



## Role of Social Support in Mitigating Child Rearing Strain, Among Parents of Differently Abled Children: A Chain Mediation of Family Sense of Coherence and Family External Resources

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### ABSTRACT

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The family is considered a fundamental cornerstone of society, holding a significant influence over the development of individuals, their emotional well-being, and the overall cohesion of communities. Raising a differently abled child is a fundamental aspect of familial dynamics that encompasses a multifaceted range of obligations, choices, and affective commitments. In view of this, the current research was carried out with the aim of analysing the influence of child rearing strain on family adaptation, along with the mediation effect of family sense of coherence and family external resources. The current study was conducted using a quantitative research design with survey and cross-sectional research methods. Data were collected from parents of differently abled children between January 2023 and May 2023. The study's scope covered nine divisions of the Punjab province. Data collection was conducted using an interview schedule and carried out with the collaboration of the Punjab Welfare and Baitul Mall departments. The analysis was conducted after gathering data from 200 parents of differently-abled children. Multistage and convenient sampling techniques were applied for data collection. To analyse the mediation results, structural equation modelling was employed to determine the effect of predictor variables on the dependent variables of the study, considering the mediation effect. Based on the major findings of the study, it is concluded that child rearing strain is closely connected with family adaptation and family external resource variables. This suggests that child rearing strain could be mitigated if families had access to external resources and social support to cope with adverse situations.

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## **Introduction**

Parents of differently abled children often faced caregiving stress due to developmental disabilities among their children. These disabilities includes but not limited to Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, spinal bifida, muscular dystrophy, velocardiofacial syndrome, fragile X syndrome, autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and intellectual disability (Huang et al., 2023). Caring for such children demands additional care, attention and social adaptation among family members roles especially parents of these children. As far parents understand that their infant is different, they undergone different level of emotional distress; i.e. social maladjustment, blame, dread, guilt, anxiety, withdrawal, hopelessness and rejection in their life (Wang et al., 2023).

Stress among such parents may display up in a variety of ways, including interpersonal conflict, emotional despondency, and social isolation (Hati, 2022). The degree of an infant's developmental handicap, its type, its link with family, and its surroundings all have an impact on the level of stress experienced by the caregivers. According to earlier research, parents of kids with intellectual disabilities were more likely to experience psychiatric disorders than parents of kids with physical illnesses (Brodaty & Donkin, 2022). Due to stress, despair, and anxiety, stressful events are challenging for carers to handle (Park et al., 2022).

According to Gull and Kaur (2023), newborns with developmental disabilities may require a lot of personal care, which can be emotionally and physically taxing for the people providing that care. Caregiving for a baby with ongoing functional problems is exhausting and adds to the burden of care, in addition to the mental and physical obligations. The physical, psychological, and emotional health of the caregivers are all greatly impacted by the burden of care, which results in subpar care and unmet demands (Farajzadeh et al., 2021). The most pervasive psychological impacts on carers of chronically ill children with disabilities include a decreased quality of life, symptoms connected to anguish, compulsive thinking, evasion, uncertainty, worry, as well as dejection (Gull & Kaur, 2023).

The family is considered as a fundamental cornerstone of society, holds significant influence over the development of individuals, their emotional well-being, and the overall cohesion of communities. The family unit plays a crucial role in shaping the development and well-being of children, serving as the fundamental environment in which they are nurtured, guided, and equipped to navigate the various challenges they encounter throughout their lives (Bar-Tal et al., 2007). The topic of how the demands of child rearing and a family's capacity to adapt to changing circumstances interact has been the subject of considerable scholarly investigation. Child rearing, a fundamental aspect of familial dynamics, encompasses a multifaceted range of obligations, choices, and affective commitments (Masten, 2018). The intricate process of parenting necessitates an ongoing negotiation of parental roles, intertwined with the management of various complex stressors, including financial burdens, limited time availability, and emotional fatigue (Mahfouz, 2020). The challenges faced by parents can have significant impacts on their well-being, the dynamics within their relationships, and the overall functioning of their families. The examination of the cumulative impact of child rearing strain on family dynamics and adaptation is an area that requires further investigation (Prime et al., 2020).

