

Parental Self-Efficacy and Psychological Wellbeing of Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder:

Anjali Prakash¹, Dr. Madhulata Yadav²

¹Research Scholar, Psychology, Srinivas University

²Research Professor, Psychology, Srinivas University

Abstract

Parenting encompasses all actions related to the raising of offspring, including providing care, protection, and guidance to ensure children's survival, socialization, and healthy development into autonomous adults (APA)

Managing autism in a child is one of the most important journeys parents will ever take. Autism spectrum disorder is a complex neurological condition, often presenting challenges in communication, social interaction, and behavior. Every autistic child has unique strengths and challenges. Parents are usually among the first to notice early signs of autism. That means parents are also the first responders in seeking help and support.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) affects children differently, and as a parent or caregiver, they are central to child's growth, well-being, and future success. Consequently, parents may face increased caregiving responsibilities and may need to continually adapt their parenting strategies to their child's changing needs. The demands associated with raising a child with ASD can extend beyond the immediate management of the child's difficulties and may influence parents' emotional functioning, coping, family relationships, social participation, and overall quality of life. Within this context, parental psychological functioning becomes an important area of research because parents' well-being can influence not only their own quality of life but also the quality and consistency of the care and support they provide to their children.

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation, behavior, and social environment.

Wellbeing is the state of feeling healthy, happy, and comfort in life, encompassing physical, mental, and social health. The emotional well-being of parents directly influences the support they provide to their autistic children.

Parental self-efficacy represents a significant psychological resource associated with parenting stress, psychological distress, and general well-being in parents of children with ASD. Consequently, evaluating parental self-efficacy alongside measures of parenting stress and psychological adjustment may be valuable when designing family-centered support programs.

A narrative literature review design to synthesize the existing evidence on parental self-efficacy and psychological well-being among parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The review

focused on identifying patterns, similarities and differences across studies and on understanding the factors associated with parental self-efficacy and psychological well-being.

The study emphasizes the significance of self-care for parents, encouraging them to seek respite and emotional support when needed. Engaging in peer support groups and counseling sessions can alleviate stress and foster a more resilient caregiving environment.

The literature uses a wide range of measures for parental self-efficacy, psychological well-being, stress, quality of life and related constructs. This variation makes comparisons across studies difficult. Future research should use well-validated, parenting-specific measures and more consistent assessment of psychological well-being. Stronger research designs and appropriate methodological approaches are also needed to provide more reliable evidence.

Keywords: ASD, Parental stress, Self efficacy, wellbeing

Introduction

Parenting is a complex and demanding role that requires continuous adaptation to a child's developmental, emotional, behavioral, educational, and social needs. The experience of parenting may become particularly challenging when a child has a neurodevelopmental condition such as autism spectrum disorder.

ASD is characterized by persistent difficulties in social communication and social interaction, along with restricted or repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities. (Hodis et al., 2026) These characteristics may create additional demands for parents, including managing challenging behaviors, communication difficulties, emotional and behavioral regulation, educational concerns, social difficulties, and the need to coordinate multiple forms of professional and educational support. Consequently, parents may face increased caregiving responsibilities and may need to continually adapt their parenting strategies to their child's changing needs. The demands associated with raising a child with ASD can extend beyond the immediate management of the child's difficulties and may influence parents' emotional functioning, coping, family relationships, social participation, and overall quality of life. Within this context, parental psychological functioning becomes an important area of research because parents' well-being can influence not only their own quality of life but also the quality and consistency of the care and support they provide to their children.

Parenting self-efficacy has emerged as an important psychological resource in the ASD parenting literature. It refers broadly to parents' beliefs regarding their ability to manage parenting responsibilities effectively. Kuhn and Carter (2006) were among the earlier studies to examine maternal self-efficacy in mothers of children with autism, establishing the relevance of perceived competence within the parenting role.

One psychological factor that may be particularly relevant is parental self-efficacy, which refers to a parent's belief in their own ability to effectively perform parenting tasks and manage the challenges associated with raising a child. Parents with stronger perceptions of self-efficacy may feel more capable of understanding their child's needs, managing difficult behaviors, making appropriate parenting decisions, solving problems, implementing recommended strategies, and seeking appropriate support when necessary (Almendingen and Pilkington.,2024)

In contrast, lower parental self-efficacy may be associated with feelings of inadequacy, reduced confidence in parenting abilities, difficulties in coping with parenting demands, and greater vulnerability

to psychological distress. Therefore, parental self-efficacy may represent an important psychological resource that can help parents respond more effectively to the demands associated with raising children with developmental and behavioral difficulties (Alsa et al., 2021, 2022).

Alongside parental self-efficacy, psychological well-being is another important aspect of parental functioning. Psychological well-being encompasses positive psychological functioning, emotional balance, sense of competence, meaningful engagement, life satisfaction, and the ability to cope effectively with everyday challenges. Parents who experience greater psychological well-being may be better able to manage ongoing caregiving responsibilities, maintain positive parent-child interactions, and engage consistently with interventions and support systems. Taylor et al. (2021) found a strong positive association between parental self-efficacy and parental mental well-being among 248 parents of children with ASD. Higher autism-related symptoms were associated with lower parental self-efficacy, while greater adaptive functioning was associated with higher self-efficacy. This finding is particularly important because it directly connects parenting self-efficacy with parental mental well-being.

