

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38035/ijphs.v2i4><https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Coping Strategies of Mothers in Raising Children with Autism: A Literature Review

Joan Beatrix¹, Rita Damayanti²

¹Department of Health Education and Behavioural Sciences, Faculty of Public Health, Universitas Indonesia, beatrixbeatrix07@gmail.com

²Department of Health Education and Behavioural Sciences, Faculty of Public Health, Universitas Indonesia, damayanti.rita257@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: beatrixbeatrix07@gmail.com¹

Abstract: This study examines mothers coping strategies in raising children with autism through a literature review method. Mothers often encounter multifaceted challenges, including emotional, financial, and social difficulties, in caring for children with special needs. This study synthesizes existing research to identify effective coping mechanisms and the factors influencing their success. The literature review findings indicate that mothers predominantly utilize problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. The effectiveness of these strategies is significantly influenced by variables such as social support, stress management, cognitive adaptation, participation in community or support groups, educational attainment, economic resources, and access to support services. These insights are crucial for practitioners and policymakers to develop interventions that better support mothers in managing the complexities of raising children with autism. The study also highlights the need for further research to determine the most effective interventions across diverse contexts.

Keywords: mothers, autism, coping strategies, problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping.

INTRODUCTION

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by challenges in communication, social interaction, and behavior. Each child with autism presents unique characteristics, necessitating individualized approaches to their care and education. Globally, the prevalence of autism has shown a significant increase, with estimates ranging from 15 to 20 cases per 10,000 children, or 0.15% to 0.20% (Muchlisa, 2020). According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), Indonesia's population growth rate is 1.14%. It suggests that approximately 2.4 million individuals are affected by autism, with an annual increase of about 500 cases (BPS, 2020). The Special Education School Data Center recorded 144,102 autistic students in Indonesia in 2019 (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020). It highlights the substantial portion of the child population requiring specialized attention in education and daily care.

Raising a child with autism imposes complex responsibilities on mothers, often presenting more significant challenges compared to parenting non-disabled children and leading to elevated levels of parental stress (Budiarti in Amelasasih, 2016). These challenges encompass the fulfillment of the child's physical and educational needs and emotional and social aspects affecting both the child and the mother. Mothers are frequently involved in therapy sessions, intervention programs, and intensive daily supervision, demanding high resilience and significant personal sacrifice.

Coping strategies become crucial (Talcer et al., 2023). Coping strategies are mechanisms individuals employ to manage stress and pressure. This study aims to examine the coping strategies utilized by mothers in raising children with autism through a literature review. Identifying effective coping strategies can assist mothers in navigating daily challenges and enhance the well-being of both them and their children. Common coping strategies include seeking social support, stress management, cognitive adaptation, and participation in community or support groups.

METHOD

This study employs a literature review approach to examine and synthesize existing research on coping strategies utilized by mothers in raising children with autism. The methodology involves systematically reading, analyzing, and summarizing peer-reviewed journal articles and other pertinent sources. A literature review methodology was utilized to explore the factors influencing mothers and to ascertain effective coping strategies. The study involved a mini-review of existing literature on coping strategies, which was conducted through a systematic analysis of peer-reviewed articles.

This study employs a literature review methodology to compare existing theories with prior research findings. Data was collected through document analysis, examining relevant literature and studies pertinent to the research topic. Data analysis in this study employed a literature review analysis method using an inductive reasoning pattern. The analysis process utilized content analysis, involving detailed descriptions of data and context, characteristics, properties, content, reasons, and inductive logic to reach accurate conclusions regarding coping strategies employed by mothers in raising children with autism.

