

The Correlation Between Coping Strategy and Stress of Parents Who Have Children with Autism

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Abstract

Autism was a very complex neurobiological developmental disorder. Parents with autistic children have a higher stress level than parents who have normal children, so use the effective coping strategy for parents who had an autistic child would make them prevented the excessive stress. Aim of the research was to find out relation of coping strategy and parents' stress who had an autistic children. The research design was correlational design with a cross-sectional approach. Data collection used a questionnaire of the Coping Health Inventory for Parents and Parental Stress Scale. Result of study showed that coping strategy and parents' stress who had an autistic child were mostly at range of medium coping strategy (57.7%) and moderate stress (76.9%). Result of Spearman's Rank correlation test showed a negative relation between coping strategy and parents' stress ($r=0.699$; $p=0.000$). There was a correlation between coping strategy and parents' stress who had an autistic child in this research, which meant the better coping strategy the lower parents' stress who had an autistic child. Based on these results, autistic agencies should be better able pay attention to improve ability of parents' coping strategy who had autistic children.

Keywords: Autism, coping strategy, parents, stress.

Introduction

The incidence of people with autism has increased every year. According to World Health Organization (WHO), nowadays prevalence of autism in Indonesia rise rapidly with eight people out of 1,000 residents than 10 years ago with just one out of 1,000 residents (Radiana in Tias, 2014). Autism is a very complex neurobiological developmental disorder in life, the disorder includes aspect of behavior, social interaction, communication and language and also emotion disorder and sensory perception even on the aspect of motor (Joko, 2009).

Existence of family members who have an autism will be its own stressor for every family member. Child who has an autism need an individual support and care that will seize family resources (Head & Abbeduto, 2007). Parents who have an autism child have a risk of stress enhancement that relate to problems which child have in aspect of social behavior, communication problems, emotional indifference, self-destructive behavior, eating problems, and sleeping problems (Hall in Darli, 2015). Associated with limitations of autistic people, parents who have an autistic child will experience stress related to the limitations experienced by the child (Dodd, 2004). It is not easy for the families to face that they have an autistic child. While family role is very required when health problems appear on other family members who will play a role as a caregiver (Friedman, 2010). Therefore families with an autistic child are required to adapt with condition, needs, and special handling for autistic children that complicated enough (Rahmania, Nurwati, & Taftazani, 2016). According to Purwanto in Ekasari, 2015 problem which often found is not all parents can admit and adapt with severity of life stressor that faced due to existence of autistic children. This condition makes parents become depressed due to unexpected reality. This condition is called stress. If compared with parents who have children with other disabilities, parents who have an autistic child have a higher stress level (Pottie in Muniroh, 2011).

Stress according to Lazarus and Folkman is a condition that can be caused by physical demands of the body or environmental and

social condition that is potentially harm, uncontrollable, or beyond individual's ability to overcome (Safaria, 2009). Stress experienced by these parents who have an autistic child will have a negative impact when these individuals unable to do a good stress management strategy. Effort to manage the stress is called as coping. Coping is an ongoing cognitive and behavior change effort to solve external and or internal demands considered as burden or something beyond individual's ability (Lazarus & Folkman in Safaria, 2009). Mc Cubbin (1983) developed a concept of family coping strategy that specifically describes how family adapt with a situation under chronic pressure (stressor). It includes prevention by family as an active process that includes utilization of family resources and development of new behavior to support to strengthen a unit of family in reducing impact of stressful events.

For parents who have an autistic child, use of an effective coping strategy will be able to face various pressures related to child's condition or ongoing therapy process so that expected an excessive stress isn't happening. Study of Hall and Graff (2011) also concludes that the right coping strategy can help reducing stress that experienced by parents who have an autistic child. Therefore it is required an additional support for parents who have an autistic child in discovering right coping strategy to help parents in handling autistic children, especially from professional health personnel such as nurses who are a part of family professional team service in autistic children and have a big opportunity to communicate with children's parents (Hall & Graff, 2011). Nurses know a lot about autism and involved in diagnosing and also early intervention steps to autistic children (Hall & Graff, 2011). Therefore nurses must be able to give explanation about actions that would be done to children, and also able to lead a right support for parents to avoid stress faced in providing care for autistic children, one of them by teaching how is the effective coping strategy.

Based on these backgrounds, the researcher wants to do a study to find out how relation of coping strategies with stress of parents who have an autistic child is so that hoped this result of study can be an information source

for nursing instances, autistic institutions, and next researchers about condition of coping strategies and stress which experienced by parents who have an autistic child.

Research Method

Study design used was quantitative correlative with cross-sectional approach and variables were coping strategy and stress on parents' who had an autistic child. The populations in the research were 52 parents of autistic students regardless had other disabilities who were still actively studying in Cileunyi National Special School, Multahada Special School, and Satria Galdin Special School. Due to sampling technique in the research was total sampling thus number of samples in the research equal to number of populations those were 52 samples.

