

# The Effects Stress has on Coping Strategies in Populations Uniquely Impacted by Both Developmental Disabilities and COVID-19

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## BACKGROUND

- The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has impacted nearly every aspect of daily life, increasing stress, decreasing well-being, creating forced isolation, and prompting fears of contracting a potentially lethal virus (Holingue et al., 2020, Zacher & Rudolph, 2020).
- Populations with developmental disabilities (DD) are at heightened risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 (CDC, 2020).
- Furthermore, individuals and families impacted by DD may experience high levels of stress during the current pandemic and this may challenge their ability to cope effectively.
- Research suggests perceived stress can predict maladaptive coping strategies in populations uniquely impacted by DD due to COVID-19 (Umucu & Lee, 2020).

## AIM

- Consistent with these recent findings (Umucu & Lee, 2020), we hypothesized perceived stress would predict maladaptive coping strategies: self-blame, aggression, and substance use.
- Additionally, we hypothesized perceived stress would not predict adaptive coping strategies: emotional support, instrumental support, active coping, and use of religion.

## PARTICIPANTS

- 65 (89% female) parents of children with DD
- 35 (60% female) were adults with DD
- 6 (66.67% female) were both parents of children with DD who also have a DD themselves

Diagnosis	Child	Adult
Multiple DD	38	18
Autism Spectrum Disorder	20	11
Attention Deficit/Hyperactive Disorder	6	6
Other DD	8	6

Individuals uniquely impacted by developmental disabilities and COVID-19 used more maladaptive coping strategies as their perceived stress increased.

Figure 1  
Perceived Stress Predicting Aggression

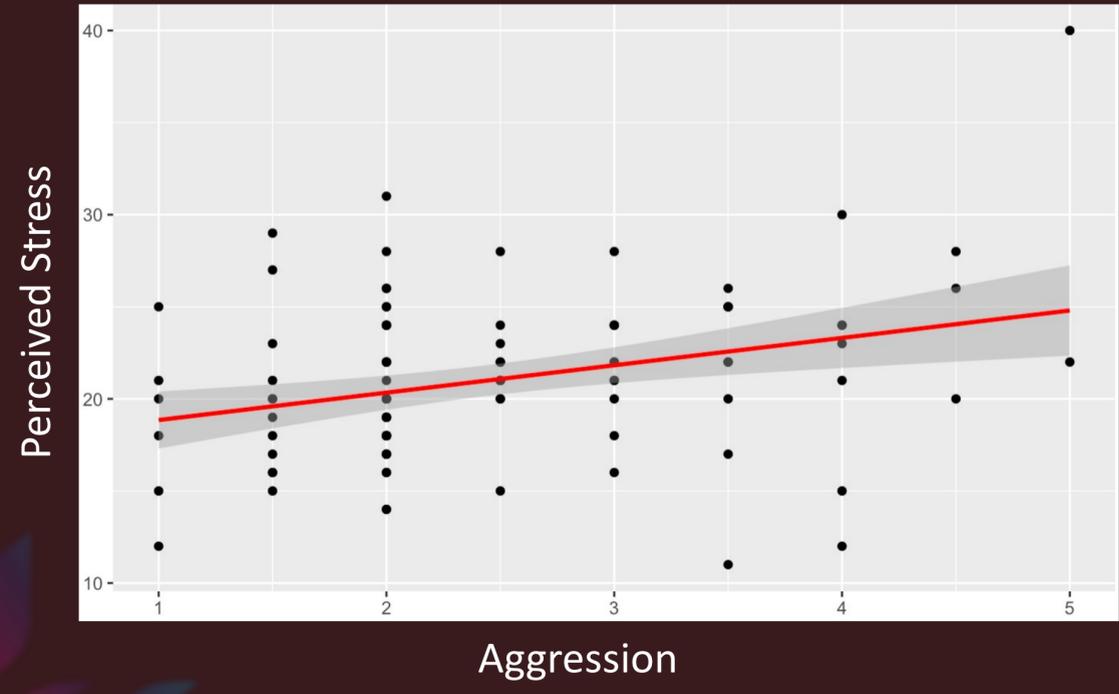
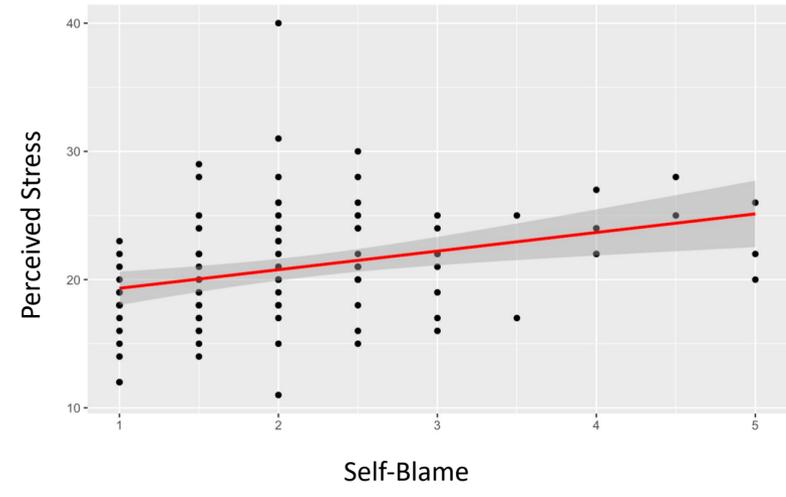


Figure 2  
Perceived Stress Predicting Self-Blame



## METHODS

- This study utilized cross-sectional data and was part of a larger web-based survey focusing on the lives of those uniquely impacted by both developmental disabilities and COVID-19 within the United States.
- Measures included selected subscales from the Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1997) and the total score from the Perceived Stress Scale-10 (PSS-10; Cohen & Williamson, 1988).

## RESULTS

- Results indicated perceived stress predicted self-blame ( $b = 0.069, SE = 0.02, p < .001, R^2 = 0.10$ ) and aggression ( $b = 0.065, SE = 0.02, p < .001, R^2 = 0.10$ ), but did not predict emotional support, instrumental support, active coping, or religious coping.
- The relation between perceived stress and substance use was trending towards significance ( $b = 0.038, SE = 0.02, p = .076, R^2 = 0.03$ ).

## DISCUSSION

- Given the inherent vulnerability of this population, these individuals are at greater risk of experiencing the negative mental and physical outcomes associated with the COVID-19 pandemic (Abedi et al., 20120).
- These findings continue to highlight the need for more resources, interventions, and support for these populations, with an emphasis on teaching more adaptive coping strategies when under greater levels of perceived stress

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