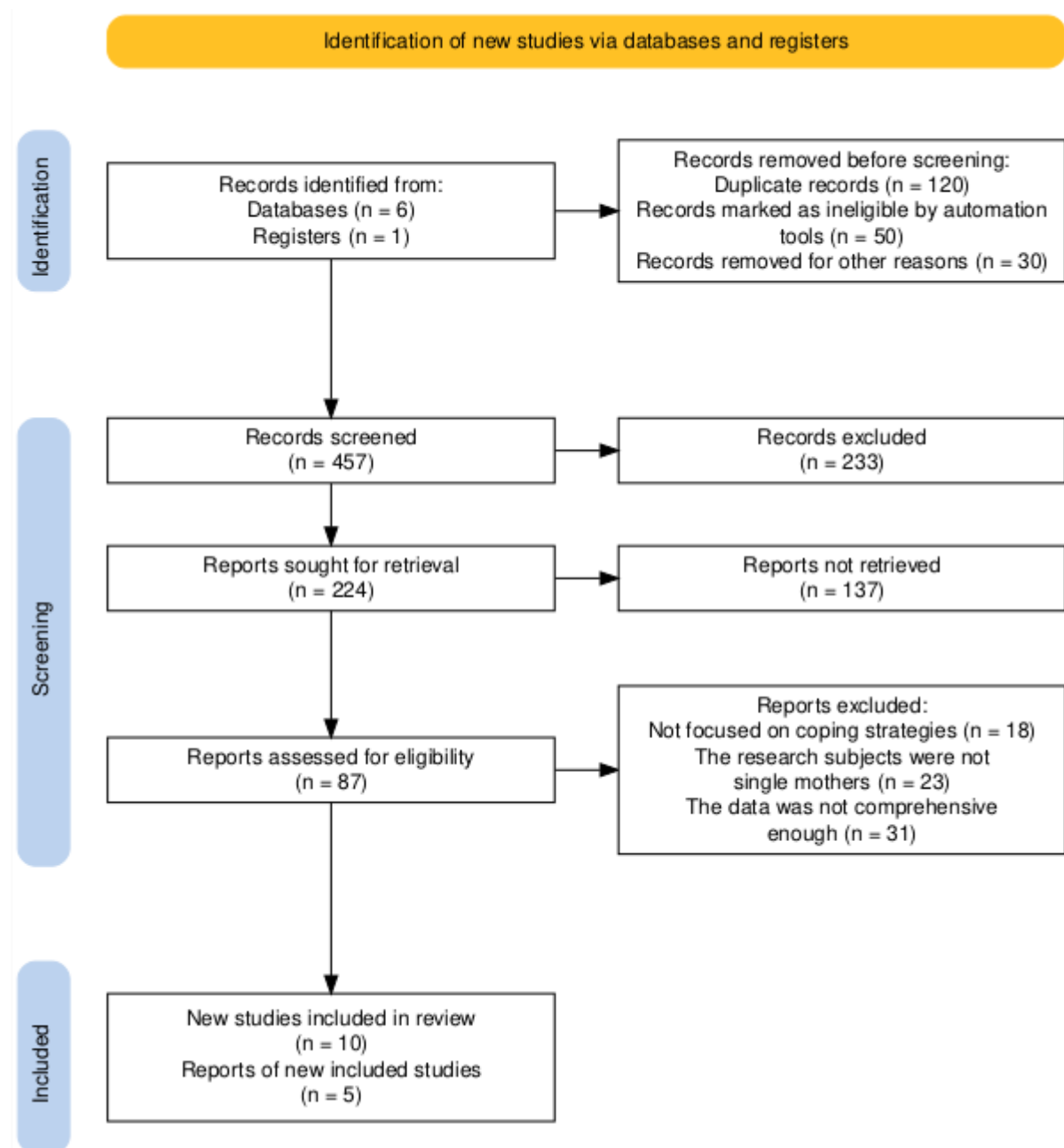


Figure 1.1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

This study employs a systematic literature review methodology, adhering to the PRISMA guidelines. In the identification phase, the researcher searches multiple databases, including PubMed, Scopus, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and PsycINFO, to locate primary studies relevant to the research topic. The search yielded a total of 657 articles. The 120 duplicate articles were removed to ensure data integrity. Additionally, 50 articles were automatically excluded by the system due to irrelevance to the specified keywords, such as those discussing autism without focusing on mother aspects. Furthermore, 30 articles were excluded as they did not constitute scientific research.

The screening phase ensures that only articles relevant to the topic are selected for further analysis. The remaining 457 articles underwent a preliminary review of titles and abstracts to determine their relevance to the study's focus. During this phase, 233 articles were eliminated for not aligning with the research objectives, such as studies examining autism without addressing mother roles or coping strategies. This screening process resulted in 224

reports deemed suitable for further evaluation, 37 of which were inaccessible due to limitations in accessibility and resources, leaving 87 reports for eligibility assessment.

During the feasibility assessment, 87 reports were examined in greater detail. These reports were scrutinized to evaluate whether they specifically addressed coping strategies employed by mothers in raising children with autism and whether the data presented were comprehensive and pertinent. Consequently, 72 reports were excluded for reasons including lack of focus on coping strategies (18 reports), subjects not being mothers (23 reports), and incomplete or insufficient data (31 reports). Ultimately, 15 studies met all inclusion criteria and were incorporated into this literature review for in-depth analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This literature review identifies and analyzes various coping strategies employed by mothers in raising children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The findings categorize these strategies into two primary groups: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Each category significantly impacts a mother's well-being and the quality of care provided to children with autism.