In collecting data, the researcher used questionnaire for coping strategy that was Coping Health Inventory for Parents formulation of Mc Cubbin (1983) which adapted into Bahasa Indonesia numbering 45 questions. CHIP questionnaire divided into three coping patterns, those were: Pattern

I was family integration (keeping family united), cooperation, and optimism to face reality. Pattern II was how family kept a social support, confidence, and sense of psychological stability. And Pattern III was understanding of medical situation (health care) through communication with family and consultation with health personnels. While in stress questionnaire the researcher used Parental Stress Scale Berry and Jone's (1951) formulation translated into Bahasa Indonesia numbering 18 questions which divided to dimension of pleasure and strain.

Data analysis technique in the research was divided into univariate and bivariate. Univariate analysis in coping strategy was divided into well, enough, and less categories. While in stress variable was divided into severe stress, moderate stress, and mild stress. Bivariate analysis used to find out a correlation between coping strategy and stress was Spearman analysis.

Research Results

Based on table 1 obtained data that demography characteristics of parents who

Table 1 The Frequency Distribution of Characteristic Patients with a Colostomy in a Public Hospital in Bandung (N=42)

Demography Characteristic	<i>f</i>	%
Age		
23 – 40 years (Young Adulthood)	15	28.8
41 – 57 years (Adulthood)	32	42.1
> 57 years	5	9.6
Education		
Elementary School	7	13.5
Junior High School	10	19.2
Senior High School	31	59.6
Diploma	2	3.8
Bachelor	-	-
Magister	2	3.8
Occupation		
Government Employees	1	1.9
Private Employees	8	15.4
Entrepreneur	13	25
Laborer	8	15.4
Housewife	22	42.3

Demography Characteristic	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Male	37	71.2
Female	15	28.8
Child's Education		
Elementary School	36	69.2
Junior High School	9	17.3
Senior High School	7	13.5

Table 2 Distribution of Coping Strategy Overview Frequency of Parents who had Autistic Children (N=52)

Coping Strategy	<i>f</i>	%
Less	11	21.2
Moderate	30	57.7
Well	11	21.2

Table 3 Distribution of Stress Overview Frequency of Parents who Had Autistic Children (N=52)

Coping Strategy	<i>f</i>	%
Less	11	21.2
Moderate	30	57.7
Well	11	21.2

Table 4 Coping Strategy of Parents who Had Autistic Children Based on Family Integrity Coping Dimension, Psychological Stabilization, and Communication (N=52)

Coping Strategy	Family Integrity		Psychological Stabilization		Communication	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Less	9	17.3	11	21.2	10	19.2
Moderate	35	67.3	30	57.7	33	63.5
Well	8	15.4	11	21.2	9	17.3

Table 5 Stress of Parents who Had Autistic Children Based on Stress Dimension of Pleasure and Strain

Stress	Pleasure		Strain	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Mild	4	7.7	3	5.8
Moderate	40	76.9	43	82.7
Severe	8	15.4	6	11.5
Mean	35.98		21.92	

had an autistic child were at range of age 23 up to 67 years old. Most parents took the last education level in high school. Based on table 2 above obtained a result that overview

of coping strategy of parents' who had an autistic children was mostly at enough range (57.7%). Based on table 3 above obtained a result that overview of stress of parents'

Table 6 Correlation of Coping Strategy with Stress of Parents who Had Autistic Children Used Spearman Test (N=52)

			Coping Strategy	Stress
Spearman's rho	Coping strategy	<i>r</i>	1.000	-.699
		p value	.	.000*
		N	52	52
	Stress	<i>r</i>	-.699	1.000
		p value	.000*	
		N	52	52

who had an autistic children was mostly at moderate range (76.9%).

Based on table 4 obtained a result that coping strategy of parents who had an autistic child in aspect of family integrity more than a half of parents were at medium category (67.3%). Also in aspect of psychological stability most parents were at medium category (57.7%). Also in aspect of communication most parents were at medium category (63.5%). In the less coping strategy, sub variable of family integrity coping strategy had the lowest values than psychological stabilization and communication. This it could be said that parents who have an autistic child tended to haven't been able to maintain family integrity in parenting.

Based on table 5 obtained a result that stress of parents who had an autistic child in aspect of pleasure most of parents were at moderate category (76.9%). Also in aspect of strain most parents were at moderate category (82.7%). In category of severe stress, sub variable of strain stress was lower than pleasure. Thus it could be said that parents who have an autistic child tended to show a bigger pleasure in parenting.

Based on table 6 obtained a result there was a significant negative relation between coping strategy with stress of parents who had an autistic child ($r=-0.699$; $p=0.000$). Result of correlation test based on Spearman analysis showed that the higher parents coping strategy the lower stress level which experienced by parents with autistic children.

Discussion

Result of study about coping strategy of parents who had autistic children (table

2) showed that most parents who had an autistic child were at medium coping strategy category that was 30 people (57.7%), while the other ones were in the category of less and well coping strategy with same number of each 11 people (21.2%). This showed that coping strategy which used by parents who had autistic children wasn't still good yet. McCubbin in Yusuf (2016) said when one of family members experienced a health problem in a long period, the family should give a care to the family member who experienced that problem in a long period and must still support so that the family member who experienced that problem could perform the daily routine activities.

