

Quality of Life among Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract : Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by difficulties with communication and interaction. Besides presenting challenges for the ASD individual, the condition can entail negative outcomes for those who care for them, most often mothers. While this issue has been studied substantially in Western society, less is known about how mothers in the Arab world are affected by raising an ASD child. This study sought to gain insights into this area by assessing quality of life and stress in mothers with (n = 25) and without (n = 25) ASD children in Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) by using, respectively, the World Health Organization Quality of Life Assessment-BREF (WHOQOL-BREF) and the Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-SF). Data pertaining to income and education were also attained to investigate how socioeconomic factors interact with the above-mentioned variables. The analysis revealed that total stress scores and scores on the individual subscales of the PSI-SF were significantly higher for the mothers with an ASD child compared to those without an ASD child, though the opposite was true of quality of life scores. Moreover, increased income was associated with increased quality of life and decreased stress. While there were not main effects of education, there were interactions between education, whether children were ASD or non-ASD, and the outcome variables. These results suggest that mothers of ASD children in an Arab culture are at increased risk of negative outcomes relative to mothers of typically developing children, and, therefore, this study may act as a foundation for the delivery of interventions to assist mothers in this position.

Keywords : autism, education, income, mothers, quality of life, stress

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