



Relationship between Religious Coping and Self Competency Assessment with Parenting Stress in Parents of Children with Special Needs

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the relationship between parents' religious coping and perceived competencies in handling their children with special needs and their parental stress level. The subject of the study is 122 parents of children with an array of special needs, selected using an accidental sampling technique. Data for the study were obtained through the Indonesian version of Amer et al.'s BARCS questionnaires (2018), with some adaptations applied. Parents' perception of their competence in handling their children with special needs was measured using the SEDKO-ABK questionnaire arranged by the researchers. At the same time, Berry & Jones's Parenting Stress Scale (1995) was adapted into the context of the parenting of children with special needs to measure parents' stress levels. The data were processed using multiple regression statistical techniques on the significance level of $\alpha=0.05$. Based on the result, it is discovered that 1) parents' perception of their competence in handling their children with special needs affects their parental stress level, 2) the use of religious coping has an impact on parental stress level, and 3) self-perception on self-competence and the use of religious coping in handling children with special needs simultaneously give an impact on parental stress level.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Caring for and educating children with special needs has different challenges from educating and caring for children in general. Children with special needs (ABK) differ significantly in several critical dimensions of their humanitarian function (Suran, in [Mangunsong 2014](#)). There are several categories of special needs, for example, visual impairments, hearing impairments, speech impairments, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, autism, unique talents, and so on. Each type of particular need has its characteristics and demands, so it also requires separate handling. In order to optimally develop their potential and capacity, a modification of learning methods or other related services is required ([Fernandez & Rainey 2017](#); [Mangunsong, 2014](#) ; [Witschel et al., 2019](#)). As the closest environment to children, parents are responsible for caring for and educating children. Through the process of nurturing and educating, parents are expected to be able to handle children's problems and develop their potential optimally. However, it should be recognized the task of parenting is a very complex task that often must be carried out in very demanding situations, with limited personal and physical resources, especially if the child faced has several mental or physical attributes that are considered difficult for parents ([Abidin, 1990](#); [Esentürk, 2021](#); [Woodgate et al., 2012](#)).

Challenges in caring for and educating ABK cause stress to parents. Stress is a feeling of being overwhelmed or unable to cope with mental or emotional stress, which can manifest in bodily and behavioral disturbances ([Mental Health Foundation, 2021](#)). Specifically, the stress that arises in parenting, both for children with special needs and for children in general, is called parenting stress. According to [Berry and Jones \(1995\)](#), parenting stress is the negative experience of parents in meeting the demands of parenting. Various studies have shown that the stress on parents of children with special needs is higher than that of children in general ([Anpalagan et al., 2021](#); [Sowmya & Lakshmi, 2019](#); [Ren et al., 2020](#); [Aldosari & Pufpaff, 2014](#); [Feizi et al., 2014](#)). The stress experienced by parents harms not only the welfare of parents but also children with special needs and other family members. The results of research conducted by [Jackson and Choi \(2018\)](#) show that parenting stress is related to harsh parenting and behavior problems in children. In addition, [Kusuma et al. \(2021\)](#) found that parenting stress is related to verbal abuse by parents of children. So, instead of developing the potential and optimizing the capacity of children, parents with high parenting stress can trigger the growth of children with behavioral and emotional disorders.

[Folkman and Lazarus \(1985\)](#) explain that stress involves four components: the stressor, cognitive assessment of the stressor, coping mechanisms, and stress reactions. In this context, the condition of ABK can potentially become a stressor for parents when their cognitive assessment of ABK is full of threats, challenges, and losses. However, the process of cognitive assessment of the stressor continues beyond there. There is a secondary process of cognitive assessment regarding stressors, in which parents assess whether they have adequate resources and coping strategies. If parents have adequate coping resources and strategies, threats, challenges, or losses can be minimized. Thus, stress or stress reaction to the stressor is reduced. Coping is a cognitive and behavioral effort to manage (master, reduce, or tolerate) problematic relationships between people and their environment ([Chen, 2015](#); [Folkman & Lazarus, 1985](#); [Garcia, 2010](#)). There are various coping strategies used in dealing with stress/problems. One is using religion as a source, commonly called religious coping. Religious coping is using religious beliefs or practices to deal with stressful situations ([Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2015](#); [Aflakseir & Mahdiyar, 2016](#); [Torralba et al., 2021](#)). Research conducted by

Sharak et al. (2017) showed that negative religious coping is significantly related to stress in mothers of children with intellectual disabilities.