Table 1.1 Prior Research on Mother Coping Strategies in Raising Children with Autism

No.	Author(s) and Year	Title	Key Findings
1	(Vernhet et al., 2022)	Coping strategies of parents of children with autism spectrum disorder: A systematic review	Parents of children with autism tend to use problem-focused coping strategies to reduce stress levels, while emotion-focused coping is considered a risk factor for increased stress.
2	(Miranda et al., 2019)	Parenting Stress in Mothers of Children with Autism Without Intellectual Disability	Problem-focused coping strategies and active involvement of mothers in behavioral approaches help mitigate parenting stress.
3	(Gobrial, 2018)	The Lived Experiences of Mothers of Children with autism spectrum disorders in Egypt	Mothers in Egypt face significant challenges, such as social stigma and lack of access to education, exacerbating their emotional stress.
4	(Ameis et al., 2020)	Coping, fostering resilience, and driving care innovation for autistic people and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond	Problem-focused coping through telehealth enhances mother resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.
5	(Shattnawi et al., 2021)	Parenting a Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Perspective of Jordanian Mothers	Jordanian mothers encounter significant emotional challenges due to social stigma, financial constraints, and limited healthcare services, leading them to employ problem-focused

			coping strategies to manage emotional exhaustion.
6	(Wang et al., 2021)	The relationship between 2019-nCoV and psychological distress among parents of children with autism spectrum disorder	Parents of children with autism experienced increased psychological distress during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, adaptive coping strategies helped mitigate negative impacts.
7	(Talcer et al., 2023)	A Qualitative Exploration into the Sensory Experiences of Autistic Mothers	Mothers of children with autism face parenting challenges related to sensory processing disorders and tend to use problem-focused coping strategies, such as seeking professional help (doctor, psychologist, therapist) and implementing therapeutic interventions to overcome sensory processing disorder.
8	(Rahmania., 2016)	<i>Strategi Coping Ibu dengan Anak Gangguan Spektrum Autisme</i>	The mother's personality influences coping strategies; effective coping comprises four key components: problem awareness, information management, behavior modification, and peaceful resolution.
9	(Iadarola et al., 2019)	Understanding stress in parents of children with autism spectrum disorder	Parenting a child with autism disrupts family dynamics and daily activities, exacerbating parental stress.
10	(Karaca & Konuk Şener, 2021)	Spirituality as a coping method for mothers of children with developmental disabilities	Mothers of children with developmental disabilities often utilize spirituality as a coping strategy to accept and manage life stressors.
11	(Shepherd et al., 2018)	Coping and care-related stress in parents of a child with autism spectrum disorder	Problem-focused coping strategies effectively reduce stress in parents of children with autism, whereas emotion-focused coping is associated with increased stress.
12	(Kuru & Piyal, 2018)	Perceived Social Support and Quality of Life of Parents of Children with Autism	Social support is crucial in enhancing the quality of life for parents of children with

			autism, aiding stress and anxiety reduction.
13	(Papadopoulos, 2021)	Mothers' Experiences and Challenges Raising a Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder	Mothers experience significant emotional and social burdens affecting their mental and social well-being, with social support being vital in stress reduction.
14	(Furrukh & Anjum, 2020)	Coping with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Pakistan	Mothers in Pakistan face a lack of institutional and emotional support, with religious and social coping mechanisms helping to alleviate stress.
15	(Destriyani., 2013)	<i>Strategi Coping dan Kelelahan Emosional pada ibu yang memiliki anak Autisme</i>	Mothers use problem-focused coping by taking immediate action, problem-solving, and seeking necessary information to address issues.

The studies summarized in Table 1.1 highlight the importance of various coping strategies employed by mothers in raising children with autism. Key factors identified include time management, social support, technology utilization, acceptance, and relaxation activities, all contributing to stress reduction and enhanced mother well-being. In Problem-Focused Coping, Mothers often engage in proactive measures such as seeking information, organizing therapy schedules, and accessing community support. The integration of technology plays a significant role in managing parenting challenges. Meanwhile, *emotion-focused coping* can help mothers manage emotional stress, rely on social support, acceptance, and relaxation techniques, and become an essential mechanism for maintaining mental balance. Previous research emphasizes the critical role of social support and community engagement in strengthening coping strategies. Factors such as stress management, cognitive adaptation, community involvement, economic resources, and access to support services significantly enhance the effectiveness of coping mechanisms.

