Sense making affects stress response processes in parents of children with developmental disorders

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This study examined the stress-buffering effects of sense making among parents of children with developmental disorders. A model assuming that social support is related to sense making and that coping strategy mediates sense making and stress response was examined via a questionnaire survey of mothers of children with developmental disorders (N = 245). The results of structural equation modeling analysis suggested the following: (a) the stress-buffering effects of sense making were mediated through an emotional approach coping strategy and sense making was positively related to stress response mediated through an active coping strategy; (b) seeking a meaning directly increased one’s stress response, which was indirectly mediated by an avoidant coping strategy; and (c) the effects of social support on sense making and coping strategy, as well as stress response, varied with the kind of social resources from whom mothers anticipated support. These results suggest that sense making affects stress response in mothers of children with developmental disorders through the social support they anticipate and the coping strategies they adopt.

Keywords: developmental disorder, sense making, parenting stress, coping strategy, acceptance of handicapped child.