems; it is possible that it affect their family life and consistency. This study is dealt with coping strategies, thought strategies and mental health in parents of mental retarded children and comparing them with parents of normal children in order to identify, control and improve strategies used by parents of mental retarded children by which their mental health can be promoted so following hypotheses have been studied.

1. There is a relation between coping strategies and thought control strategies with mental health of parents having mental retarded children.
2. There is a relation between coping strategies and mental health of

parents having mental retarded children.

3. There is a relation between thought control strategies and mental health of parents having mental retarded children.
4. There is a difference between coping strategies of parents having mental retarded children and habit.
5. There is a difference between mental health of parents having mental retarded children and normal children

## Methodology

It is a correlative research. The aim of correlative research method is to study range of one or more variables with range of other variables (Delavari, 2005). Statistical population of this study is all parents of normal and mental retarded children. 180 parents of normal children and 180 parents of mental retarded children were selected randomly as the sample. Tools of gathering data include three questionnaires such as

A: thought control questionnaire developed by Welzodavis in 1994. It was used for evaluation of personal differences in using strategies for controlling undesirable and unwanted thoughts. It includes 5 scales: 1- inattentiveness 2- social control 3- anxiety 4- punishment 5- reassessment

B: General health questionnaire was developed by Goldberg and Williams in 1998 and is practical for

Table 1. Correlation coefficient of the thought control, coping strategies and mental health variables.

Variables	correlation coefficient r	Significance level
Coping and thought strategies	.142	.123
Coping strategy and mental health	.056	.0001
Thought strategy and mental health	.566	.0001

Table 2. Regression analysis of thought control, coping strategies and mental health variables.

Variable	Beta	R square	F	Sig
Thought control strategy	.473	.325	.325	.0001
Coping strategy	.123			0.0001

Table 3. Pearson correlation for coping strategy and mental health of parents having mental retarded children.

Variables	Correlation coefficient	Sig
Coping strategy	.34	.0001
Mental health		

Table 4. Pearson correlation for thought control strategy and mental health of parents having mental retarded.

Variables	Correlation coefficient	Sig
Thought control strategy Mental health	- .56	.0001

Table 5. Independent T for coping strategies of parents having normal and mental retarded children.

Variables	Parents	Mean	Standard deviation	T	df	Sig
Coping strategy	Normal	53	12	2.56	358	.0001
Coping strategy	Mental retarded	81	15			

Table 6. Independent for mental health of parents having normal and mental retarded children.

Variables	Parents	Mean	Standard deviation	T	df	Sig
Coping strategy	Normal	38	13	2.80	358	.0001
Coping strategy	Mental retarded	58				

adults and adolescents. C: Lazarous coping strategy questionnaire has been developed by Lazarous and Flakman in 1985 and a wide range of thoughts and activities people do while facing internal and external stressed condition will be evaluated by this questionnaire. T independent test, Pearson correlation coefficient and regression test have been used for data analyses.

## Findings:

Hypothesis 1: There is a relation between coping strategies and thought control strategies with mental health of parents having mental retarded children.

Results of table 1 showed that there is no relation between coping strategies and thought control strategies. Results also showed that there is a significant correlation between coping strategies and mental health ( $r = 0.056$ ) and there is a positive significant correlation between thought control strategy and mental health (.566). results of regression analysis in table 2 showed that variables of thought control strategy and coping strategy can determine and predict changes related to mental health ( $R$  square= 0.320,  $F= 28.16$ ,  $Sig= 0.0001$ ).

Hypothesis 2: There is a relation between coping strategies and mental health of parents having mental retarded children.

Results of Pearson correlation test in table 3 showed that there is a significant relation between coping strategy and mental health of parents having mental retarded children. The correlation is equal

to - .34 and significance level is equal to 0.0001 so there is a correlation between coping strategy and mental health by .99 confidence levels. This hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 3: There is a relation between thought control strategies and mental health of parents having mental retarded children.

Results of Pearson correlation test show that there is negative significant relation between thought control strategy and mental health of parents having mental retarded children. Correlative value is equal to - .56 and significance level is equal to 0.0001. So this hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 4: there is a difference between coping strategies of parents having mental retarded children and habit.