The concept of family adaptation plays a pivotal role in maintaining healthy relationships and promoting resilience within families. It encompasses the family's ability to effectively respond to external stressors, navigate through various changes, and ultimately establish a state of harmonious equilibrium. Understanding and enhancing family adaptation is of utmost importance in order to promote the overall well-being and functioning of families (Masten, 2018). The study of family dynamics involves examining the various ways in which families adapt and change their structures and functioning, and the subsequent effects of these adaptations on the well-being of family members (Prime et al., 2020). Previous studies have examined a range of factors that contribute to family adaptation. However, the specific impact of child rearing strain on this process has yet to be thoroughly investigated. This gap in the literature highlights the need for a more targeted examination of the potential role of child rearing strain as either a catalyst or impediment to family adaptation (Ceccon et al., 2023; Higgins et al., 2023).

Within the complex realm of familial relationships, the intricate dynamics that unfold between child rearing strain and family adaptation have emerged as a pivotal subject of investigation. Child rearing is a complex process that presents various challenges to parents, encompassing factors such as parenting stress, financial burdens, and emotional fatigue. These challenges have the capacity to profoundly affect the overall welfare of parents and disrupt the harmonious dynamics within families. The significance of conducting research on the current study was that the current research holds substantial importance not only within the realm of academic investigation but also in terms of their practical implications, particularly in relation to improving the overall welfare of families facing challenges associated with the strain of child rearing. This research aims to explore the complex relationship between family social support, external resources, and their impact on family dynamics in the context of child rearing. By delving into the intricate chain mediation process, this study has the potential to inform interventions, enhance family resilience, and contribute to the development of healthier family dynamics. In view of this, current study was conducted by analyzing the following objectives of the study:

- I. To analyze the Influence of child rearing strain on family adaptation
- II. To analyze the influence of child rearing strain on family adaptation with mediation effect of family sense of coherence and family external resources

## **2.0 Literature Review**

The challenges of raising a child with special needs bring about changes in family relations and adaptation. The notion of child rearing strain and its implications on family adaptation among parents of children with disabilities are examined in this review of the literature (Greenspan et al., 1998). The phrase "differently abled children" refers to a broad spectrum of impairments and diseases, including developmental, intellectual, sensory, and physical disabilities. Supporting families in these situations requires an understanding of the complexity of child rearing strain and its consequences for family adaptation (Gull & Husain, 2023).

Parenting a child with special needs often entails handling a plethora of duties pertaining to medical care, treatment, education, and emotional support (Karst & Van Hecke, 2012). Child rearing strain, which refers to the physical, emotional, and psychological stress experienced by parents as a consequence of the obstacles connected with having a child with disabilities, may emerge from the obligations put on parents in caring for these children (Chung et al., 2023). Strain associated with child rearing includes both concrete stresses, such as financial constraints and time-consuming care obligations, as well as subjective stressors, such as mental discomfort, guilt, and feelings of isolation (Pohl et al., 2022).

According to research, family adaptation may be considerably impacted by the stress of childrearing. Family adaptation is the process through which a family adapts to stresses and manages them to preserve overall well-being and functioning (Pichler et al., 2023). Changes in family responsibilities, routines, and social contacts are frequent for parents of children with disabilities, which may make family adaptation more challenging (Hussain et al., 2021). The effects of the pressure that child rearing has on family dynamics often include elevated stress levels, decreased marital satisfaction, and strained sibling relationships (Pichler et al., 2023). Parental mental health and wellbeing may also be impacted by the stress of childrearing. Parents of children with disabilities who are caregivers had greater rates of sadness and anxiety as well as worse quality of life (Hussain et al., 2023). These psychological difficulties have an impact on the whole family structure in addition to the individual parents (Heshmati et al., 2023).

The idea of Family Sense of Coherence (FSOC) is based on Antonovsky's theory of salutogenesis, which is concerned with identifying elements that support good health and happiness (Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988). A family's perception of their internal and external issues as understandable, controllable, and significant is reflected in their FSOC score. It includes the family's capacity to navigate challenging circumstances, make use of the resources at hand, and derive meaning from their shared experiences. A high FSOC indicates that families have coping mechanisms and a resilient mentality that help them deal with pressures and preserve a healthy family dynamic (Ngai & Loke, 2022).