This understanding may also have practical implications for psychologists, therapists, educators, and other professionals working with children and families, as strengthening parental self-efficacy may offer a potential avenue to improve parental coping and psychological well-being.

Therefore, the present study aims to examine parental self-efficacy and psychological well-being among parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, with particular emphasis on understanding the relationship between these psychological constructs and identifying factors that may contribute to better parental functioning and well-being.

Narrative Synthesis

The present study adopted a narrative literature review design to synthesize the existing evidence on parental self-efficacy and psychological well-being among parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The identified literature was screened initially on the basis of the title and abstract for relevance to the review objectives. Studies considered potentially relevant were examined in greater detail before inclusion in the narrative synthesis. Duplicate studies were removed.

The synthesis involved comparing findings across studies, identifying areas of convergence and divergence, and examining how parental self-efficacy was associated with psychological well-being and related parental outcomes. Particular attention given to the distinction between parenting-specific self-efficacy and general self-efficacy, as well as between psychological well-being and related constructs such as stress, psychological distress, depression, anxiety, quality of life and life satisfaction.

The findings were synthesized thematically rather than presented as a study-by-study summary. A narrative approach was considered appropriate because the available literature includes quantitative, qualitative, comparative, longitudinal, intervention-based, and review studies examining different dimensions of parental functioning and well-being. The review focused on identifying patterns, similarities and differences across studies and on understanding the factors associated with parental self-efficacy and psychological well-being.

Psychological Well-Being of Parents of Children with ASD

Early research primarily highlighted the psychological burden experienced by parents of children with ASD. For example, Kuhn and Carter (2006) examined maternal self-efficacy and associated parenting

cognitions and highlighted the importance of perceived competence in the parenting role in the context of the considerable challenges associated with raising a child with autism. Similarly, Costa et al. (2017) reported reduced well-being and increased physiological and psychological stress among parents of children with ASD. Their findings suggested that parents' perceptions of their child's difficulties and their use of cognitive reappraisal were relevant to parental stress and well-being.

The relationship between ASD-related demands and parental psychological outcomes has also been demonstrated in studies focusing specifically on stress. Padden and James (2017) found greater parental distress, anxiety and depressive symptoms among parents of children with ASD compared with comparison parents. Likewise, Herrema et al. (2017) reported substantial levels of depression, anxiety, stress and worry among family members supporting autistic adults, indicating that psychological difficulties may continue beyond childhood.

Evidence from India further supports the presence of considerable parental stress. Negi et al. (2024) conducted a prospective case-control study in Dehradun and found substantially higher stress among parents of children with ASD compared with parents of typically developing children; a large proportion of the ASD group demonstrated significant stress. In Bangalore, Preetham et al. (2022) showed that socioeconomic and treatment-access factors were important characteristics of families raising children with ASD. Although the study did not directly measure psychological well-being, it provides useful contextual evidence that access to intervention and socioeconomic circumstances may influence the experiences of parents.

The literature also indicates that parental well-being cannot be understood only in terms of negative psychological outcomes. Vasilopoulou and Nisbet (2016), in a systematic review of parental quality of life, found that parents of children with ASD generally experienced poorer quality of life across at least one domain. Child behavioural difficulties, unemployment, being a mother and limited social support were among factors associated with poorer quality of life. However, later research has increasingly identified positive forms of adaptation alongside stress.

Lickenbrock et al. (2011) found that maternal perceptions of the child and marital adjustment were associated with maternal well-being. Positive perceptions were related to more positive maternal outcomes, while marital adjustment played an important role in explaining these relationships. Similarly, McAuliffe et al. (2019) showed that mothers' management of family routines could have both demanding and supportive consequences for their health and well-being. Mothers described considerable fatigue and responsibility, but also identified self-care and effective routines as important for maintaining family functioning and personal well-being.

More recent research has further broadened the concept of parental well-being. Zhang et al. (2025) examined capability well-being among 366 parents of autistic children in China and found that greater autism-related demands, lower socioeconomic status and longer caregiving time were associated with poorer well-being. Importantly, mothers reported lower levels of autonomy and achievement than fathers. This finding suggests that parental well-being is influenced not only by emotional symptoms but also by parents' opportunities to experience autonomy, achievement and meaningful participation in life.

Overall, the evidence indicates that parents of children with ASD may experience substantial psychological demands, but parental adaptation is not uniformly negative. Stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms may coexist with life satisfaction, family quality of life, positive perceptions and personal

growth. This shift from a deficit-focused perspective toward a more balanced understanding of parental adaptation is important for examining the potential contribution of parenting self-efficacy.

