

ABSTRACT

A PHENOMENOLOGY STUDY: COPING STRATEGIES USED BY PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

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Coping strategies are important predictors of psychosocial adaptation among parents of children with ASD. This study aimed to explore coping strategies used by parents of children with ASD. This descriptive phenomenology study used in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore parents experiences. Six participants were recruited from Pusat Layanan Autis Kota Malang by using purposive sampling. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. The thematic were analyzed using Colaizi's phenomenological method. Eight themes were extracted according to the spesific purposes: (1) caring demand; (2) social stigma; (3) level of ASD severity; (4) life stressor of parent as a caregiver; (5) constructive coping strategies: seeking for information, formal support, spiritual approach, relaxation, positif thinking and by using emotion; (6) destructive coping strategies: physical and verbale action; (7) positive life meaning: the way of thinking and behaving change, and (8) negative life meaning: stress feeling of having ASD children. It can be concluded that both constructive and destructive coping strategies can be used by parents when dealing with children with ASD. Futher investigation with parents living in rural areas is needed to explore their constructive coping strategies using phenomenology study design.

Keywords: *coping strategies, parents, autism spectrum disorder*