The crucial function of Family Sense of Coherence (FSOC) as a mediator in the link between child rearing strain and family adaptability among parents of differently abled children is becoming more widely acknowledged in research (McStay et al., 2015). In order for families to properly adjust, having a child with special needs often brings with it a complicated variety of pressures. FSOC appears as a possible mediator that may have an effect on how the stress of child rearing affects overall family functioning. FSOC acts as a cognitive framework that enables parents to understand and control the strain of child rearing. A greater FSOC may aid parents in seeing the difficulties they confront in raising a child with special needs as comprehensible and controllable. This could thus make it easier for people to build adaptable tactics, strengthening their feeling of mastery and control over their environment (Ngai & Ngu, 2014).

A strong FSOC may also help parents feel fulfillment in their jobs as caregivers. The overall adaptability of a family may increase when parents are able to see the good elements, development possibilities, and lessons from their experiences (Ylvén et al., 2006). FSOC may

enable parents to use hardship as a springboard for individual and family development. The mediating function of FSOC extends beyond specific parenting experiences. A family with a high FSOC might solve problems together, provide emotional support for one another, and be more cohesive overall. This might promote a more adaptable family atmosphere and mitigate any possible harm that child rearing could do to family ties (Ngai & Loke, 2022).

The association between child rearing stress and family adaptability among parents of children with disabilities is mediated by Family Sense of Coherence (FSOC). FSOC may have an impact on how parents see, handle, and interpret their caregiving issues, which in turn may have an impact on the family's overall adaptive dynamics (Ngai & Ngu, 2014). Understanding the mediating function of FSOC has implications for treatments and support systems that seek to improve family well-being by encouraging a resilient mentality and successful coping mechanisms in the face of child rearing stress (Cui et al., 2023).

Family external resources include a wide range of assets and support networks that are accessible to families from outside sources. These resources are often essential in helping families overcome obstacles and promote good results (Patterson, 2002). These resources may include both official networks of support offered by institutions and organizations, such as healthcare services and educational programs, as well as more informal ones, such as close friends, family, and community ties. Enhancing families' capacity to handle stresses, deal with crises, and advance general wellbeing depends heavily on family external resources (Diallo et al., 2019).

In the academic literature, there has been a lot of focus on the intricate interaction between child rearing stress and family adaptability among parents of children with disabilities. The importance of family external resources as a mediating element in this connection, however, has come under more and more scrutiny in recent research (Boh et al., 2020). The availability and use of external resources have been identified as key variables impacting parents' capacity to manage and adapt as they negotiate the difficulties associated with parenting children who are differently abled. According to Nomaguchi and Milkie (2020), families were more likely to experience lower levels of adaptability when parents reported greater levels of child rearing strain, but this link was moderated by the number of external resources that were available to the family

### **3.0 Methodology**

The current research was carried out by using quantitative research design with survey and cross-sectional research methods. The data were collected from the parents of differently abled children's parents who were available at the time of interview at their homes. The data was collected from January 2023 to May 2023. The universe of the present study was 9 division of Punjab province and data was collected with the help of Punjab Welfare and Baitul Mall department. The list of all the registered differently abled children was obtained from the Punjab Welfare and Baitul Mall department. The current study result is part of the Ph.D. dissertation. So far analysis was carried out after obtaining data from 200 differently abled children's parents. Data were collected using interview schedule. The rationale behind using of interview schedule was it enhance the accuracy, efficiency and

validity of the collected data. For data collection, multistage sampling technique and convenient sampling techniques were applied. Keeping in view the objectives of the current study, the interview schedule was formulated by using existing scales about the variables of the study. In view of this, the family cohesion and adaptability scale by Olson (1983), social support scale by Barrera (1980) and spirituality scale by Brittany (2011) was adapted and used in the study. Following the completion of the respondent's response, the data were entered and analyzed in SPSS Software. The tool's validity was assessed using a reliability analysis test. In addition, regression analysis tests were used to evaluate the study's inferential response. To analyze the mediation results, structural equation modelling was used to obtain the effect of predictor variable on the dependent variables of the study with mediation effect. The reasoning behind using Pearson correlation was that the correlation coefficient is utilized to identify whether or not two quantitative variables have a linear relationship.