Parenting Self-Efficacy Among Parents of Children with ASD

Parenting self-efficacy has emerged as an important psychological resource in the ASD parenting literature. It refers broadly to parents' beliefs regarding their ability to manage parenting responsibilities effectively. Kuhn and Carter (2006) were among the earlier studies to examine maternal self-efficacy in mothers of children with autism, establishing the relevance of perceived competence within the parenting role. Later qualitative evidence from Singapore provided greater insight into how parenting self-efficacy develops. Chong and Kua (2017) found that mastery experiences were particularly important sources of parenting self-efficacy among mothers of children with autism, while physiological and emotional states also contributed to mothers' perceptions of competence. Support in parenting was another important factor.

Measurement of parenting self-efficacy has also developed over time. Benedetto et al. (2021) examined the Italian version of the Child Adjustment and Parent Efficacy Scale–Developmental Disability among parents of children with ASD. The measure links parents' perceptions of children's behavioural and emotional difficulties with their confidence in managing those difficulties. This type of measurement is particularly useful because it captures self-efficacy within the specific context of developmental and behavioural challenges rather than treating self-efficacy as a general personal characteristic.

Similarly, Kabashima et al. (2020) developed the Parental Self-Efficacy Scale for Preventing Challenging Behaviors in Children with ASD (PASEC). The final scale included dimensions related to empowering children's social functioning and optimizing the child's environment. The scale demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity and was positively associated with the self-efficacy component of the Parenting Sense of Competence measure. Such work is important because it highlights the need for ASD-specific assessment of parental self-efficacy.

Parenting self-efficacy has also been linked to parents' ability to participate in intervention. Russell and Ingersoll (2021) examined therapeutic self-efficacy in 51 parents participating in a telehealth parent-mediated intervention. Global parental self-efficacy was associated with therapeutic self-efficacy, while qualitative findings highlighted the importance of the fit between the child's abilities, the parent's interaction style, environmental conditions and the child's response to intervention. These findings suggest that parental self-efficacy is not a fixed characteristic; rather, it may be influenced by parents' experiences of success, intervention demands and environmental support.

Evidence from intervention studies further supports this interpretation. Zhou et al. (2019) reported that parents of children with ASD initially showed lower parenting self-efficacy and poorer emotional outcomes than comparison parents. Following a four-week family-focused psychoeducational intervention, parenting self-efficacy improved and anxiety and depressive symptoms decreased, with improvements maintained at one-month follow-up. Similarly, Keen et al. (2010) found that a parent-focused intervention for recently diagnosed children with ASD reduced parenting stress and improved parenting competence, particularly among parents with lower initial competence.

Other intervention evidence is consistent with these findings. Tahmassian and Khorramabadi (2011) reported improvements in parenting self-efficacy and parent-child relationships following parent management training. Shiri et al. (2020) found improvements in parental self-efficacy and reductions in parenting stress following a family-based management programme for young children with ASD. These

findings collectively suggest that parent training may provide opportunities for mastery and skill development, which can strengthen parents' perceived competence.

More recent studies have examined the relationship between parenting self-efficacy and family outcomes using larger samples. Taylor et al. (2021) found a strong positive association between parental self-efficacy and parental mental well-being among 248 parents of children with ASD. Higher autism-related symptoms were associated with lower parental self-efficacy, while greater adaptive functioning was associated with higher self-efficacy. This finding is particularly important because it directly connects parenting self-efficacy with parental mental well-being. Almendingen and Pilkington (2024) similarly found that greater parenting self-efficacy was associated with lower psychological distress among parents of children with ASD.

Relationship between Parenting Self-Efficacy and Psychological Well-Being

The relationship between parenting self-efficacy and psychological well-being represents the central theme emerging from the literature. Across multiple studies, parents who feel more capable of managing their child's needs tend to report better psychological outcomes. However, the relationship appears to be more complex than a simple direct association.

One of the clearest findings comes from Taylor et al. (2021), who reported a substantial positive association between parenting self-efficacy and parental mental well-being. Their findings suggest that parents who perceive themselves as more capable in their parenting role may be better able to maintain positive psychological functioning despite the challenges associated with ASD.

Similarly, Almendingen and Pilkington (2024) found that parenting self-efficacy was associated with reduced psychological distress. Their findings also indicated that mastery beliefs and co-parenting experiences were related to parenting self-efficacy, suggesting that parents' confidence may develop within a broader interpersonal and psychological context.

Evidence from Indonesia provides further support for this association. Desiningrum and Kurniawati (2023) examined parenting self-efficacy, hardiness and psychological well-being among 125 parents of children with ASD. Both parenting self-efficacy and hardiness were significantly associated with psychological well-being, indicating that parental confidence may operate together with broader psychological resilience resources rather than independently.

A particularly important finding was reported by Alsa et al. (2021/2022), who examined parenting self-efficacy, resilience and psychological well-being among mothers of children with autism in Indonesia. Although parenting self-efficacy did not show a significant direct relationship with psychological well-being in their model, resilience played a significant mediating role. This finding suggests that parenting self-efficacy may influence well-being partly through other psychological resources.

This interpretation is supported by the broader findings of Higgins et al. (2023). In a sample of 136 parents, parental self-efficacy was a significant contributor to psychological well-being, family quality of life and lower parental stress. Adaptive coping, social support and positive perceptions also contributed to parental adaptation. However, none of these variables significantly moderated the relationship between child behavioural problems and parental adaptation. Thus, these resources appear to function more as independent contributors to adaptation than as simple buffers against child-related difficulties.

