

Do Parents Using an Alternative Tool of Communication with Their Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder Have a Better Quality of Life?

Miryam de Courville ^{1,2}, Nadine Chapdelaine ^{2,3}, Émilie Cappe ^{4,5} and Nathalie Poirier ^{1,2}

¹ Labo TSA – ² Department of psychology, Université du Québec à Montréal- ³ ÉRISA – ⁴ Laboratoire de psychopathologie et des processus de santé – ⁵ Université Paris-Descartes

Introduction

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a pervasive developmental disorder ⁽¹⁾.
- ASD can be associated with a language deficit which may pose an additional challenge to the parents ⁽²⁾.
- Raising a child with ASD can have a negative impact on the quality of life (QOL) of the parents ⁽³⁾.
- The use of pictograms can be a good alternative to verbal communication ⁽⁴⁾.

Objective

- The purpose of the present study is to explore the association of the language skills of children with ASD and the use of pictograms with the QOL of their parents.

Methods

Participants

- 161 parents of children with ASD (F: 148 ; M: 13).
- Children were aged between 3 and 18 years old (F:23; M:138).

Procedure

- The parents completed a questionnaire to assess their QOL (*Échelle de la qualité de vie des parents d'enfants ayant un TSA*) ⁽³⁻⁵⁾ and a questionnaire to assess the language skills of the child, the type of intervention and the use of pictograms.

Results

- With *t*-tests, our results show that the parents of children with poorer language skills have a lower QOL compared to parents of children with better language skills ($p=.001$).
- Parents using pictograms have a better QOL than parents who don't use pictograms as a communication tool ($p=.02$).



Conclusions

- These results suggest the importance of communication between parents and children and the impact on the different dimensions of QOL (relationships, social activities, well being, etc.)
- These results also suggest that, even though poorer language skills are associated with a lower QOL, using an alternative tool of communication like pictograms could have a positive effect on the QOL of the parents.
- Using pictograms with children with ASD could be beneficial for the QOL of the parents.

References

- 1) American Psychological Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.)*. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publication
- 2) Miranda, A., Mira, A., Berenguer, C., Rosello, B. et Baixauli, I. (2019). Parenting Stress in Mothers of Children With Autism Without Intellectual Disability. Mediation of Behavioral Problems and Coping Strategies. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, p.1-12.
- 3) Cappe, É., Bobet, R. et Adrien, J.-L. (2009). Psychiatrie sociale et problèmes d'assistance qualité de vie et processus d'adaptation des familles d'un enfant ayant un trouble autistique ou un syndrome d'asperger. *La psychiatrie de l'enfant*, 52(1), 201-246.
- 4) Hervás, R., Bautista, S., Méndez, G., Galván, P., & Gervás, P. (2020). Predictive composition of pictogram messages for users with autism. *Journal of Ambient Intelligence and Humanized Computing*, 1-16.
- 5) Cappe, E., Wolff, M., Bobet, R., & Adrien, J. L. (2011). Quality of life: A key variable to consider in the evaluation of adjustment in parents of children with autism spectrum disorders and in the development of relevant support and assistance programmes. *Quality of Life Research*, 20(8), 1279–1294.