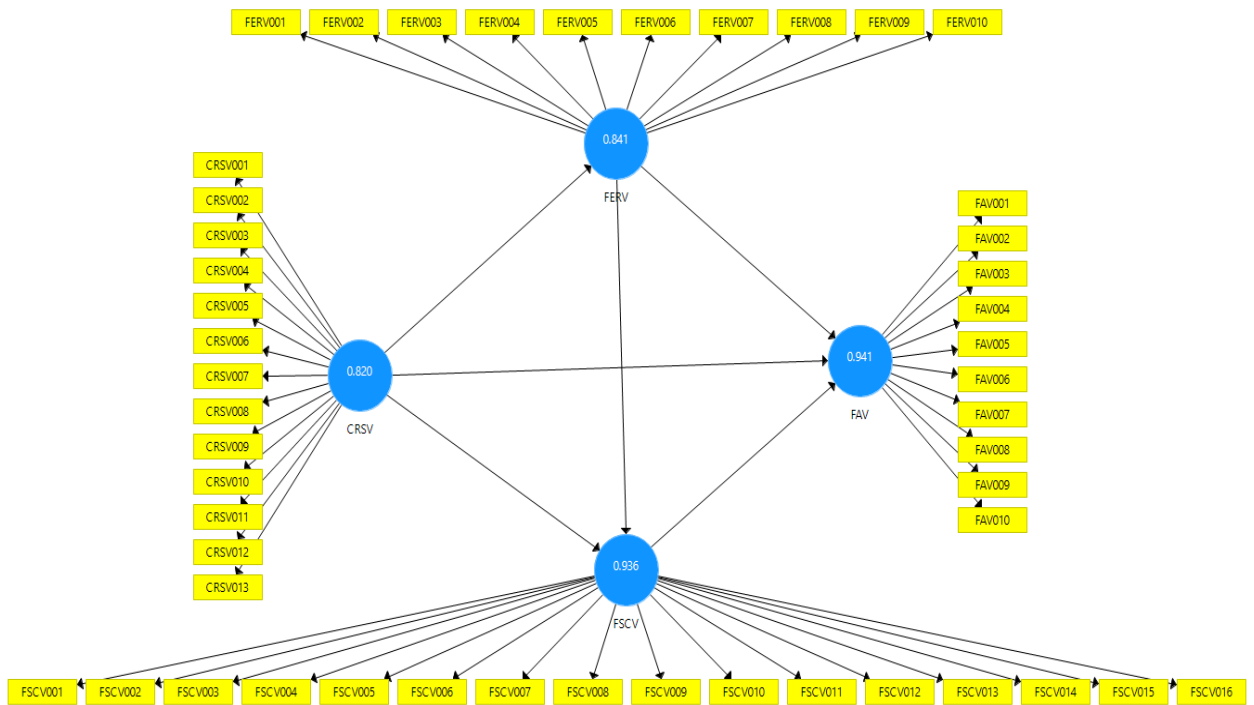
## 4.0 Results

**Table.1 Reliability Analysis**

	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>rho_A</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</b>
CRSV	0.82	0.748	0.767	0.542
FAV	0.941	0.959	0.952	0.67
FERV	0.841	0.861	0.875	0.518
FSCV	0.936	0.942	0.944	0.517

The internal consistency of the measured constructs is excellent, according to the reliability analysis findings shown in Table 1. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, which vary from 0.82 to 0.941 and are higher than the generally accepted cutoff point of 0.7, show strong reliability for the scales in use. Further demonstrating the robustness of the measures, the rho\_A values, which provide a more precise estimate of reliability for constructs containing multidimensional items, vary from 0.748 to 0.959. Strong internal consistency is shown by composite reliability scores that range from 0.767 to 0.952, which are above the required threshold of 0.7. The constructs also have

respectable Average variation Extracted (AVE) values, ranging from 0.517 to 0.67, which show that the latent structures account for a sizeable percentage of the variation. Overall, these findings imply that the assessment techniques used in the research are accurate and consistent in measuring the underlying constructs of child rearing strain and family adaptability and sense of coherence.



