

# A Glimpse of the Coping Strategies of Raising Young Children and Twins with Down Syndrome (DS) in Mauritius

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## Abstract

Society tends to view the presence of a child with a disability as an unutterable tragedy from which the family may never recover. This study takes a narrative stand of parent's stories to explore the dark and bright side around the world of parents raising a child/young/twin with Down syndrome (DS). Decades of research were based on negative dimensions, the upsetting thoughts that torment their minds such as stress, child's intellectual disability, medical problems and other challenges instead of the positive outlook and coping strategies of parents living with their children with (DS). The study aims at contributing to the positive experiences and strengths of parents having a young child with DS and an understanding of the insights of parental coping strategies. This study is grounded on the Family System Theory (FST) and Transactional Family system model

By recruiting a convenience sample of twelve (12) parents of young children with DS through network and organization that service individuals with DS in Mauritius, a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis were used. By using an interpretive methodology, the study explored the experiences and coping strategies of these parents. The goal is to shift the focus of research from predictors of negative outcomes to examine rather the potential positive affect within the family context.

Parents raising a child with DS endorsed experiences with mixed feelings of sorrows, pains, joy and love but the positive feels are stronger than the negative consequences.

The plausible parents' coping mechanisms are discovered such as, Self-autonomy, Social and Community network, Spirituality, Self-sufficiency and development Professional support services, Quality time for parents, family-centred care and consistently maintaining routines for the well-being of DS and parents. The study revolves around four-tiered levels i.e. the **child, parent, family and community levels** and thus underlying themes were categorized through either positive or negative dimensions.

**20 - 22 June 2025****Nice, France**

Parents endorsed negative impacts resulting from the severe health conditions and behavioural problems of their child with DS and lack of support at family and community levels. Parents pressed more on the positive experiences and showed various techniques to cope. Despite their negative feelings in the beginning, they have seemingly demonstrated a remarkable ability to cope, adjust, adapt and move forward on their parenting journey together with the family in an optimistic manner.

**Keywords:** Parenting, Down Syndrome, Positive vs Negative, Twins, Coping Strategies, Mauritius