This study's results confirm Folkman and Lazarus's opinion regarding the process of stress that involves coping components. However, it is still essential to research the implications of religious coping on parenting stress from parents who have children with special needs without being limited to the type of special needs children themselves. Various studies on the stress of caring for ABK show that when parents see/believe themselves to have good competence in carrying out positive parenting, they lower the parenting stress they feel (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012; Fatimah, 2015; Daulay et al., 2018). In addition, research conducted by Chotidjah et al. (2018) showed that increasing parental knowledge and practical skills regarding special needs reduced the stress level of parents of children with autism. Mash and Johnston (1990) suggest that parents' beliefs about their competence in child-care situations influence how they process and perceive information, the amount of effort they put into raising children, and their emotional reactions to the child's behavior and the parenting role they have. Parents who believe they are competent might be more likely to interpret challenging situations positively, seek out relevant information, and be open to learning new parenting skills. Conversely, parents who doubt their competence might misinterpret cues, ignore information, or feel overwhelmed by parenting tasks (Holmberg Fagerlund et al., 2019; Lawrence et al., 2010; Ooi et al., 2016).

Parents who believe they are incompetent in parenting tend to have low control over children and tend not to be responsive to problems that arise when interacting with children, so they have low parental satisfaction. In addition, they consider their child's condition challenging to control, and they feel they have failed to meet their expectations in parenting. Thus, parents' assessment of their competence in caring for and dealing with their children with special needs is thought to influence the level of parenting stress they experience. Based on the things that have been described previously, it is felt necessary to research the relationship between religious coping and self-competence assessment with the stress of parenting children with special needs.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research is quantitative research with a correlational design. The subjects in this study were parents of children with special needs with various types of barriers, such as visual impairments, hearing impairments, speech impairments, intellectual disabilities, autism, and academic barriers; as many as 122 people consisting of 109 women and 13 men. The instrument used to measure parenting stress is The Parental Stress scale from Berry and Jones (1995), adopted by researchers. This instrument consists of 18 items that measure the dimensions of pleasure and strain in parenting. The pleasure dimension contains emotional benefits (such as love, happiness, and joy), a sense of self-enrichment, and personal development.

The strain dimension contains resource demands such as time, energy, possibilities, and cost limitations. The scale used is a Likert scale with 5 answer choices. The minimum score is 0, which means strongly disagree, and the highest score is 5, which means strongly agree. The reliability of this instrument is 0.830. Religious coping was measured using the scale adapted from BARCS compiled by Amer et al. (2008). This instrument consists of 15 items that measure internal and external religious coping behaviors to find meaning, gain control, gain comfort and closeness to God, gain intimacy with others and closeness to God, and achieve a life transformation. The scale used is a Likert scale type 5, with the lowest score being 0, which

means not used at all, and the highest score is 5, which means always used. The reliability of this instrument is 0.80.

Parents' self-assessment regarding competence in dealing with ABK was measured using the Competency Self-Evaluation Scale of Parents of Children with Special Needs (SEDKO-ABK). Researchers concerning Bloom's taxonomy compiled this scale. The instrument is a questionnaire consisting of 14 items on a Likert scale with 7 answer choices and a score range of 1-7. Parental competence consists of three components: cognitive competence, psychomotor/skill competence, and affective competence. The instrument has a Cronbach's Alpha reliability of 0.891, with item validity in the range of 0.358-0.708. The data analysis used in this study is multiple regression analysis. This analysis is used to determine the effect of religious coping and self-competence assessment in dealing with ABK on parenting stress.

3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the descriptive analysis, the parenting stress variable has an average score of 54 with a standard deviation of 6. So, the low-stress category limits are in the range of <48, the moderate-stress category limits are in the range of 48-59, and the high-stress category limits are in the range of scores ≥ 60 . Furthermore, based on table 4, the majority of parent respondents, namely as many as 87 people (71.3%), experienced moderate levels of parenting stress.

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis of Parenting Stress

Calculation		Statistic	Std. Error
Mean		53.71	.538
95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	52.65	
	Upper Bound	54.78	
5% Trimmed Mean		53.46	
Median		53.00	
Variance		35.248	
Std. Derivation		5.937	
Minimum		44	
Maximum		72	
Range		28	

Based on table 2, the religious coping variable has an average score of 34 with a standard deviation of 7. Thus, the low religious coping category is in the range of scores <27, the moderate religious coping category is in the range of scores 27-40, and the limit for the coping category high religious is in the range of scores ≥ 41 . Furthermore, based on table 4, the majority of parent respondents, namely as many as 77 people (63.1%), have moderate levels of religious coping.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of Religious Coping

Calculation		Statistic	Std. Error
Mean		34.31	.603
95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	33.12	
	Upper Bound	35.51	
5% Trimmed Mean		34.53	

	Calculation	Statistic	Std. Error
Median		35.00	
Variance		44.43	
Std. Derivation		6.666	
Minimum		12	
Maximum		45	
Range		33	

Based on table 3, the parents' self-assessment variable regarding their competence in handling ABK has an average score of 80 with a standard deviation of 12. So, the low category limit on self-assessment is in the range of <68, , the moderate category limit is in the range of scores 69- 91, and the high category limit is in the range of scores ≥ 92 . Most respondents, namely as many as 78 people (63.9%), rated their competence in dealing with their children with special needs generally classified as moderate.

