

# TRANSACTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS INFLUENCING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF FATHERS OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

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## INTRODUCTION

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that is characterized by social communication, stereotyped interests and repetitive movements (APA, 2013). Major changes in the family structure are observed following the diagnosis, such as changes in parental roles (Cappe, Bobet, & Adrien, 2009; Gray, 2003).

More specifically, mothers tend to reduce the number of worked hours per week or quit their job in order to properly respond to their child's individual needs (des Rivières-Pigeon, Courcy, & Dunn, 2014; Sénéchal & des Rivières-Pigeon, 2009). In consequence, the father will work additional hours or will seek a better paying job. Fathers and mothers compose differently with their child's disorder (Gray, 2003; Hastings et al., 2005).

The scientific literature regarding parental experience mostly focus on the mothers, thus, few is known about the father's perception towards their child with ASD. This study allows a better understanding of the fathers parenthood experiences towards ASD by assessing their quality of life. The quality of life includes biological, individual, economic, psychological and social factors (Dardas & Ahmad, 2014).

## OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to assess the elements that may interfere with the quality of life of fathers with an ASD child. Furthermore, it aims to identify the transactional characteristic that influence their daily activities.

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

- ❖ 35 biological fathers of children with ASD (28 boys; 7 girls)
- ❖ Fathers age ranged from 28-56 years old
- ❖ The child with ASD age ranged from 4 to 21 years old (average: 11,7)
- ❖ All fathers see their child, at least, on a bi-weekly basis

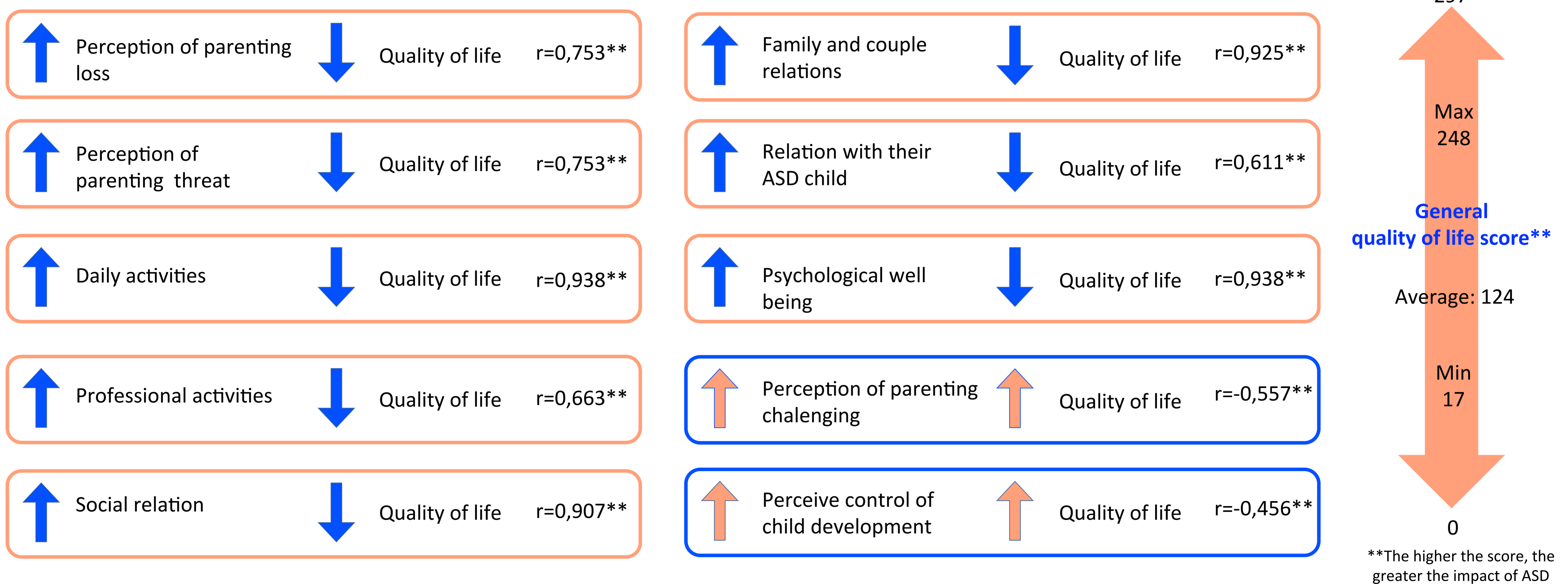
### Instruments

Questionnaires:

1. Sociodemographic
2. The Quality of Life Scale
3. The Appraisal of Life Events Scale
4. Cancer Locus of Control Scale

\*All questionnaires have been adapted for parents with an ASD child

## RESULTS



## DISCUSSION

- ❖ To date, few studies have described the experiences of fathers whose children have been diagnosed with ASD. Indeed, most studies tend to focus mothers, whereas the reality of the fathers remain misunderstood and unknown.
- ❖ In general, a child with ASD has a significant impact on the daily life of their father.
- ❖ The greater the impact of the diagnosis on the different domains of the father's life, the lower their quality of life
  - Daily activities: " My daily life has changed "
  - Professionals activities: " I stopped working "
  - Social and friendship relations: " I feel lonely "
  - Family and couple relations: " My family invites me less "
  - Relation with the ASD child: " I do not understand my child "
  - Psychological well-being: " I sleep less well "
- ❖ The more the father perceives his ASD child as a loss of a threat, the lower his quality of life.
  - Threatening, worrisome
  - Destructive, painful, depressing
  - Unhappy, frightening, overwhelming, unbearable
- ❖ For some fathers, the ASD diagnosis acts as a motivational challenge. In these circumstances, it has a positive impact their quality of life.
  - Better stress management
  - Reduced sense of guilt
- ❖ Thus, the results of the present study reveal that some fathers manage to adapt to their new life situation, while for other, all life domains seem to be impacted negatively.

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