Mothers raising children with autism commonly employ two primary coping strategies: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping involves proactive efforts to address challenges, such as organizing schedules, seeking information about autism, and engaging with supportive communities or organizations dedicated to families with special needs. Research indicates effective time and resource management are crucial in reducing mother stress (Vernhet et al., 2022). Additionally, active participation in community support networks significantly enhances the success of these coping strategies (Miranda et al., 2019). Social support from family, friends, and community groups allows mothers to share experiences, alleviate feelings of isolation, and receive practical advice (Gobrial, 2018).

Furthermore, emotion-focused coping centers on managing emotional responses can be associated with the challenges of raising a child with autism. Social support is crucial to this strategy; engaging with support groups or online communities can alleviate isolation and enhance emotional well-being. According to Ameis et al., meditation, yoga, and physical activity have been shown to help mothers better manage stress (Shattnawi et al., 2021). Additionally, acceptance of the child's condition and focusing on positive aspects of parenting

are vital elements of emotion-focused coping. Mothers who develop this acceptance tend to experience better mental health and can support their children more effectively (Talcer et al., 2023).

In addition to problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies, the integration of technology has emerged as a pivotal support mechanism for mothers raising children with autism. Technological tools facilitate rapid access to information, participation in online communities, and management of therapy schedules and children's activities through various applications. Research indicates that technology provides access to resources that may not be locally available, enabling mothers to feel more connected to a global community and obtain necessary support (Iadarola et al., 2019). By leveraging technology, mothers can develop more effective coping strategies to address daily parenting challenges (Karaca & Konuk Şener, 2021). Social support also plays a crucial role in helping mothers cope with parenting stress. Studies show that mothers with strong social support networks—comprising family, friends, and support groups—tend to experience better well-being. Social support offers a platform to share experiences and practical advice on managing daily challenges (Kuru & Piyal, 2018; Shepherd et al., 2018). Further, social support contributes to reduced levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among mothers, enhancing their capacity to respond to the needs of their autistic children more positively and proactively (Pohl et al., 2020).

Overall, factors such as social support, stress management, cognitive adaptation, and involvement in community or support groups significantly influence the effectiveness of coping strategies employed by mothers raising children with autism. Additionally, educational level, economic resources, and access to support services affect mothers' abilities to navigate parenting challenges. This research indicates that government support programs and specialized training can assist mothers in adopting more effective coping strategies (Cai et al., 2018; Furrukh & Anjum, 2020; Papadopoulos, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This literature review examined coping strategies employed by mothers raising children with autism. Findings indicate that these strategies can be categorized into two primary types: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping involves time and resource management and utilizing technology to seek information and support. Emotion-focused coping encompasses seeking social support, employing relaxation techniques, and developing acceptance of the child's condition. Social support from family, friends, and communities of parents with autistic children is crucial in reducing stress and providing practical assistance. Technology plays a significant role in offering access to information and supporting communities. Acceptance of the child's condition and focusing on positive aspects help mothers manage feelings of frustration and anxiety, leading to more effective and compassionate parenting. This study emphasizes the importance of structured and comprehensive support for mothers raising children with autism. Government support programs, specialized education and training, and the development of local support communities are essential to assist mothers in fulfilling their roles more effectively.

Future studies should consider longitudinal research to understand how mothers' coping strategies evolve. In addition to qualitative approaches, quantitative research with larger samples can measure the effectiveness of various coping strategies and identify the most significant factors aiding mothers. Developing and testing structured interventions, such as training programs or community support, can provide more specific and targeted assistance. Comparative studies across countries are also essential to understanding the influence of different cultures and social support systems, aiding in designing more contextual and practical support programs. Involving the perspectives of autistic children in research can offer a more holistic view of parenting dynamics. Additionally, examining the impact of external factors such as government policies, educational systems, and healthcare services on the effectiveness

of mothers' coping strategies can help identify areas needing policy improvement and service provision. By addressing these recommendations, future research can contribute more significantly to understanding and supporting mothers raising children with autism, thereby enhancing the well-being of both mothers and their children.

