

Stress and Marital Satisfaction of Parents to Children Diagnosed with Autism

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Abstract : The current investigation expended on research among parents caring for a child who is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). An online web survey was used to collect data from 253 parents caring for a child with a diagnosis of ASD. Both parents reported on elevated levels of parental stress associated with caring for the child on the spectrum. In addition, lower levels of marital satisfaction were found in both parents. About 13% of the parents in the sample met the diagnostic criteria for Major Depressive Disorder and About 15% of the parents met the diagnostic criteria for Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Although the majority of the sample was females (94%) significant differences were found between males and females in relation to meeting the diagnostic criteria for Major Depressive Disorder and for Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Higher levels of stress were associated with higher number of Generalized Anxiety Disorder symptoms and higher number of Major Depressive Disorder symptoms. Findings from this study indicate how vulnerable parents and especially females are in relation to caring to a child diagnosed with ASD. Educational Objectives: At the conclusion of the paper, the readers should be able to: -Identify levels of stress and marital satisfaction among parents caring for a child diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, -Recognize the impact of stress on the development of mental health issues, -Name the two most common mood and anxiety related disorders associated with caring for a child diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder.

Keywords : autism, stress, parents, children

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