

# Group Differences in Active Coping Abilities Among Individuals & Families Impacted by Developmental Disabilities

Kaitlyn Drafton, Chloe Quinnett, M.S., Miles Feller, M.S., Taylor DeMotta, Beverly Wilson, Ph.D.

## BACKGROUND

- The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has a profound impact on the physical and mental health of people around the world.
- Individuals with developmental disabilities (DD) are disproportionately impacted by the negative outcomes of COVID-19 (Abedi et al., 2020).
- Given the multiple negative outcomes associated with COVID-19, it is important to assess the coping abilities and resiliency factors in vulnerable populations such as individuals with autism and DD.
- Active coping, a problem-focused coping strategy in response to adversity, has been associated with subjective well-being, specifically, higher levels of life satisfaction and positive affect (Zacher & Rudolph, 2020).

## AIM

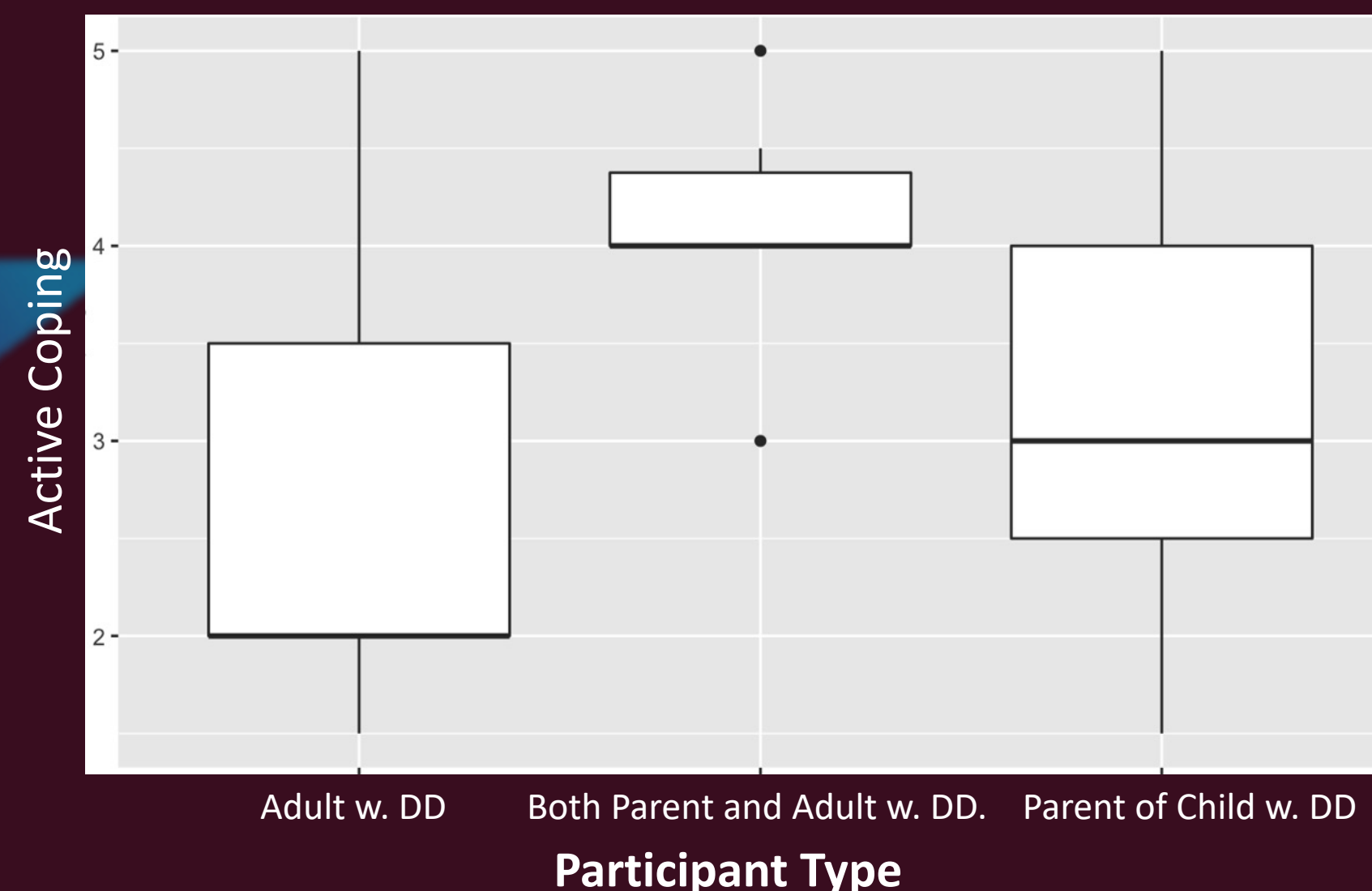
The purpose of this study was to explore coping strategies utilized by individuals and caregivers impacted by DD.

## PARTICIPANTS

- 65 parents of children with DD (89% female)
- 35 adults with DD (60% female)
- 6 parents of children with DD who also have a DD themselves (66.67% female)
- **Adult diagnoses:** 11 with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), 6 with ADHD, 18 with multiple DD, and 6 with other DD
- **Child diagnoses:** 20 with ASD, 6 with ADHD, 38 with multiple DD, and 8 with other DD

# Parents of children with developmental disabilities (DD) who *also* have a DD themselves engage in **greater levels of active coping** compared to parents of children with DD and adults with DD.

**Figure 1**  
Boxplot of Participant Type and Active Coping



## METHOD

- This study utilized cross-sectional data collected during COVID-19 through a web-based survey.
- We examined coping abilities by participant type: parents of children with DD, adults with DD, and families in which both a caregiver and child have a DD.
- The active coping subscale from the Brief COPE Inventory was used to assess self-reported levels of active coping (Carver, 1997).

## RESULTS

Participant Type	Lower CI	Upper CI
Adult with DD - Parent of child with DD	-0.27	0.96
Both parent and adult w. DD - Adult with DD	0.43	2.37
Both parent and adult w. DD - Parent of child with DD	-1.77	-0.34

## DISCUSSION

- These findings suggest that parents of children with DD who also have a DD themselves engage in greater levels of active coping compared to parents of children with DD and adults with DD.
- Parents with DD may develop strengths in problem-focused coping by learning to manage challenges associated with their experience of having a disability in addition to obstacles related to caregiving for a child with DD.
- Researchers should continue to examine the effectiveness of active coping strategies and how to better support and advocate for individuals with developmental disabilities.