**PARENTAL COPING AS A MEDIATOR FOR STRESS WHEN ACCOUNTING FOR CHILD VARIABLES OF CHILDREN WITH ASD**

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**Objectives**: Raising a child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) comes with its joys but also many challenges, including increased stress among both mothers and fathers (though fathers are less studied). The characteristics of the child and the family can have a significant impact on the stress of parents, but this can be ameliorated by the resources and supports they have. Therefore, it is important to examine the three major areas of a parent’s experience of stress: stressors, resources and supports, and parental outcomes (Perry, 2004). In particular, coping strategies and resiliency factors can be used to mitigate the impact of the stressors to produce greater positive outcomes. The purpose of this study is to explore how various methods of coping can mediate and/or moderate the relationship between child variables and parental stress in a large community sample of mothers and fathers of children diagnosed with ASD.

**Method**: Data were derived from screening assessments conducted at a public agency to determine eligibility for entry into the Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) program. Families were included in the present study based on the child’s diagnosis of ASD and completion of Family Crisis Oriented Personal Evaluation Scales (F-COPES; McCubbin et al., 1991) and the Parenting Stress Index – Short Form (PSI-SF; Abidin, 1995) by both the child’s mother and father (*N* = 794 mother-father dyads). Children were between 18 and 83 months (*M* = 44.0, *SD* = 13.2) and most were male (84%) which reflects diagnostic ratios seen in ASD. Child variables were assessed using the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale (VABS; Sparrow et al., 2005) and the Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS; Schopler et al., 2010).

**Results**: Analyses are in progress but will be reported at RSIG. The degree to which coping mitigates the stressors associated with individual child variables will be analyzed (for mothers and fathers separately) using multiple regression analyses. Various subscales of coping will be examined with emphasis is placed on three types of coping: self-efficacy, passive avoidance, and acceptance.

**Discussion/Conclusion:** Based on the results of the multiple regression analyses, the present study will illustrate the relationship. between child variables and coping mechanisms on stress of mothers and fathers of children with ASD. Significant results may suggest that particular coping mechanisms should be emphasized for mothers and fathers in order to best mediate stressors associated with their child’s diagnosis. This would be helpful for parents themselves and for professionals supporting these families.

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