

Enhancing Counsellor Education: Equipping Professionals to Support Caregivers in Autism Care

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Abstract

Despite the rise in autism diagnoses and the growing need for parental support, few studies have examined how a sense of control reduces distress. This study explored relationships between social support, sense of control, stress, anxiety, and loneliness among parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), with implications for school-based family counselling. A cross-sectional study with 96 parents of children with ASD aged 6-12 used questionnaires assessing stress, social support, sense of control, anxiety, and loneliness. Data analysis employed Pearson's correlation and stepwise regression. Results confirmed negative relationships between social support, sense of control, stress, loneliness, and anxiety. Higher levels of social support and sense of control were linked to lower stress, anxiety, and loneliness. Sense of control emerged as a key predictor of distress, explaining 25% of the variance beyond demographic factors. Social support, while helpful, did not significantly enhance the model when sense of control was included. Fostering a sense of control is essential in reducing distress among parents of children with ASD. Findings inform strategies for school-based family counsellors to strengthen personal and social resources, enhancing parental well-being.

Keywords: anxiety; loneliness; school-based family counselling; sense of control; stress