

Understanding the Manifestation of Psychosocial Difficulties in Children with Developmental Language Disorder, with a Focus on Anxiety and Social Frustration

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Abstract : Children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) are well documented to experience social and emotional difficulties. Despite this, there is little consensus as to how these difficulties manifest, without which the ability to develop prevention initiatives is limited. An online survey was completed by 107 parents of either child with DLD ('DLD sample'; n=57), or typically developing children ('typical sample'; n=50), all aged 6-12 years old. Psychosocial symptom measures were used, alongside 11 psychosocial statements generated from previous qualitative work. Qualitative interviews were then held to understand the manifestation of key difficulties in more depth (n=4). The DLD sample scored significantly higher on all psychosocial statements than the typical sample. Experiencing anxiety (80.7%), requiring routine and sameness (75.4%) and struggling to regulate their emotions (75.4%) were the most common difficulties for a majority of children with DLD. For this DLD sample, family communication and coping styles were found not to contribute to the manifestation of these difficulties. Two separate mediation models were run to understand the role of other psychosocial difficulties in the manifestation of (1) anxiety and (2) social frustration. 'Intolerance of uncertainty was found to strongly mediate the relationship between DLD diagnosis and symptoms of anxiety. Emotion regulation was found to moderately mediate the relationship between DLD diagnosis and social frustration. Parents appear to cope well with their children's complex psychosocial needs, but further external intervention is needed. Intervention focussing on intolerance of uncertainty and emotion dysregulation may help the management of anxiety and social frustration. Further research is needed to understand the children's routinized behaviors.

Keywords : psychosocial difficulties, developmental language disorder, specific language impairment, parent, anxiety

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