**Figure 1: Reliability Analysis**

**Table.2 HTMT**

	<b>CRSV</b>	<b>FAV</b>	<b>FERV</b>	<b>FSCV</b>
<b>CRSV</b>				
<b>FAV</b>		0.455		
<b>FERV</b>		0.463	0.802	
<b>FSCV</b>		0.357	0.851	0.824

Henseler et al. (2015) introduced an alternative technique for assessing discriminant

validity using the multitrait-multimethod matrix, specifically using a ratio of hetero trait to mono trait correlations. Furthermore, the use of a Monte Carlo simulation analysis is employed to elucidate the enhanced efficacy of the aforementioned process. Values that are in close proximity to zero on the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio suggest a deficiency in discriminant validity. In order to evaluate the appropriateness of the HTMT as a criterion, it is important to conduct a comparative analysis using a pre-established threshold. If the value of HTMT exceeds this threshold, it indicates a lack of discriminant validity. A threshold of 0.85 has been proposed by several writers (Kline, 2011). Hence, the findings of this research establish the discriminant validity of the Hierarchical Testing of Mediation Theory (HTMT) in relation to the variables under investigation, namely Child Rearing Strain (CRSV-IV), family adaptation (FAV-DV), family sense of coherence (FSCV-Mediation), and family external resources (FESV-MEDIATION). It is noteworthy that none of the observed values surpass the threshold of 0.90, indicating satisfactory acceptability.

**Table.3 Outer Loadings**

	<b>CRSV</b>	<b>FAV</b>	<b>FERV</b>	<b>FSCV</b>
CRSV001	0.682			
CRSV002	0.706			
CRSV003	0.784			
CRSV004	0.684			
CRSV005	0.657			
CRSV006	0.463			
CRSV007	0.591			
CRSV008	0.587			
CRSV009	0.605			
CRSV010	0.715			
CRSV011	0.738			
CRSV012	0.758			
CRSV013	0.588			
FAV001		0.574		
FAV002		0.474		
FAV003		0.818		
FAV004		0.856		
FAV005		0.857		
FAV006		0.902		
FAV007		0.906		
FAV008		0.869		
FAV009		0.895		
FAV010		0.903		
FERV001			0.77	



FERV002	0.814	
FERV003	0.749	
FERV004	0.659	
FERV005	0.538	
FERV006	0.54	
FERV007	0.586	
FERV008	0.666	
FERV009	0.515	
FERV010	0.543	
FSCV001		0.627
FSCV002		0.755
FSCV003		0.668
FSCV004		0.777
FSCV005		0.789
FSCV006		0.779
FSCV007		0.756
FSCV008		0.772
FSCV009		0.659
FSCV010		0.717
FSCV011		0.492
FSCV012		0.77
FSCV013		0.781
FSCV014		0.806
FSCV015		0.709
FSCV016		0.566

Anderson and Gerbing (1988) assert that two steps of data analysis were conducted to examine the measurement and structural models. The researcher examined the adequacy of the measurement model's fit. Before forming any assessments on the association between constructs, it is essential to verify the reliability and validity of measures used to assess the concepts in question (Albort-Morant et al., 2018). According to the table provided, the data in our study satisfied the convergent validity requirements. This is evident as all variables in our study exhibited standardized factor loadings beyond the threshold of 0.4, which is considered an acceptable criterion as outlined by Holland (1999) in their research.

