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Variables predicting mental health and quality of marriage among parents to autistic children: A multivariate model

Ayelet Siman-Tov and Shlomo KanielKibbutzim College of Education Technology and the Arts, Israel
Tel-Aviv University, Israel

Backgrounds: The purpose of the current study is the construction and validation of a model for the mental health and quality of marriage of parents and a child with autism. The model comprises four elements: parental stress, parental resources, parental mental health and quality of marriage and the child's autism symptoms. Our main hypothesis is that the resources (sense of coherence, locus of control and social support), will be negatively correlated with parental stress. The more social support parents have and greater their sense of coherence and internal locus of control, the less pressure they will report in parenting their autistic child. The intensity of the stress will be also negatively correlated with parental mental health and quality of marriage. Consequently, parental mental health and quality of marriage will be positively correlated with the child improvement.

Methods: 176 parents of children aged between 6 to 16 diagnosed with ASD answered several questionnaires measuring parental stress, personal resources, mental health and marriage quality and the child's autism symptoms.

Results: Path analysis showed that sense of coherence, internal locus of control, social support and quality of marriage increase the ability to cope with the stress of parenting an autistic child.

Conclusions: It seems that the explanations of the results of this research emphasize the concept of control. A strong sense of control may facilitate use of active coping and support seeking methods encourage persistence and promote domain-specific satisfaction and affect.

Recent publications:

1. Kaniel S and Siman –Tov A (2011) Comparison between mothers and fathers in coping with autistic children: A multivariate model. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*. 26:479-493.
2. Siman Tov A and Kaniel S (2011) Stress and personal resource as predictors of the adjustment of parents to autistic children: A multivariate model. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 41(7): 879-890.
3. Siman Tov A (2015) The linkage between stress experience, personal, family and social resources and the coping patterns of Parents to Children with Autism, *Dapim* 61: 174-204 (Hebrew)

Biography

Ayelet Siman-Tov completed her PhD from Bar Ilan University and was awarded the Rector's prize for excellent research students for her distinction in her doctoral studies. Her main research interests: autism parenting and family. She also received a certificate of merit as an excellent lecturer from the Kibbutzim College of Education. From 2014-2017- Coordinator of faculty researchers, Department of Special Education at Kibbutzim College of Education, Israel; 2006-2018- Researcher and Lecturer, Department of Special Education at Kibbutzim College of Education, Israel; 2009-2018-Researcher, Lecturer, Mentor and Academic Coordinator in a Training program for Therapists, School of Social Work, Bar Ilan University, Israel; Researcher and Lecturer, Department of Human Development and Education, School of Education, Tel Aviv University, Israel.

yosicpa@netvision.net.il