Results of independent T in mean comparisons show that there is a significant difference between parents having normal and mental retarded children regarding their mental health. Amount of mental health of parents having mental retarded children is 58 and amount of mental health of those having normal children is 38. This difference is significant ( $T=2.80$ ) and ( $Sig= 0.0001$ ). So this hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 5: There is a difference between mental health of parents having mental retarded children and normal children.

## Discussion

Hypothesis 1: There is a relation

between coping strategies and thought control strategies with mental health of parents having mental retarded children.

Test results showed that there is no relation between coping strategy and thought control strategy but there is a positive significant correlation between coping strategy and mental health and between thought control strategy and mental health. Results of regression analysis showed that variables of coping strategy and thought control strategy explicate mental health. Results of this study are consistent with those obtained from Mosavinasab and Taqavi's study entitled as effect of stress evaluation and encountering strategy with mental health. The study of Goodarzi and Moeeni entitled as the relationship between coping strategies and mental health is consistent with results of this research. Their results showed that logical and problematic coping strategies could predict healthy indices and emotional and inefficient coping strategies of disease indices. So it can be concluded that cognitive problems, the strategy they have for controlling unwanted thoughts and attitudes of parents having mental retarded children can affect their mental health and positive or negative coping strategies have been used (Alice, 2003).

Hypothesis 2: There is a relation between coping strategies and mental health of parents having mental retarded children.

Results of the hypothesis showed that there is a significant correlation between coping strategy and mental health. Role of coping strategy on

mental and physical health is of great importance in health psychology. Considering the relation between mental health and coping strategies, it can be said that In a mutual interaction, mental health is accounted for results of selecting and using effective coping strategies proportional to change and stress in one hand and on the other hand, it is a bed for a healthy mental space by which effective and correct cognition is possible. According to Folkman and Lazarous's model, cognitive skills will be used for problem solving in coping process. A person use cognitive skills for solving problem using efficient coping strategy so problematic coping methods will be studied directly and psychological satisfaction will be obtained by finding appropriate solutions.

Hypothesis 3: There is a relation between thought control strategies and mental health of parents having mental retarded children.

Results of the hypothesis showed that there is a negative significant relation between thought control strategies and mental health. Thought control strategies mean those which are used by people for controlling undesirable and unwanted thoughts. *Alice (2003)* believed that some people have irrational beliefs that are effective on their interpretation of events and resulted in inappropriate emotional responses. Back believed that when a person represses negative thoughts, they feel unable to cope with these thoughts. These thoughts make a self beaten cycle automatically so that the person feels unable to cope with events and these make them anxious (*Boon, 2002*). So it can be concluded that individual way of thought about different events cause problems in cognitive balance resulting in mental imbalance in individuals.

Hypothesis 4: there is a difference between coping strategies of parents having mental retarded children and habit.

Results showed that there is significant difference in using coping strategies between parents of normal and mental retarded children. The research results are harmonious with those obtained by Dastjerdi. Results revealed

that there is a significant difference between mental retarded and normal groups regarding emotional oriented coping strategies but there was no significant difference between above mentioned groups in using inefficient and problematic coping strategies in stressed condition. In analyzing obtained results, it seems that although parents cope with activities related directly to the children, and economical costs and social pressures are stressful for them, it is possible that they could understand that using coping strategies they can solve problems while facing them and since parents of mental retarded children are under emotional and mental pressures, they may use different methods in coping strategies.

Hypothesis 5: There is a difference between mental health of parents having mental retarded children and normal children. Results revealed that there is a difference between mental health of parents having mental retarded children and normal children. Research results are harmonious with those obtained by Rimani who concluded that parents of mental retarded children experience more mental pressure. They also are consistent with results of Narimani.et.al entitled as comparing mental health of parents having mental retarded children with mental health of normal children. Results obtained from this research showed that generally, there is a significant difference between mental health of parents having mental retarded children and normal ones. Parents feel confident who hope that their children are natural and healthy but they will be disappointed when they know about disability of their children and the problem will start and it causes their mental health to reduce.

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