The relationship can also be observed through parental stress. Li et al. (2022) found that parental self-efficacy completely mediated the relationship between children's social impairment and parenting stress

among 185 mothers of children with ASD. Mothers reporting greater child social impairment tended to have lower self-efficacy, which in turn was associated with greater parenting stress.

Similarly, Strauss et al. (2022) found that parenting self-efficacy mediated the association between child behavioural and emotional problems and parenting stress among fathers. Interestingly, this mediation was identified specifically in fathers, highlighting the possibility that the psychological mechanisms linking child behavior, parenting confidence and stress may differ between mothers and fathers.

Taken together, these studies suggest that parenting self-efficacy may be viewed as a psychological resource associated with better parental adaptation. However, the available evidence does not establish that higher self-efficacy directly causes better psychological well-being. Much of the evidence is cross-sectional, and other variables such as coping, resilience, social support, marital adjustment and parenting stress may partly explain the association.

Parenting Stress as an Important Link Between Self-Efficacy and Well-Being

Parenting stress appears repeatedly across the literature as an important mechanism connecting parenting experiences with parental psychological outcomes. Studies consistently indicate that parents of children with ASD experience elevated stress, particularly when children display behavioural, emotional or social difficulties.

For example, Negi et al. (2024) found high levels of parental stress in parents of newly diagnosed children with ASD. Padden and James (2017) similarly identified greater parental distress, anxiety and depressive symptoms among parents of children with ASD. These findings provide evidence that parental well-being may be compromised when parenting demands exceed perceived coping resources.

Several studies suggest that parenting self-efficacy may reduce this burden. Li et al. (2022) demonstrated that self-efficacy mediated the relationship between child social impairment and parenting stress. Strauss et al. (2022) identified a similar mechanism involving fathers and child behavioral problems. Chen et al. (2021) also found that parenting stress mediated the relationship between parental self-efficacy and children's behavioral problems during the COVID-19 pandemic. In that study, perceived social support further influenced the indirect relationship, highlighting the interconnected nature of personal and social resources.

The findings therefore suggest a possible reciprocal process: difficult child behaviors may increase parenting demands, which may reduce parents' confidence in their parenting abilities and increase stress; in turn, elevated stress may make effective parenting more difficult. Parenting self-efficacy may therefore be particularly important because it can influence how parents interpret and respond to challenging parenting situations.

Social Support, Resilience, Coping and Other Protective Factors

Although parenting self-efficacy is important, the literature suggests that it should not be examined in isolation. Social support, resilience, coping, hardiness, self-esteem and positive perceptions repeatedly emerge as additional resources associated with parental adaptation.

Zhang et al. (2023) examined social support, parenting self-efficacy, post-traumatic growth and self-esteem among 208 Chinese parents of children with ASD. Social support was positively associated with parenting self-efficacy, while post-traumatic growth partially mediated this relationship. Self-esteem moderated the mediation, with the indirect pathway being stronger among parents with lower self-

esteem. These findings suggest that social support may contribute to parenting self-efficacy through internal psychological changes rather than through a direct pathway alone.

Similarly, Higgins et al. (2023) found that social support, adaptive coping, positive perceptions and self-efficacy contributed to different dimensions of parental adaptation, including psychological well-being, family quality of life and life satisfaction. The study is particularly useful because it included both positive and negative outcomes rather than defining adaptation only in terms of stress.

The importance of resilience was also demonstrated by Desiningrum and Kurniawati (2023) through the inclusion of hardiness alongside parenting self-efficacy. In addition, Alsa et al. (2021/2022) identified resilience as an important mediator between parenting self-efficacy and psychological well-being.

Qualitative research provides further evidence for the importance of these resources. Fante et al. (2026) interviewed 36 parents, including 19 mothers and 17 fathers, and found that parental adaptation involved both emotional distress and personal growth. Social support, information, professional interventions and parental self-efficacy were identified as important resources, while service difficulties, family conflict, stigma and maladaptive coping were identified as challenges. The study therefore presents parental adaptation as an ongoing process involving the interaction between demands and available resources.

The findings from Lense et al. (2020) similarly illustrate the potential role of community participation. Parents participating in an integrated parent-child music programme described improved parent-child connections and increased connections with other families. Such community-based experiences may contribute indirectly to parental well-being by reducing isolation and strengthening social relationships.

Child and Family Factors Influencing Parental Self-Efficacy and Well-Being

The reviewed studies indicate that parental psychological outcomes cannot be separated from characteristics of the child and family environment. Child behavioural problems, social impairment, adaptive functioning and symptom severity were repeatedly associated with parental experiences.

Clauser et al. (2021) demonstrated that parenting stress and parenting style were associated with behavioural outcomes among children with autism. Li et al. (2022) showed that child social impairment was related to maternal parenting stress partly through reduced parental self-efficacy. Strauss et al. (2022) similarly identified a role for parenting self-efficacy in the relationship between child behavioural problems and paternal stress. These findings indicate that the relationship between child characteristics and parental well-being is potentially transactional rather than one-directional.

