

Anxiety and Depression in Parents of Children with Developmental Disabilities in Early Childhood

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Abstract : Early childhood intervention (ECI) is the set of actions aimed at children aged 0-6 years with special needs, the family, and the environment that aim to improve child development and family well-being. Socio-educational intervention with children with disabilities and their families should be understood through the principles of family-centered practice (FCP). The multidisciplinary team of professionals carries out the intake, assessment, and intervention, understanding that families may experience mental health problems, parental role incompetence, or feelings of exclusion. This study examines the relationship between caregivers' levels of anxiety and depression and child development during the fostering and assessment phase. The design is quantitative, non-experimental, and cross-sectional. The sample consisted of 135 family members (78.5% female, 21.5% male) users of child development services in the Balearic Islands (Spain). Three questionnaires were completed: Anxiety and Depression Scale, Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL 1½-5), and sociodemographic questionnaire. The main results show that parents of children with special needs score higher on anxiety than on depression. It should be noted that professional discipline is a variable to be taken into account in relation to parents' perception of the improvement of their child's development. In addition, there is an association between the developmental subscales, where the more the child is affected, the more the parents' mental health is affected. In short, we propose a reflection on the application of FCP during the intervention, understanding the lack of professional training as a predictor of quality in early intervention. Likewise, future lines of research are proposed to improve early care practices.

Keywords : anxiety, depression, early childhood intervention, family

Conference Title : ICSNECD 2022 : International Conference on Special Needs Education and Child Development

Conference Location : Amsterdam, Netherlands

Conference Dates : May 16-17, 2022