Based on the result of study concerning sub variable of coping strategy of parents who had autistic children (table 4) showed in low coping category, values of family integrity was the lowest one than psychological and communication stabilization. Thus it could be said that parents who have an autistic child tended to haven't been able to maintain family integrity in parenting. Low family integrity indicated low ability of parents to maintain relationship with all family members, cooperation, and saw children's condition positively. This was in line with a theory explained by Nasir and Muhith (2011) about one of stress sources in family which could affect family coping. Family integrity was closely related to interaction among family members, jealousy of family members (siblings) or other situations and conditions in the family which was influenced by the presence of autistic child. As according to Purwanto in Ekasari (2015) problem which was often found in family who had an autistic child was not all parents and family members could admit and adapt with the condition due

to presence of an autistic child.

Other factors which could affect coping strategy according to Hobfoll in Taylor (2009) were age, when the older someone's age then experiences in solving and self adapting to problems happened would be controlled better. Ages of autistic children's parents who were involved in the research were mostly at early adulthood age and middle-aged adult when on that ages were the age with an optimal parents development duty to perform a role as a parent with physical and psychosocial strength owned. Besides age, factors which could affect coping strategy according to Sarafino in Lingga (2014) were education, individuals with a high education level would have a higher cognitive development so that the individuals would have a more realistic assessment concerning problems faced and the coping behavior would be more effective. Other external factor was job, could be seen in the result of study that majority of parents who were involved in the research had a job as a housewife or didn't work while Hobfoll in Taylor (2009) proofed that individuals who had a higher job status were able to perform logical analysis in solving problems than them who had a lower job status.

Result of study about stress of parents who had autistic children (tabel 3) showed that most parents who had an autistic child were in moderate stress category that was 40 people (76.9%), while the other ones were in the severe stress category that was 9 people (17.3%) and in the mild stress category that was 3 people (5.8%). This showed that stress which was experienced by parents who had autistic children was still high enough. This was in line with result of study done by Lin (2015) stated that parents with an autistic child had a higher stress level than parents who had a normal child. The high stress in parenting autistic children caused by a harder and intensive parenting level than in parenting children with a normal development (Astriamitha, 2012).

Stress was something that normal and reasonable happened in individual's life, included in this case was parents who had autistic children. Stressor happened on the parents who had autistic children related to different handling and parenting than normal children. This was in line with the research

done by Das et al. (2017) which mentioned that parents with an autistic child generally experienced stress caused by a parenting process to raise a child, parents also kept maintaining a physical health condition, emotion, financial, and social caused by parenting.

Parenting stress defined by Berry and Jones was an excessive tension that was specifically related to the role of parents and interaction between parents and children. Berry and Jones (1995) Said that there were two components in parenting stress those were pleasure (a positive component which brought advantages emotionally such as love, joy, happiness, enjoyment, and also feeling of self-enrichment and self-development), and strain (a negative component which involved demand of various sources such as time, energy, and money, as well as prohibitions, feelings of shame, and control). Based on the result of study of stress sub variable (table 5) showed that there was no a significant difference in the respectively aspect of pleasure and strain. However in category of severe stress, values of strain was lower than pleasure's. Thus it could be said that parents who had an autistic child tended to show a bigger pleasure in parenting.

Based on the research of 52 parents who had an autistic child obtained a result of relation test that showed there was a significant negative relation between coping strategy with stress in parents who had an autistic child with a strong correlation power ($r=-0.699$; $p=0.000$). These showed that the better coping strategy the lower stress experienced by parents who had an autistic child. These were in line with study done by Rayan and Ahmad (2017) which tested positive reappraisal coping (PRC) that considered as a good stress management strategy to 104 parents who had an autistic child. Result of study mentioned that there was a relation between the adaptive coping and the low stress level in parents who had an autistic child.

Based on the result of study could be concluded that there was a negative relation between coping strategy and stress of parents who had an autistic child, this meant that the way done by parents who had an autistic child to manage stress could affect the perception

on stress. As according to Yusuf (2016) the less coping could be happened due to high stress and coping source that didn't support to develop a good coping. Therefore, taught the parents who had an autistic child to use a right coping strategy could reduce parenting stress which experienced by parents who had an autistic child.

Conclusion

Result of the study indicates that most parents who have an autistic child have medium coping strategy and experience stress in category of moderate stress. Based on coping dimension, in the category of less coping, family integrity indicates the lowest value between communication and psychological stability. This shows that parents who have an autistic child tend to haven't been able to maintain family integrity in parenting. While based on stress dimension, in the category of severe stress, strain indicates a lower value than pleasure value. This shows that parents who have an autistic child tend to show a bigger pleasure in parenting. Relation of coping strategy and stress of parents who have an autistic children indicate there is a significant negative relation. These indicate that the better coping strategy the lower stress experience by parents who have an autistic child.

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