**Table.4 Regression Analysis**

	<b>Original Sample (O)</b>	<b>Sample Mean (M)</b>	<b>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</b>	<b>T Statistics ( O/STDEV )</b>	<b>P Values</b>
CRSV ->FAV	-0.204	-0.211	0.037	5.503	0

CRSV -> FSCV	-0.072	-0.084	0.018	4.054	0.002
FERV -> FAV	0.229	0.26	0.031	7.363	0
FERV -> FSCV	0.713	0.719	0.025	28.995	0
FSCV -> FAV	0.554	0.521	0.034	16.469	0

The findings show important connections between the constructs. For instance, the negative pathways between family adaptability (FAV) and family sense of coherence (FSCV) show that lower family adaptability and family sense of coherence are related with greater child rearing strain. Similar to this, the positive relationships between family internal resources (FERV), family adaptability (FAV), and family sense of coherence (FSCV) show that greater levels of family internal resources are associated with higher levels of family adaptability and sense of coherence. A higher feeling of coherence may be associated with better family adaptability, according to the positive route between family feeling of coherence (FSCV) and family adaptability (FAV). Overall, these findings emphasize the important influence of diverse variables on family dynamics and functioning and provide insights into the linkages between the researched dimensions.

**Table.5 Mediation Analysis**

	<b>Original Sample (O)</b>	<b>Sample Mean (M)</b>	<b>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</b>	<b>T Statistics ( O/STDEV )</b>	<b>P Values</b>
CRSV -> FERV -> FAV	0.119	0.137	0.033	3.618	0.005
CRSV -> FSCV -> FAV	0.04	0.044	0.01	4.05	0.002
FERV -> FSCV -> FAV	0.395	0.374	0.023	17.189	0.000
CRSV -> FERV -> FSCV -> FAV	0.205	0.195	0.023	9.057	0.000
CRSV -> FERV -> FSCV	0.37	0.377	0.061	6.115	0.000

The above-mentioned table showed the SEM result regarding the effect of independent variables of the study on the dependent variables of the study with mediating variables. In this regard data showed that independent variable child rearing strain had significant effect on the

dependent variables of the study which is family adaptation with mediating effect of both variables: family external resources and family sense of coherence. Besides this, independent variable family external resources had significant and positive effect on the dependent variables of the study which is family adaptation with mediating effect of variable family sense of coherence. Moreover, independent variable child rearing strain had significant and positive effect on the dependent variables of the study which is family adaptation with mediating effect of both variables that are family sense of coherence and family external resources. Lastly, the independent variable child rearing strain had significant and positive effect on the dependent variables of the study which is family sense of coherence with mediating effect of family external resources. It is because, all the beta/original sample values are positive and all the P values are less than 0.05, the relationship between the variables is significant.

