Problem Behaviors in ASD: Comparing Parent and Professional Concerns [Slides]

Louisa Ha  
*Bowling Green State University, luisah@bgsu.edu*

Siva Priya Santhanam

Lisa Shattuck

Elizabeth Witter

Lynne Elizabeth Hewitt  
*Bowling Green State University, lhewitt@bgsu.edu*

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Abstract
Parents and professionals working with individuals on the autism spectrum face many challenges meeting their social and communication demands, adapting to their changes, and providing conducive environments for their physical and emotional well-being. A survey assessed the information needs of parents and professionals. Results revealed that parents and professionals shared similar concerns on most of the categories.

Background
- Literature indicates that parents and professionals differ in their perceptions and concerns regarding children's cognitive, emotional, and communication characteristics (e.g. Stone & Rosenbaum, 1988).

Parents' concerns (e.g. Kasari & Sigman, 1997; Davis & Carter, 2008)
1. Impairments in social relatedness
2. Impairments in communication
3. Presence of maladaptive behaviors

Professionals' concerns (e.g. Quintero & McIntyre, 2011)
1. Difficulty adapting to social situations
2. Academic/literacy issues
3. Problems engaging effectively with peers in the classroom

Purpose
1. Identify the pressing needs and concerns of parents and professionals involved with individuals with autism.
2. Determine the concern areas that need additional support and intervention.

Method
- A survey targeting parents and professionals in Northwest Ohio assessed their information needs in March, 2011.
- In this study, responses to the open-ended question, “What behaviors are you most concerned about” in the survey were analyzed. Quantitative results presented in Ha, Hewitt, & Weinberg (2011).

Method continued...
- Three coders analyzed the data independently and identified 15 themes. The themes included:
  1. Sensory
  2. Motor
  3. Noncompliance
  4. Aggression
  5. Self-stimulatory behaviors
  6. Academics
  7. Attention deficit outbursts
  8. Restricted
  9. Social issues
  10. Communication
  11. Emotional
  12. Organization
  13. Mental health
  14. Personal care
  15. Other

- 33% of the data was used to determine coding reliability.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Percentage of Responses (Number of Responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>33.33% (9,294)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor</td>
<td>31.25% (8,500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncompliance</td>
<td>16.67% (4,500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>12.50% (3,500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-stimulatory behaviors</td>
<td>6.25% (1,688)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>6.25% (1,688)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention deficit outbursts</td>
<td>6.25% (1,688)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted</td>
<td>6.25% (1,688)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social issues</td>
<td>6.25% (1,688)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>6.25% (1,688)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>3.12% (850)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>3.12% (850)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>3.12% (850)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal care</td>
<td>3.12% (850)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion
- Both groups reported highest concerns on social interaction.
- The present findings indicate that parents and professionals share a substantial overlap in their identification of critical need areas.
- Limitations:
  - The data were gathered from a larger study who original purpose did not focus specifically on the behavioral concerns of parents and professionals.
  - The data were gathered from an open ended question which may have resulted in erroneous interpretations of qualitative data.

Conclusion
Parents and professionals concurred on the behavioral concerns demonstrated by the children they live with/work with. While these findings contradict previous research (e.g. Stone & Rosenbaum, 1988), these results are encouraging in that they suggest parents and professionals are aligned in terms of their views on problem behaviors, and thus it will be important to work in collaboration toward the overall development of the individual with ASD. While differences on directions to go may exist, shared recognition of the problem is a first step to shared goals for solving it.

References

Disclosure statement: Authors have no financial or non-financial relationship to the content of the poster.