

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING
AMONG AUTISM CAREGIVERS:
ROLE OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORT**

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ABSTRACT

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasise the improvement of well-being for everyone at all ages. The increasing prevalence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), especially among children, is worrying. ASD is a lifelong developmental condition that hinders communication and cognitive skills, resulting in distinctive behaviours that distinguish autistic children apart from those without the condition. As a result, autism caregivers have substantial difficulties, frequently suffering increased stress and emotional instability, which leads to reduced psychological well-being. This study aims to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence (independent variable) and psychological well-being (dependent variable) among autism caregivers, while simultaneously assessing the moderating effect of government support on this relationship. The study also examines the impact of specific demographic factors (e.g., age, marital status, level of education, occupation sector and household income) on psychological well-being. A quantitative approach was utilised, employing purposive sampling and self-administered online questionnaires to collect data from 159 caregivers of children with autism in Selangor, Malaysia. The study model was assessed with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results indicated: (1) specific demographic factors had both significant and insignificant impacts on psychological well-being, (2) emotional intelligence had a positive effect on psychological well-being, and (3) the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being reduced in the presence of government support, suggesting that there could be compensatory effect associated with this support. This study complements the existing literature by contributing comprehensive insight into the relationship among emotional intelligence, government support, and psychological well-being in the context of autism caregiving. It emphasises the important role of emotional intelligence in ensuring caregivers' psychological well-being, especially in situations with inadequate governmental support. The findings highlight the necessity for specific efforts by government agencies and healthcare practitioners towards increasing emotional intelligence in autism caregivers, thus promoting resilience and enhancing their psychological well-being.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the background of study and research problems to set up the context, relevance and aims of the study. In addition, research objectives, research questions, scope of study, significant of the study, definition of terms and lastly, the summary of Chapter 1 will be included as well.

1.2 Background of the Study

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a lifelong developmental condition characterised by challenges in communication, social interaction and repetitive behaviours (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Autism also known as a persistent neurodevelopmental disorder that hinder both communication and understanding skills whereby the mechanism by which it occurs remain unclear, but it changes the connections and systems of nerve cells and synapses in the brain; thus, disrupting the information process (Roddy & O'Neill, 2019; Picardi, Gigantesco, Tarolla, Stoppioni, Cerbo, Cremonese, Alessandri, Lega, & Nardocci, 2018; Al-Towairqi, Alosaimi, Al-Zaidi, Helmy, & Al-Sherif, 2015). Learning difficulties, language difficulty, motor skill issues, inappropriate emotional reactions, and hypersensitivity to sensory concerns are just a few instances of how autism affects people's life and their families (Bujang, Ajmain, & Saari, 2020; Gobrial, 2018; Sullivan, 2017).

As the prevalence of ASD continues to rise universally, the role of autism caregivers become increasingly important. Autism caregivers often parents, family member, or close relatives should bear with the significant responsibilities, ranging from managing daily routines to navigating healthcare and educational systems for the dependents. These responsibilities can significantly impact mental and emotional well-being of autism caregivers, rendering them at risk for ongoing stress, anxiety, and burnout (Yassin, 2023; Yaacob, Yaacob, Muhamad, & Zulkifli, 2021; Kamaralzaman, Toran, Mohamed, & Abdullah, 2018; Al-Towairqi et al., 2015).