The importance of family relationships is also evident. Lickenbrock et al. (2011) demonstrated an association between maternal perceptions, marital adjustment and maternal well-being. Tahmassian and Khorramabadi (2011) found that parent management training improved both parenting self-efficacy and parent-child relationships. So (2025) further examined the relationship between parental self-efficacy and parent-child relationships while considering the potential influence of child problem behaviours and autism stigma. This emerging literature suggests that parental confidence may influence not only parents' internal well-being but also their interactions with their children.

Grandparent and extended-family involvement may also be relevant. Risnawati et al. (2025) found that parental self-efficacy was associated with children's daily living skills, highlighting the possibility that parents' confidence may have consequences for child adaptive functioning. Such findings support the view that parental self-efficacy has implications extending beyond parental psychological outcomes.

Intervention Evidence and conceptual pathway

Intervention studies provide some of the strongest evidence for the practical importance of parenting self-efficacy and parental well-being. Several studies included in this review reported improvements in parenting self-efficacy, parenting competence, stress or emotional outcomes following parent-focused interventions.

Keen et al. (2010) found that a parent-focused intervention following recent ASD diagnosis improved parenting competence and reduced child-related stress. Tahmassian and Khorramabadi (2011) reported improvements in parenting self-efficacy and parent-child relationships following parent management training. Zhou et al. (2019) found that family-focused psychoeducational therapy improved parenting self-efficacy and reduced anxiety and depression. Shiri et al. (2020) similarly reported improvements in parenting self-efficacy and reductions in parenting stress following a family-based intervention.

Evidence from broader psychological interventions is also encouraging. Dykens et al. (2014) found that mindfulness-based stress reduction and positive adult development interventions reduced maternal stress and psychological symptoms and improved aspects of well-being among mothers of children with developmental disabilities, including ASD. However, because the sample included both ASD and other developmental disabilities, the findings cannot be interpreted as evidence exclusively for parents of children with ASD.

A systematic review and meta-analysis by Kulasinghe et al. (2023) strengthens this intervention evidence. Across 32 randomized controlled trials involving 2,336 participants, psychological interventions showed moderate-certainty evidence for reducing maternal stress. However, significant effects were not consistently observed for depression or general mental health, and the evidence for parent-child relationship outcomes was of lower certainty. This finding is important because it suggests that interventions may be more consistently effective in reducing stress than in producing broad improvements in psychological well-being.

The intervention evidence therefore supports the potential value of strengthening parental skills and psychological resources. However, relatively few interventions have been specifically designed around the combined pathway of parenting self-efficacy → parenting stress → psychological well-being. This represents an important opportunity for future research.

Methodological Trends and Emerging Patterns

Across the reviewed literature, several methodological patterns can be identified. A large proportion of studies used cross-sectional questionnaire-based designs. These studies are useful for identifying relationships between parenting self-efficacy, stress, social support and well-being, but they cannot establish temporal or causal relationships.

There is also a noticeable imbalance between mothers and fathers. Many studies have focused primarily or exclusively on mothers, including studies by Kuhn and Carter (2006), Chong and Kua (2017), Alsa et al. (2021/2022) and several intervention studies. More recent research has begun to include fathers. For example, Zhang et al. (2025) included 48 fathers alongside 318 mothers, while Fante et al. (2026) included 17 fathers and 19 mothers. Nevertheless, fathers remain substantially underrepresented.

Geographical diversity has improved but remains uneven. Research has been conducted across Australia, China, Japan, Singapore, Italy, Iran, Indonesia, Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States and India. However, the findings may not be directly transferable across cultural contexts because parenting

expectations, family structures, social support systems and access to autism services differ substantially between countries.

Another important issue is variation in measurement. Studies have used measures of parenting self-efficacy, parenting competence, general self-efficacy, therapeutic self-efficacy, stress, depression, anxiety, quality of life, life satisfaction, psychological well-being and capability well-being. These constructs overlap but are not interchangeable. In particular, general self-efficacy should be distinguished from parenting self-efficacy, while capability well-being should not automatically be treated as equivalent to psychological well-being.

Summary of the synthesis

The reviewed evidence suggests that parenting self-efficacy is an important psychological resource in the adaptation of parents of children with ASD. Across different countries and research designs, higher parenting self-efficacy is generally associated with lower parenting stress and psychological distress and with more positive outcomes such as psychological well-being, life satisfaction and family quality of life.

However, the relationship does not appear to be entirely direct. Evidence from studies examining resilience, hardiness, social support, post-traumatic growth and coping suggests that parenting self-efficacy may operate within a broader network of psychological and contextual resources. For example, resilience has been shown to mediate the relationship between parenting self-efficacy and psychological well-being, while social support has been associated with both self-efficacy and parental adaptation. These findings suggest that parental well-being is best understood as the outcome of an interaction between personal resources, parenting experiences, child characteristics and social-contextual resources. The evidence also indicates that child behavioral and social difficulties may increase parental stress, while higher parenting self-efficacy may reduce the psychological impact of these difficulties. However, the direction of these relationships remains uncertain because many studies are cross-sectional. Longitudinal evidence is therefore needed to determine whether parenting self-efficacy predicts later psychological well-being, whether improvements in well-being strengthen self-efficacy, or whether both processes operate reciprocally.