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis of Self Competency Assesment

	Calculation	Statistic	Std. Error
Mean		80.28	1.284
95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	77.73	
	Upper Bound	82.83	
5% Trimmed Mean		80.94	
Median		81.00	
Variance		153.291	
Std. Derivation		12.381	
Minimum		46	
Maximum		98	
Range		52	

Table 4. Categorization of Variables

Variable	Score	Frequency	Percentage	Category
Parenting stress	<48	11	9%	Low
	48-59	87	71,3%	Medium
	≥ 60	24	19,7%	High
Religious Coping	<27	20	16,5%	Low
	27-40	77	63,1%	Medium
	≥ 41	25	20,5%	High
Self competence	<68	18	14,8%	Low
	69-91	78	63,9%	Medium
	≥ 92	26	21,3%	High

Table 5 Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1 (Constant)	67.134	3.907		17.181	.000
Self Assesment	-.099	.043	-.208	-2.324	.022
Religious Coping	-.159	.080	-.179	-1.992	.049

Table 5 shows that the significant value of the effect of self-assessment on parental stress is 0.02 (sig. table 1.657). Thus, parents' self-assessment regarding competence in dealing with children with special needs significantly influences parenting stress. In table 5, it is also known that the significant value of the effect of religious coping on parental stress is 0.049 (sig. table 1.657). It can be concluded that religious coping affects parenting stress for parents who have children with special needs.

Table 6. Multiple Regression Analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	393.060	2	196.530	6.040	.003 ^b
	Residual	3871.899	119	32.537		
	Total	4264.959	121			

- a. Dependent Variable: Stres Pengasuhan
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Religius, Penilaian Diri

Table 6 shows the significance value of the influence of parents' self-assessment regarding their competence in dealing with children with special needs and religious coping on parental stress is 0.003 (sig. <0.005), and the Fcount value is 6.040 > Ftable 3.070. So there is a simultaneous effect of self-assessment and religious coping on the stress of parents with children with special needs.

The results of this study indicate that most respondents have a moderate level of parenting stress, a moderate level of religious coping, and an assessment of self-competence regarding handling ABK in the moderate category. The levels of these variables are interrelated. If related to the theory from [Folkman and Lazarus \(1985\)](#), in this context, ABK is seen as a potential stressor. Then, parents conduct a cognitive assessment of the condition of ABK, namely how big the challenge is in caring for and educating ABK, whether the resources (competencies) allow for positive parenting and educating ABK, and whether there are opportunities for success in positive parenting and educating ABK. In this study, parents have an assessment of self-competence at a moderate level, so it is suspected that they still see sufficient opportunities to deal with the condition of their children who have special needs. In addition, they also have a coping mechanism, namely religious coping, at a moderate level so that the interaction of these things gives rise to parenting stress which is also moderate.

The results of this study also confirm the relevance of the model developed by Abidin regarding parenting stress. [Abidin \(1990\)](#) views parenting stress arises as a result of the relationship between parental characteristics and child characteristics. The characteristics of ABK provide challenges and threats to parents. The characteristics of parents, one of which is cognition, play a role in perceiving and assessing the characteristics of their children with special needs. Parents judge that they have competence at a moderate level in dealing with their children, resulting in the view that the difficulty in dealing with their children is in the

moderate category, which has implications for the stress level of parenting. Even though the levels of parenting stress, religious coping, and assessments of self-competence seem related, it still needs to be proven whether the same level of the three variables results from a relationship or is just a coincidence. Based on the results of this study, both religious coping variables and self-competence assessments significantly affect parenting stress, both separately and simultaneously. These results confirm several previous studies which showed that religious coping and self-assessment of competence in handling ABK affect parenting stress (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012; Chotidjah et al., 2018; Sharak et al., 2017; Ward & Lee, 2020). The implications of this study indicate that there is a need for training in caring for and handling ABK and religious coping techniques in dealing with parenting problems for parents with children with special needs. This is because parents with special needs are very vulnerable to experiencing high parenting stress, which hurts children's growth and development. Moreover, various studies on parenting/handling skills training for children with special needs show that this training effectively reduces the stress level of caring for parents who have children with special needs (Hidayati, 2013; Khoiriyah, 2020; López-Liria et al., 2020; Pamungkas, 2015).

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the parenting stress of most parents with ABK is in the moderate category. In addition, the religious coping of most parents with ABK is in the moderate category. Furthermore, most parents with ABK consider themselves competent to handle ABK in the medium category. Regression analysis shows that religious coping significantly influences parenting stress. In addition, this study also shows that self-assessment of competence in dealing with children with special needs significantly affects parenting stress. Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that religious coping and assessment of self-competence simultaneously affect parenting stress.

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