REFERENCES

- Ameis, S. H., Lai, M. C., Mulsant, B. H., & Szatmari, P. (2020). Coping, fostering resilience, and driving care innovation for autistic people and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. In *Molecular Autism* (Vol. 11, Issue 1). BioMed Central. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13229-020-00365-y>
- Cai, R. Y., Richdale, A. L., Uljarević, M., Dissanayake, C., & Samson, A. C. (2018). Emotion regulation in autism spectrum disorder: Where we are and where we need to go. In *Autism Research* (Vol. 11, Issue 7, pp. 962–978). John Wiley and Sons Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aur.1968>
- Destriyani. (2013). Strategi Coping dan Kelelahan Emosional (emotional exhaustion) pada Ibu yang Memiliki Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus. *Jurnal Psikoborneo*. Vol 1. No. 2
- Furrukh, J., & Anjum, G. (2020). Coping with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in Pakistan: A phenomenology of mothers who have children with ASD. *Cogent Psychology*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2020.1728108>
- Gobrial, E. (2018). The lived experiences of mothers of children with autism spectrum disorders in Egypt. *Social Sciences*, 7(8). <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci7080133>
- Higgins, L., Mannion, A., Chen, J. L., & Leader, G. (2023). Adaptation of Parents Raising a Child with ASD: The Role of Positive Perceptions, Coping, Self-efficacy, and Social Support. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 53(3), 1224–1242. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-022-05537-8>
- Iadarola, S., Pérez-Ramos, J., Smith, T., & Dozier, A. (2019). Understanding stress in parents of children with autism spectrum disorder: a focus on under-represented families. *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities*, 65(1), 20–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20473869.2017.1347228>
- Jacques, C., Saulnier, G., Éthier, A., & Soulières, I. (2022). Experience of Autistic Children and Their Families During the Pandemic: From Distress to Coping Strategies. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 52(8), 3626–3638. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-021-05233-z>
- Karaca, A., & Konuk Şener, D. (2021). Spirituality as a coping method for mothers of children with developmental disabilities. *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities*, 67(2), 112–120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20473869.2019.1603730>
- Kuru, N., & Piyal, B. (2018). Perceived social support and quality of life of parents of children with autism. *Nigerian Journal of Clinical Practice*, 21(9), 1182–1189. https://doi.org/10.4103/njcp.njcp_13_18
- Miranda, A., Mira, A., Berenguer, C., Rosello, B., & Baixauli, I. (2019). Parenting stress in mothers of children with autism without intellectual disability. Mediation of behavioral problems and coping strategies. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10(MAR). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00464>
- Muchlisa, N. (2020). Coping Strategies Used By Mothers in Children with Autism. In 2238 *Indian Journal of Public Health Research & Development* (Vol. 11, Issue 03).
- Papadopoulos, D. (2021). Mothers' experiences and challenges raising a child with autism spectrum disorder: A qualitative study. *Brain Sciences*, 11(3), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci11030309>
- Pohl, A. L., Crockford, S. K., Blakemore, M., Allison, C., & Baron-Cohen, S. (2020). A comparative study of autistic and non-autistic women's experience of motherhood. *Molecular Autism*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13229-019-0304-2>

- Rahmania, et al. (2016)., Strategi Coping Ibu dengan Anak Gangguan Spektrum Autisme ; (Studi Kasus : Orangtua Murid Taman Kanak-Kanak Mutiara Bunda). *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan.*, Vol 5 No 5,2104-2116, <https://edukatif.org/index.php/edukatif/index>
- Sari, N., Zulkarnain, & Marimbun. (2021). Coping strategy of a single mother in overcoming child inferiority attitude. *INSPIRA: Indonesian Journal of Psychological Research*, 2(2), 41–49. <https://doi.org/10.32505/inspira.v2i2.3133>
- Shattnawi, K. K., Bani, Saeed, W. M., Al-Natour, A., Al-Hammouri, M. M., Al-Azzam, M., & Joseph, R. A. (2021). Parenting a Child With Autism Spectrum Disorder: Perspective of Jordanian Mothers. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 32(5), 474–483. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659620970634>
- Shepherd, D., Landon, J., Taylor, S., & Goedeke, S. (2018). Coping and care-related stress in parents of a child with autism spectrum disorder. *Anxiety, Stress and Coping*, 31(3), 277–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10615806.2018.1442614>
- Talcer, M. C., Duffy, O., & Pedlow, K. (2023). A Qualitative Exploration into the Sensory Experiences of Autistic Mothers. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 53(2), 834–849. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-021-05188-1>
- Vernhet, C., Dellapiazza, F., Blanc, N., Cousson-Gélie, F., Miot, S., Roeyers, H., & Baghdadli, A. (2022). *Coping strategies of parents of children with autism spectrum disorder: a systematic review*.
- Wang, L., Li, D., Pan, S., Zhai, J., Xia, W., Sun, C., & Zou, M. (2021). The relationship between 2019-nCoV and psychological distress among parents of children with autism spectrum disorder. *Globalization and Health*, 17(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-021-00674-8>