

## Indicators of Psychological Resilience Among Persons With Learning Disabilities in the COVID-19 Pandemic in Jordan: A Pilot Survey Study

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### Abstract

The current study aimed to describe the indicators of psychological resilience in the COVID-19 pandemic in Jordan. The study included 45 participants. To achieve the goal of the study, the researcher constructed the study tool, and its validity and reliability were verified. The result indicated that persons with learning disabilities have a medium psychological resilience. The study recommended the importance of strengthening the psychological resilience of persons with learning disabilities.

**Key words:** Indicators of psychological resilience; Persons with learning disabilities COVID-19; Jordan

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### INTRODUCTION

Learning disability is a condition of expressing, receiving and processing information, and it appears in the form of specific difficulties in reading, writing, speaking, listening, understanding mathematical concepts, and general understanding (Swan, 2015). A learning disability is referred to hidden disability because persons with learning disabilities do not appear to be disabled and their difficulties are not apparent. Hence, persons with learning disabilities often display challenges in low self-esteem, confidence, and motivation. It also negatively affects

school achievement and participation in life activities, although persons with learning disabilities have average intelligence and sometimes above average. Since learning disabilities are multifaceted, however, each difficulty has its own symptoms and impact on the person. Therefore, the appropriate facilities depend on the strengths of the individual in addition to the nature of the conditions, support provided, and the quality of special services (Muktamath, Hegde, and Chand, 2021).

Psychological resilience is seen as one of the important aspects of mental health in a person's life. Resilient persons are able to use their skills and strengths to deal with life's challenges, which can include a variety of critical events such as financial problems, illness, and natural disasters. Instead of the negative impact of the situation or crisis, which leads to despair or avoidance of facing problems or challenges, psychological flexibility helps a person to confront life's difficulties. Resilient persons use healthy coping skills to deal with such difficulties in ways that promote strength and growth. A person who is psychologically flexible can manage his feelings, overcome his anxiety and fear, and control his behavior to enable him to face the situation and continue to deal with it in successful ways and thus survive. In addition, a person who is psychologically resilient is characterized by having a positive self-esteem, a supportive people, and they also understand the importance of support and know when they need to seek help (Cherry, 2022).

Parents are seen as having an important role in supporting their children with learning disabilities. The Lawrence, Harrison, and Milford (2019) study outlines the effects of positive parenting on the mental health of adolescents with learning disabilities. The study explored the direct and indirect effects of parental depression, family functioning, parental care and monitoring behaviors, and adolescents' social and emotional competencies on adolescent mental health. The

results indicated that adolescents' social and emotional competencies and parental control are important and powerful mediators in reducing anxiety and depression symptoms among young people with learning difficulties. In addition, the study Touloupis (2021) examined parental participation in homework for children with learning difficulties, during distance learning due to the Corona Virus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and examined the role of parents' fear of COVID-19 and flexibility in their participation in homework. The results indicated that the current emotional state of parents affects their participation in homework for children with learning difficulties. The study stressed the need to support parents during the pandemic, to feel more resilient and thus support children's learning. Also, the Zhao, Fu, and Ai, (2021) study surveyed parents of children with disabilities in China to understand the role of social support between parental stress and parental resilience. The results indicated that the resilience of Chinese parents for children with disabilities was at a high level. In addition, parenting stress, social support, and resilience were significantly associated, and that reducing parental stress and improving social support may predict improved parental resilience.

Furthermore, parents play a major role in supporting their children with special needs in regular schools. The results of a Chinese study conducted by Cheng, Chen, Fu, Ma, and Zhao (2021) which investigated the relationship between comprehensive school quality and the well-being of parents of children with disabilities and the mediating effect of flexibility on such a relationship. The results indicated that parents' perceptions of school quality overall had a positive relationship with their subjective well-being, and resilience showed a partial mediating effect on that relationship.

Margalit (2003) emphasized the critical role of emotions and the importance of reciprocity in relationships with both adults and peers. While Piers and Duquette (2016) examined the challenges students with learning disabilities faced, and the abilities and resources that facilitated their resilience and helped them achieve their current level of academic achievement and mental health. The participants identified a number of interactions between students, their parents, teachers, and peers that helped shape and develop the abilities they need. These abilities have included an awareness and acceptance of learning difficulty and themselves, the self-advocacy skills they need in order to have the support and facilities necessary for their success, the ability to set achievable goals, persistence in achieving goals and a willingness to use the support and resources available to them.

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDY

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the psychological and social status of people with disabilities, and this

impact has had an impact on social participation and the implementation of daily life activities. The studies of El-Zraigat and Al-Shammari, (2020, 2020a, 2020b) indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic had clearly affected the psychological and social life of persons with disabilities. And as the El-Zraigat, (2020) study indicated, the pandemic prevention factor was generally average in the pandemic. The El-Zraigat and Al-Shammari (2020b) study also clarified strategies for dealing with the psychological and social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Psychological resilience is one of the mental health factors that helps persons with learning disabilities to deal with these influences and enables them to interact in a more positive manner. Hence, the current study sought to identify indicators of psychological resilience among persons with learning difficulties in the COVID-19 pandemic.

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## STUDY QUESTIONS

The current study sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the behavioral indicators of psychological resilience for persons with learning disabilities in the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are the cognitive indicators of psychological resilience for persons with learning disabilities in the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are the social indicators of psychological resilience for persons with learning disabilities in the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are the emotional indicators of psychological resilience for persons with learning disabilities in the COVID-19 pandemic?

