

# 4<sup>th</sup> European Autism Congress

May 13-14, 2022 | Webinar

Volume: 12

## The Enigma of Autism: Parental Stress and Children's Self-Regulation Problems in Families with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

**Maria Efstratopoulou**

United Arabs Emirates University, UAE

Increased parental stress is strongly related to the severity of [autism spectrum disorder \(ASD\) symptomatology](#). Parents' coping strategies and social support issues add to the complexity of this relationship. Aim: The present study investigated the relationship between self-regulation skills and parenting stress in parents of nonverbal children with ASD. Methods and procedure: The Parenting Stress Index–Short Form (PSI-SF) was administered to 75 families, and self-regulation scores on a [Motor Behavior Checklist for children \(MBC\)](#) were recorded by students' class teachers (level of functioning-behavioral problems). In addition, interviews were conducted with a focus group of six parents (four mothers and two fathers) to explore the underline factors of parental stress in-depth. Results: Correlation analyses revealed that parenting stress was positively correlated with elevated scores on MBC children's self-regulation subscale. On the other hand, parenting stress was negatively correlated with the level of social functional support reported. Qualitative data were analyzed using transcripts, revealing additional stressors for families and parents, and resulting in recommendations to overcome these factors. Conclusions and implications: Aiming at developing strategies to improve self-regulation skills in nonverbal children with [ASD](#) may be particularly important in reducing parental stress for families having nonverbal children with autism and other developmental disabilities. Parents' stressors and suggestions during interviews are also discussed.

Keywords: parental stress; self-regulation; social support; coping strategies; ASD; behavioral difficulties; non-verbal children.

### Biography

Dr Maria Efstratopoulou, PhD, is an Associate Professor at the Department of Special Education, College of Education, United Arab Emirates University. She coordinates the Graduate Programs – Master and PhD- in Special Education. Her research interests are on Autism and Assessment and Diagnosis for children with Emotional, Behavioral and Developmental disorders and Intervention Strategies for professionals and families. She is an Active researcher in the field of Autism, ADHD, Eating Disorders and Psychological Support to Families. She is a Core member of The European Framework on Psychomotor Assessment for Children (EFP) – Research Unit and she is the author of 4 books and several research articles on Children's' behaviour, education and health.

maria.efstratopou@uaeu.ac.ae