Finally, intervention findings suggest that parenting self-efficacy may be modifiable. Parent management training, psycho-educational interventions, family-focused programmes and parent-mediated interventions have demonstrated improvements in parental competence or self-efficacy and reductions in stress or psychological symptoms. Nevertheless, relatively few studies have directly tested whether increasing parenting self-efficacy produces sustained improvements in psychological well-being.

Overall, the literature provides a reasonable basis for considering parenting self-efficacy as a potentially important contributor to psychological well-being among parents of children with ASD. At the same time, the evidence remains limited by cross-sectional designs, predominantly maternal samples, cultural concentration in particular countries, inconsistent measurement approaches and limited longitudinal and intervention research. These limitations indicate the need for further research examining the mechanisms through which parenting self-efficacy contributes to psychological well-being and the role of protective factors such as social support, resilience and coping.

Research Gaps and Future directions

The reviewed literature highlights several important gaps in the current understanding of parental self-efficacy and psychological well-being among parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Limited Longitudinal Evidence

Most existing studies have used cross-sectional designs, limiting the understanding of how parental self-efficacy, parenting stress and psychological well-being change over time. More longitudinal research is needed to clarify the direction and nature of these relationships.

Limited Intervention-Based Research

Although some parent-focused interventions have reported improvements in parental self-efficacy and reductions in stress or psychological distress, relatively few studies have directly examined whether strengthening parental self-efficacy leads to sustained improvements in psychological well-being. Larger randomized and controlled intervention studies are needed.

Underrepresentation of Fathers

The existing literature is predominantly focused on mothers, with fathers often represented in smaller numbers or excluded from analyses. Further research should include more balanced samples of mothers and fathers and examine whether the relationship between parental self-efficacy and psychological well-being differs by parent gender.

Limited Cultural and Socioeconomic Diversity

Much of the available evidence comes from specific geographical and cultural settings, and lower socioeconomic groups remain underrepresented. Research involving diverse socioeconomic, cultural and geographical populations is needed to determine whether existing findings are applicable across different contexts.

Need to Examine Protective and Mediating Factors

Studies have identified social support, resilience, coping, hardiness, self-esteem and post-traumatic growth as potentially important factors in parental adaptation. However, their roles in explaining the relationship between parental self-efficacy and psychological well-being remain insufficiently explored. Future research should examine these factors using appropriate mediation and longitudinal approaches.

Methodological and Measurement Gaps

The literature uses a wide range of measures for parental self-efficacy, psychological well-being, stress, quality of life and related constructs. This variation makes comparisons across studies difficult. Future research should use well-validated, parenting-specific measures and more consistent assessment of psychological well-being. Stronger research designs and appropriate methodological approaches are also needed to provide more reliable evidence.

Implications

The findings of the present narrative review hold several implications for both research and clinical practice. The synthesized literature suggests that parental self-efficacy represents a significant psychological resource associated with parenting stress, psychological distress, and general well-being in parents of children with ASD. Consequently, evaluating parental self-efficacy alongside measures of parenting stress and psychological adjustment may be valuable when designing family-centered support programs.

For clinical practice, parent-focused interventions may be enhanced by integrating components that actively build parents' confidence in managing their child's behavioural, communication, and daily living needs. Strategies such as structured skill-building, guided practice, collaborative problem-solving, and

creation of opportunities for positive parenting experiences may contribute to strengthening self-efficacy. Nevertheless, an exclusive focus on self-efficacy would be insufficient. The current review also highlights the relevance of complementary factors such as perceived social support, resilience, adaptive coping, and healthy family relationships in facilitating parental adaptation.

Limitations

The findings further underscore the necessity of including both mothers and fathers in assessment and intervention. Services should actively encourage participation of fathers and other caregivers, rather than operating on the implicit assumption that mothers are the sole recipients of parenting and psychological support.

From a research standpoint, there is a need for longitudinal designs and robust intervention studies to determine whether enhancements in parental self-efficacy translate into sustained improvements in psychological well-being. Additionally, future research should prioritize inclusion of culturally and socio-economically diverse populations and adopt consistent, psychometrically validated measures of parental self-efficacy and well-being to improve comparability across studies.

Conclusion

A family-centered model that simultaneously addresses the practical challenges of parenting a child with ASD and strengthens the internal psychological resources of parents may offer a more holistic and effective framework for supporting families.