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## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was to describe the indicators of psychological resilience among persons with learning difficulties in Jordan.

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## PARTICIPANTS

The current study included 45 persons with learning disabilities in Jordan, their ages ranged between 16-20 years.

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## STUDY TOOL

To achieve the goal of the study, the researcher constructs the study tool by referring to the following studies: (van der Meer, Te Brake, van der Aa, Dashtgard, Bakker, and Olf, 2018; Connor, and Davidson, 2003; Shi, Wang, Wang, and Fan, 2021; El-Zraigat and Alshammari, 2020; and El-Zraigat, 2020). It consisted of 21 items divided into four dimensions as follows:

### Cognitive Dimension

Contains the following:

- I respect myself.
- Do not succumb to the effects of the pandemic
- I know how to deal with a pandemic
- I have the ability and skills to deal with a pandemic

### Behavioral Dimension

Consists of the following:

- Act according to the current circumstances of the pandemic
- I am making continuous efforts to achieve my goals during the pandemic
- My behavior is in line with pandemic prevention measures
- My behavior is consistent with the effects of the pandemic

### Social Dimension

Contains the following:

- I have supportive social relationships during the pandemic
- My social skills are suitable
- I maintain my social relations and friends
- I am always trying to connect with others

### Emotional dimension

Include the following:

- I feel good in the pandemic
- I am satisfied with myself
- I can control my emotions
- I feel anxious and afraid of the pandemic
- I get angry and irritated

The response of participants was made according to three ratings: agree, neutral and disagree.

### Validity of the Tool

After constructing the tool, it was presented to 10 experts in the field to make sure that it measured what it was designed for.

### Reliability of the Tool

To verify the reliability of the tool, it was applied to a sample of 20 persons from outside the study sample, and the test – retest reliability coefficient was 0.86, which is acceptable for the purposes of the study.

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

The current study used the descriptive survey method to answer its questions.

## THE RESULTS

This part displays the results organized according to the study questions:

- What are the cognitive indicators of psychological

resilience for persons with learning disabilities in the COVID-19 pandemic?

The following table shows the percentages of cognitive indicators.

**Table 1**  
Percentages of cognitive indicators of psychological resilience for persons with learning disabilities

Items	Percentage		
	agree	neutral	disagree
I respect myself.	55%	30%	15%
Do not succumb to the effects of the pandemic	44%	40%	16%
I know how to deal with a pandemic	48%	29%	23%
I have the ability and skills to deal with a pandemic	40%	37%	23%

The percentages show that persons with learning disabilities have average cognitive indicators of psychological resilience.

- What are the behavioral indicators of psychological resilience for persons with learning disabilities in the COVID-19 pandemic?

The following table shows the percentages of behavioral indicators.

**Table 2**  
Percentages of behavioral indicators of psychological resilience for persons with learning disabilities

Items	Percentage		
	agree	neutral	disagree
Act according to the current circumstances of the pandemic	51%	25%	24%
I am making continuous efforts to achieve my goals during the pandemic	53%	30%	17%
My behavior is in line with pandemic prevention measures	41%	40%	19%

The percentages show that persons with learning disabilities have an agreement that came with an average for behavioral indicators of psychological resilience.

- What are the social indicators of psychological resilience for persons with learning disabilities in the COVID-19 pandemic?

The following table shows the percentages of social indicators.

**Table 3**  
Percentages of social indicators of psychological resilience for persons with learning disabilities.

Items	Percentage		
	agree	neutral	disagree
I have supportive social relationships during the pandemic	51%	30%	19%
My social skills are suitable	50%	15%	35%
I maintain my social relations and friends	43%	22%	35%
I am always trying to connect with others	44%	22%	34%

The percentages show that persons with learning disabilities have agreed to a moderate degree on the existence of social indicators of psychological resilience.

- What are the emotional indicators of psychological resilience for persons with learning disabilities in the COVID-19 pandemic?

The following table shows the percentages of emotional indicators.

**Table 4**  
**Percentages of emotional indicators of psychological resilience for persons with learning disabilities**

Items	Percentage		
	agree	neutral	disagree
I feel good in the pandemic	38%	32%	30%
I am satisfied with myself	42%	41%	17%
I can control my emotions	47%	33%	20%
I feel anxious and afraid of the pandemic	65%	25%	10%
I get angry and irritated	56%	26%	18%

The percentages show that persons with learning disabilities have agreed to a moderate degree on the existence of emotional indicators of psychological resilience.

## DISCUSSING FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Persons with learning disabilities have shown moderate psychological resilience. This may be due to their average knowledge of the effects of the COVID-19 and their follow-up of educational guidelines that aimed at dealing with the pandemic. Also, family support may have helped in this, in addition to social support for them and the ability to communicate with others, especially by using social media. El-Zraigat and Alshammari (2020, 2020a, 2020b) have indicated moderate psychological and social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, El-Zraigat (2020) also stressed that persons with disabilities have had a moderate use of virus prevention measures in the pandemic.

Based on the results, the researcher recommends the following:

- Strengthening the psychological resilience of persons with learning difficulties.
- Providing social support for persons with learning disabilities.
- Enabling families to support their children with learning disabilities.

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