

Abstract for the thesis entitled:

Adult Outcome of Children with Autism with Normal Intelligence

Submitted by : Poon Mak Sui Man

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ABSTRACT

Introduction This present research was a cross-sectional study examining the outcome and adjustment of 64 individuals at their early adulthood (18 to 28 years old). They all had normal intelligence but were diagnosed as having autism spectrum disorder (ASD) as children.

Method The participants of this study were recruited from a child psychiatric clinic or from the community. All were Chinese living in Hong Kong. All except five were males, aged from 18 to 28, with mean age at 21.7 years (SD=2.5). All had a full IQ score of 75 or above (mean full IQ was 96.4 (SD=13.1, range 75-129), verbal IQ 96.3 (SD=13.7, range 73-128) and performance IQ 97.3 (SD=14.7, range 72-139). They and/or their parents were administered a range of tests or interviews to assess their current outcome and adjustment at early adulthood.

Results and Discussion The participants of this study were under-achieved both in educational attainment and employment when compared to population age peers. 32% (21 out of 64) were found no longer meeting a diagnosis of autism in adulthood, but only seven participants out of the 32% fell below the clinical range in all three domains of autistic deficits. The majority still had impairment in at least one aspect of the triad of autistic deficits. Their intellectual functioning had been stable with a small increase in mean verbal IQ. The overall outcome in terms of a composite score consisting of work,

friendship, independence, autistic-type stereotyped repetitive behaviours, and language use was relatively better than those of past studies in Western countries in that 42% had a 'good' outcome. It was argued however that the relatively positive outcome was attributed in part to the results of supportive and facilitative environmental factors such as a large labour market, a buoyant economy, and technological advances, including the mass availability of computers. The participants of this study also experienced more general psychological disturbances other than autism than the general population. Finally, as in previous Western studies, childhood IQ, especially verbal IQ, proved to be a robust predictor of adult outcome in most areas. Results of the present study confirm the findings of Western studies that despite improvement in some individuals at early adulthood, significant impairment still persisted for the majority, reconfirming that ASD as largely a chronic disorder. The need for services tailored to adult problems of autism was called for.

摘要

引言: 這研究是一個探討 64 個青年(年 18 至 28 歲)在成長期的適應的橫斷報告。

所有受試者皆在孩童期被診斷為患有泛自閉症障礙(ASD)，並具正常智能。

方法: 受試者乃居住在香港的中國人，由社區及一間兒童精神科診所招募而來。其中五人為女性，其餘為男性，整體年齡介乎 18 至 28 歲，平均年齡為 21.7 歲(SD=2.5)。全部受試者智商達 75 或以上，平均全量表智商為 96.4 (SD=13.1, 介於 75 至 129 之間)，語文智商為 96.3 (SD=13.7, 介於 73 至 128 之間)，作業智商為 97.3 (SD=14.7, 介於 72 至 139 之間)。受試者及其父母接受一系列的測試或面談以評估他們的現況及在成長期的適應。

結果及討論: 是次研究的受試者的教育水平及就業情況稍遜於一般同齡人士。在 64 位受試者中有 21 人(32%)於成年階段已不再符合自閉症的臨床診斷，而其中只有 7 人在自閉障礙三方面的表現上，能全部低於臨床界別。大部分受試者仍在自閉症的三大範疇中最少有一方面帶有障礙。他們的智能相當穩定而在語文智商平均有輕微增加。由工作、社交、獨立、自閉型的重覆常規動作與及語文運用組成的整體適應函數中，42%受試者有「良好」表現，比以往西方研究的結果稍佳。但是，如此正面的結果部分可能與現今具較多鼓勵及支援的環境因素有關；如龐大勞工市場，蓬勃經濟，科技特別是電腦方面的發展，皆富有影響。此研究的受試者亦比一般同齡人士受到較多心理困擾。最後，與以往西方研究發現類同，兒童智商，尤其為語文智商，在大部分範疇證實能有效預測成長期的適應。同時，是次研究顯示，雖然有某些自閉症患者在青年時有所進步，但大部分人仍保留相當的障礙，這亦確認了西方研究認為泛自閉症障礙 (ASD) 實為一種長期疾患。故此，探討自閉成人的服務需求乃當前急務。