




The Relationship Between Mental Health and Mental Toughness with Meaning in Life in Families of Children with Autism




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E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
Manijeh Daneshpour  Department of Couple and Family therapy, Alliant International University, California, United States of America mdaneshpour@alliant.edu	Reviewer 1: Sara Nejatifar  Department of Psychology and Education of People with Special Needs, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran. Email: s.nejatifar@edu.ui.ac.ir Reviewer 2: Kamdin. Parsakia  Department of Psychology and Counseling, KMAN Research Institute, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada. Email: kamdinarsakia@kmanresce.ca

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The statement "Individuals with autism experience significant behavioral challenges that expose both them and their families to serious risks and psychological difficulties" is a strong opening, but the phrase "serious risks and psychological difficulties" is somewhat vague. Could you be more specific about the nature of these risks? For example, is it related to mental health, social isolation, or family dynamics? Providing examples would help clarify the scope.

The sentence "Mental health is an essential component for the growth and prosperity of families and societies" is somewhat abstract. It would be useful to provide specific examples or references supporting the argument that mental health is critical not only for individuals but also for the broader community.

The introduction of the World Health Organization's (2015) definition of health is relevant, but this could be tied more directly to your research question. How does this broad definition relate specifically to families of children with autism? Does it support the claim that low mental health among these families impedes optimal functioning?

The claim that "low mental health among parents of children with special needs is a commonly observed phenomenon" could benefit from a citation of more recent or comprehensive studies that investigate the specific mental health issues faced by these parents. This would strengthen the assertion and further justify your research's focus on mental health.

The reference to "immune system strengthening" as a result of meaning in life seems somewhat out of place in this section. Could you clarify how this finding directly ties to the mental health of caregivers of children with autism? A stronger focus on the psychological rather than physiological outcomes would make the argument more relevant to your study's objectives.

The research question at the end of the introduction—"Is there a relationship between mental health and mental toughness with meaning in life among families of children with autism?"—is well-phrased. However, the wording could be slightly refined for clarity. Consider rewording it as "What is the relationship between mental health, mental toughness, and meaning in life among families of children with autism?" for smoother readability.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The definition of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) as "a neurodevelopmental disorder" is accurate, but could you expand on this by briefly describing the core symptoms associated with ASD, such as challenges with communication, repetitive behaviors, and social interaction, to provide a clearer picture for readers unfamiliar with the condition?

The claim that "families of children with autism experience greater stress compared to families of children with intellectual disabilities or Down syndrome" is important, but could benefit from stronger context. You could consider adding more details about the underlying causes of this additional stress—such as the unpredictability of behaviors or the lack of universal diagnostic criteria—which would provide a more comprehensive explanation.

The explanation of mental toughness is thorough but could be enhanced by briefly discussing how mental toughness specifically applies to families of children with autism. For example, how does mental toughness influence parents' coping strategies in particular?

The model of mental toughness proposed by Clough et al. (2002) is outlined well. However, could you clarify how these components—control, commitment, challenge, and confidence—apply specifically to parents of children with autism? Examples from the literature or your own study would help contextualize the model within this population.

The sentence "Mental toughness has garnered significant attention due to its explanatory power regarding psychological constructs such as stress management, self-confidence, and motivation" could be strengthened by including references to studies that show the impact of mental toughness on specific mental health outcomes for caregivers. This would provide stronger empirical grounding for the claim.

You mention a correlation between mental health and mental toughness in prior research, but it would be beneficial to discuss whether these studies also examined causality or merely correlation. This distinction would add depth to the discussion and clarify the relationship between the two constructs.

The discussion of "meaning in life" is well-structured but could benefit from a clearer connection to your research question. How does meaning in life specifically relate to the experiences of families with children on the autism spectrum? Providing examples of how meaning in life has been shown to affect coping in similar populations could improve clarity.

The assertion that "meaning in life is a predictor of mental health" is well-supported, but it would be useful to briefly discuss how meaning in life influences specific aspects of mental health, such as anxiety or depression. Providing a more direct link to the mental health challenges faced by parents of children with autism would strengthen the argument.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria are generally well-stated. However, the exclusion of "the presence of physical or mental illnesses" could be further explained. Are these illnesses expected to confound the results in a way that might distort the relationships you are testing? A brief explanation of why this exclusion criterion was chosen would help readers understand its relevance.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.