References

1. Abdel , R., Frankiewicz, k., & Thomassin, K. (2026). Associations between caregiver and child factors and parental self-efficacy in mothers and fathers of autistic children in Canada. Science direct, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S3050656526000817>
2. Amalashi. E .Z., Hossienkhanzadeh, A. A., & Akbar, B. (2022). Comparison of the Effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Training with Acceptance and Commitment Therapy on the Self-esteem of Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Research gate*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/366645764_Comparison_of_the_Effectiveness_of_Cognitive_Behavioral_Training_with_Acceptance_and_Commitment_Therapy_on_the_Self-esteem_of_Mothers_of_Children_with_Autism_Spectrum_Disorder
3. Almendingen, A., Pilkington, P.(2024). Parenting Self-Efficacy and Psychological Distress in Parents of Children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. *J Autism Dev Disord* 54, 2604–2614, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-023-05939-2>
4. Alsa, A., Sovitriana, R.,& Ekasari, A.(2021). Psychological Well-being in Terms of Parenting Self-efficacy and Resilience in Mothers with Autistic Children in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok,Tangerang and Bekasi. *Online library*, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/famp.12856>
5. Akitu, Y. (2024). The role of parenting stress on parenting self-efficacy and parental burnout among Turkishparents: a moderated mediation model. *Sprinker nature link*, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s40359-024-01980-7>
6. Bendetto, L., & Ingrassia, M. (2021). Parental Self-Efficacy in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Preliminary Findings by the Italian Version of the CAPES-DD. *Iris*, <https://iris.unime.it/handle/11570/3199909>

7. Carter, A.S., Martínez-Pedraza, F.d.L. and Gray, S.A.O. (2009), Stability and individual change in depressive symptoms among mothers raising young children with ASD: maternal and child correlates†. *J. Clin. Psychol.*, 65: 1270-1280. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20634>
8. Chee So,W., Ke Song,X.,& Wai Lam, H.(2025). Relationship between parental self-efficacy and Parent- child relationships: Moderating roles of problem behaviors and autism stigma. *Wileyonlinelibrary*, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/fare.13155>
9. Chong, W. H., & Kua, S. M.(2017). Parenting self-efficacy beliefs in parents of children with Autism: Perspectives from Singapore. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 87(3), 365–375. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000169>
10. Costa, P.A., Steffgen, G., & Ferring., D. (2017). Contributors to well-being and stress in parents of children with autism spectrum disorder. *Science direct*, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1750946717300211#>
11. Clauser, P., Ding, Y., & Chen C.E.(2020). Parenting styles, parenting stress, and behavioral outcomes in children with autism. *Sage Journals*, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0143034320971675>
12. Dan,S.,Yu,Y.,& Kai,X.(2021). Parental Self-Efficacy and Behavioral Problems in Children with Autism During COVID-19: A Moderated Mediation Model of Parenting Stress and Perceived Social Support. *National library of medicine*, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34429669/>
13. Elisabeth M. Dykens, Marisa H. Fisher, Julie Lounds Taylor, Warren Lambert, Nancy Miodrag; Reducing Distress in Mothers of Children With Autism and Other Disabilities: A Randomized Trial. *Pediatrics* August 2014; 134 (2): e454–e463. 10.1542/peds.2013-3164
14. Fante, C., Fontana, F ., Capelli, F ., Dioni, B., Pezzi, M., Raffin, C., De, R.,& Picione, L. (2026). From challenge to growth: A qualitative study of parental adaptation to Autism Spectrum Disorder. *National Library of medicine*, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12994777/>
15. Efstratopoulou, M., Sofologi.,& Giannoglou, S. (2022). Parental Stress and Children’s Self-Regulation Problems in Families with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). *Mdpi*, <https://www.mdpi.com/2079-3200/10/1/4>
16. Factor., & Reina, S.(2016). Autism Spectrum Disorder Traits and Parental Stress: The moderating role of parental self-efficacy. *Virginia Tech*, <https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/items/7cb9d56c-bd27-4fbd-a6fd-0a2ffd36ef13>
17. Greenbank, A., & Menzin, M. (2024). Maternal self-efficacy and life satisfaction among mothers of children on the autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and mothers of children with typical development. *Journal of maternal and child health*, <https://thejmch.com/index.php/thejmch/article/view/1069>
18. Hou, U., Yan, T., & Zhang, U. (2020). The relationship between parental involvement and psychological adjustment among Chinese children with autism spectrum disorder in the transition from kindergarten to primary school: A chain-mediating model. *Frontiers*, <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2023>
19. Kabashima, Y ., Tadaka, E., & Arimoto, A. (2020). Development of the parental self-efficacy scale for preventing challenging behaviors in children with autism spectrum disorder. *Plos.one*, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/>
20. Keen, D., Couzens, D., & Muspratt, S. (2010). The effects of a parent-focused intervention for children with a recent diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder on parenting stress and competence. *Science Direct*, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1750946709000956>