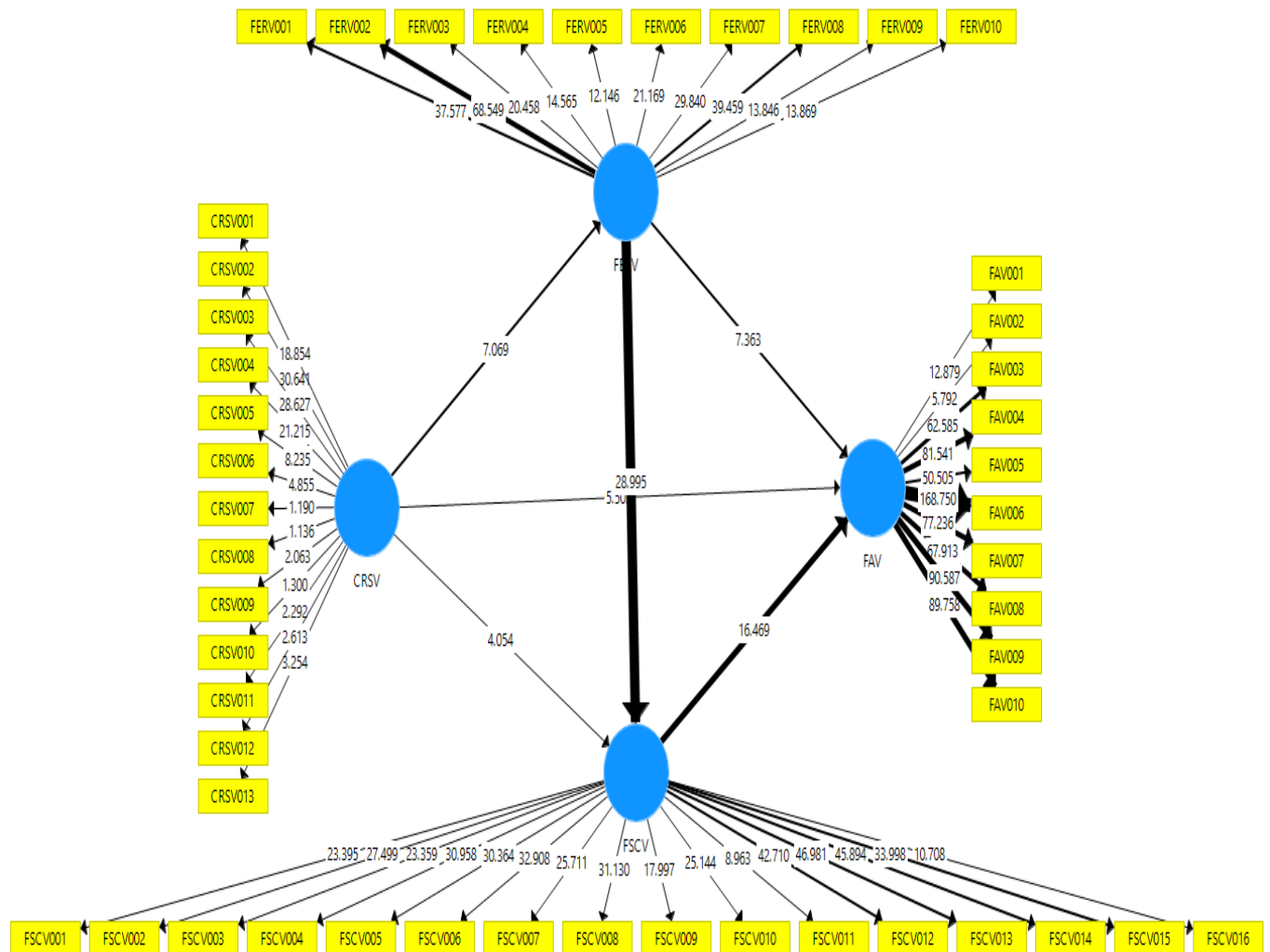


Figure 2: Structural Equation Model

### 5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the current study elaborated that independent variable child rearing strain had significant effect on the dependent variables of the study which is family adaptation with mediating effect of both variables: family external resources and family sense of coherence. In view of these findings, earlier literature showed that being a parent of a child with special needs can be challenging and stressful; in this case, support can lessen the psychological symptoms of stress that parents are experiencing; however, in the absence of family support, parents are more likely to experience high levels of anxiety and depression, low levels of emotional well-being, or issues with their mental health (Huang et al., 2023). Moreover, Masten (2018) found that supportive elements including mother-child relationships and family support are crucial to the adaptation process. When parents realize they are not alone in their community and can get help, they frequently feel relieved and their tendency to blame themselves decreases.

Higher degrees of resolve and perceived social support were found to be positively correlated. Rudelli et al. (2021) pointed out that parental involvement in caregiving is influenced by support to a certain extent. Besides that, current study findings also found that the independent variable child rearing strain had significant and positive effect on the dependent variables of the study which is family sense of coherence with mediating effect of family external resources.

In view of that similar literature depicts that the social support provided to parents of differently abled children had a significant impact on their resilience from child rearing strain. A prior study by Kuşcu Karatepe et al. (2022) confirmed our findings about the relationship between social support and strong resilience. According to Zolkoski and Bullock (2012), resilience serves as a protective factor by reducing the negative effects of distress. According to (Zafar et al., 2022) study, joint families with two or three generations have also protective role in stress mitigation of parents with differently abled children in Pakistan.

It is concluded that children rearing strain has closely connection with the family adaptation and family external resources variables. It means that children rearing strain could be mitigated if the family have external resources and social support available to them to cope that adverse situation. By this, they may quickly adapt the situation and shift themselves into new role.

**Adnan Ahmed Sarwar:** Problem Identification and Model Development, Literature search, Methodology

**Muhammad Rizwan Safdar:** Supervision and Drafting

### **Conflict of Interests/Disclosures**

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest in this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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