

Abstract

Western researches have shown that parental stress in parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is higher than those with typical developed children or other disabilities such as Down Syndrome or Intellectual Disability (ID). Moreover, perceived severity of the aberrant behaviors such as autistic symptoms and child characteristics are identified as directly correlated to the parental stress. Regarding this problem, researchers also examined the moderating relationship between social support and parental stress of parents with ASD children. However, very limited research has been done in Asian culture and especially in Hong Kong. Due to the differences in culture, acceptance of the public and professional support provided by the government, findings from western studies may not be applicable in Hong Kong. The current research addressed the cultural gap in the literatures. It tested the hypotheses that parental stress can be positively predicted by aberrant behaviors, whereas it can be negatively predicted by social support parents received. It also examined the hypothesis that social support may interact and moderate the positive relationship between aberrant behaviors and parental stress. One hundred and thirteen parents or caretakers (mean age group = 41-45 years, 82.3% female) of children with ASD (mean age = 8.99 years, 81.4% male) participated. Participants self-reported their parental support level, their child's aberrant behavior level and social support level. Main effect was significant between parental stress and aberrant behavior, while hyperactivity and lethargy were found to be the two most contributive components under aberrant behavior. Main effect was also found between parental stress and social support. Meanwhile, informal social support was found to be the major predictor towards parental stress. However, interactions between social support and aberrant behavior in predicting parental stress were not significantly found. For parents of children with serious aberrant behavior, a higher level of social support cannot

moderate the high parental stress of them. These findings implied that in order to lower the parental stress, resources should be focused on relieving the aberrant behavior of children instead of providing social support to parents.

Keywords

Parental stress, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Social support, Aberrant behavior