21. Kuhn, J. C., & Carter, A. S. (2006). Maternal self-efficacy and associated parenting cognitions among mothers of children with autism. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 76(4), 564–575. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0002-9432.76.4.564>
22. Lu, M . , Chen, J., & He, W.(2021). Association between perceived social support of parents and emotional/behavioral problems in children with ASD: A chain mediation model. *Science direct*, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0891422221000822>
23. Lickenbrock, D.M., Ekas , N.V. & Whitman, T.L. (2011). Feeling Good, Feeling Bad: Influences Of Maternal Perceptions of the Child and Marital Adjustment on Well-being in Mothers Of Children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. *J Autism Dev Disord* **41**, 848–858 , <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-010-1105-9>
24. Li, F., Xu, M., & Wu, D. (2022). From child social impairment to parenting stress in mothers of children with ASD: The role of parental self-efficacy and social support. *Frontiers*,
25. Lense MD, Beck S, Liu C, Pfeiffer R, Diaz N, Lynch M, Goodman N, Summers A and Fisher MH (2020) Parents, Peers, and Musical Play: Integrated Parent-Child Music Class Program Supports Community Participation and Well-Being for Families of Children With and Without Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Front. Psychol.* 11:555717. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.555717
26. Mcauliffe, T., Thomas, Y., & Vaz, S. (2018). The experiences of mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder: Managing family routines and mothers' health and wellbeing. *Wiley online library*, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1440-1630.12524>
27. Mohammadi, H., Moradi, & Zandi, F. (2026). The Effectiveness of Positive Parenting Training on Parent-Child Conflicts and Parental Self-Efficacy of Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Journal of psychological sciences*, <https://psychologicalscience.ir/article-1-2997-fa.pdf>
28. Marbaniang ., & Alice, M. (2024). Psychosocial Intervention for Mothers of Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder - A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Shod ganga*, <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/643714>
29. Negi, K ., Saini, V., & Kumar, S. (2024). Stress Assessment in Parents of Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Prospective Case-Control Study. *National library of medicine*, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39473684/>
30. Preetham, C., Natesan, R., & Ganeshan, M. (2022). A Study on the Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Parents with Children on the Autism Spectrum Disorders in Bangalore, India. *Research gate*, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362371041>
31. Quintero, N., & McIntyre, L. L. (2010). Sibling Adjustment and Maternal Well-Being: An Examination of Families With and Without a Child With an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 25(1), 37-46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088357609350367>
32. Risnawati, E., Rochayu, I., & Shofiyah, K. (2025). Daily Living Skills in Children with Autism: The Impact of Gender, Parental Self-Efficacy, and Grand parenting. *Golden Age*, <https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/tarbiyah/goldenage/article/view/9756>
33. Russel, M., & Ingersoll, B. (2020). Factors related to parental therapeutic self-efficacy in a parent-mediated intervention for children with autism spectrum disorder: A mixed methods study. *Sage journals*, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1362361320974233>

34. Shiri, E ., Pouretamad, H., & Fathabadi, J. (2020). A pilot study of family-based management of behavioral excesses in young Iranian children with autism spectrum disorder. *Science direct*, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1876201819307865>
35. Strauss, K., Servadio,M.,& Valeri,G.(2022). Association between Child Behavioural Problems and Parenting Stress in Autism Spectrum Disorders: The Role of Parenting Self-Efficacy. *International Journal of developmental disabilities*, [https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/ full/10.1080/20473869.2022.2052417](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/20473869.2022.2052417)
36. Taylor, J.L., Luk, Y.L., Leadbitter, K., Moore, L.H., & Charman, T. (2021). Are child autism symptoms, developmental level and adaptive function associated with caregiver feelings of wellbeing and efficacy in the parenting role?. *Research in Autism spectrum disorder*, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1750946721000131>
37. Turnage, D ., Conner, N.,& Hinojosa, M.(2025). Stress, Coping, and Quality of Life of Parents of Children with Autism. *National Library of medicine*,<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/40974513/>
38. Tahmassian, K., & Khorramabadi, S.(2020). The effectiveness of parent management training in parent- child relationship and parental self-efficacy of mothers with autistic children. Cambridge university press, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european->
39. Vasilopoulou, E., & Nisbet, J. (2016). The quality of life of parents of children with autism spectrum disorder: A systematic review. *Science direct*, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1750946715300064#abs0010>
40. Wozniak, M ., Gambin, M.,& Sekowski, M. (2023). Positive experiences in the parent–child relationship during the COVID-19 lockdown in Poland: The role of emotion regulation, empathy, parenting self-efficacy, and social support. *Wiley.onlinelibrary* <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/famp.12856>
41. Yoosefee, S., Imani, F., Hejazi, S.A., & Heidari, M. (2025). Spiritual Health and Psychological Well-Being and Their Relationship with General Self-Efficacy in Mothers of Children with Intellectual Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorders. *Iranian journal of psychiatry*, <https://ijps.tums.ac.ir/index.php/ijps/article/view/4455>
42. Zhang, H., Chen, S., Yu, J., Chen, F., & Yan, J. (2025). Capability well-being in mothers and fathers of autistic children: a cross-sectional study from China. *Springer nature link*, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s40359-025-03507-0>
43. Zhang, J., Lin X., & Zhou, S. (2023). Social support and parenting self-efficacy in parents of Children with ASD: The mediating role of post-traumatic growth and the moderating role Of self-esteem. *Springer nature link*, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12144-023-05031-z>
44. Zhou, Y., Yin, H., & Wang, M. (2019). The effect of family-focused psychoeducational therapy for autism spectrum disorder children's parents on parenting self-efficacy and emotion. *Sciencedirect*, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0883941717305708>