

## **Coping abstract**

(Background, Objectives, Methods, Results, and Conclusions)

Coping has been found to play an important role in wellbeing. Coping in children remains, however, a relatively sparsely researched area of study.

This study sought to investigate the association between children's coping styles and emotional outcomes, with reference to family factors, and maternal mental health and coping. It was hypothesised that particular coping styles would be associated with aspects of family functioning and children's symptoms.

The study adopted a mixed method approach, employing large scale survey data collection (n=2557), and in depth interviews with 144 children and their carers. An instrument designed to assess children's coping as a multidimensional construct was designed for use in this study.

Results demonstrated consistent relationships between family factors, including maternal mental health, quality of parent-child and parental relationships, and children's coping, and between children's coping and anxiety and somatic symptoms. Deficits in thought and emotion regulation were associated with greater anxiety and somatic symptoms, while self-efficacy and constructive strategies were associated with fewer symptoms. Girls were more likely to respond with preoccupation and perseveration and feelings of helplessness, while boys were more likely to report a positive outlook and feel capable of managing negative emotions. Better maternal mental health, positive parent-child relationships and harmonious parental relationships were associated with a more constructive coping style in children, while poorer ratings of maternal mental health, negative parent-child relationships and discordant parent relationships were associated with poor emotion and thought regulation in children.

Results suggest that while many children feel confident in their coping resources and respond to difficulties in constructive and solution focused ways, for some, difficulties in managing thoughts and emotions in response to stressors emerge early in life, and family factors may play a key role. Early intervention may be valuable in supporting such children to develop their coping resources.