



Parental Perceptions about Autism Spectrum Disorder of Their Children: Impacts and Implications for Interventions in Albania

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Abstract:

Aims: To identify and evaluate perceptions of parents of children with ASD at the time of diagnosis, and after receiving 2 years and 4 years ABA therapy.

Method: The participants of the study are parents of 150 children who receive diagnosis or receive treatment in 2 years and who receive treatment in 4 years at the Regional Center for Autism. The research method used is quantitative by using questionnaires. All these parents have fulfilled the questionnaires about the perception of the diagnosis and perception of ABA therapy, questionnaire about self-efficacy, depression, anxiety level, hopelessness, readiness for change. The other used questionnaires are, Beck's Depression Inventory, Hopkins list of symptoms, Parenting Self-Efficacy Test, Beck Hopelessness Scale and Jurica instrument of Prochaska and Di-Clemente.

Results and Discussion: Regarding the results of the study, as we expected, parental perceptions differ at the time of diagnosis, after 2 years, and 4 years of treatment. These differences were obvious regarding self-efficacy and parenting capacities, expectations from therapy, the willingness to change, emotional response from the situation, sense of hope. The main differences were found between the first group (time of diagnosis) and the second group (2 years of therapy), however we have found significant differences between all three groups mainly about expectations and sense of hope for the future, denial, despair, sense of guilt, family's coping skills, family and social support, hope in the therapy etc.

Conclusion: We suggest that many factors might be the source for the differences that resulted including: cognitive and behavioural abilities of the autistic child, readiness for change, child age, existing parental problem, cohesion of the family. Further studies should be done in order to better understand how and the way these factors are integrated and influence parental perceptions.

Keywords

ASD, Parental Perceptions, Perceived Self-efficacy, Change, Parenting, ABA Therapy