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# Relationship between psychological adjustment and quality of life among parents with autistic child

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**Abstract---**Background: Autistic Disorder is a complicated childhood developmental disability that can have a severe impact on a child's intellectual, social, and language abilities, The number of children diagnosed with Autistic Disorder has risen dramatically, leaving a large number of children and their parents in need of comprehensive support services, Parenting a child with Autistic Disorder has been reported to disrupt the entire family's life and cause a slew of economic, social, physical, and psychological issues. Objective: The study aims to find out the relationship between Psychological adjustment and parents' quality of life. Method: The descriptive correlational study design approach is carried out by questioning individuals of the research population with the goal of describing the phenomena simply in terms of its type and degree of existence. Interrogating study participants about their psychological adjustment and quality of life is how the correlational approach is used. Results: there is a highly significant relationship (Strong positive) between psychological adjustment and quality of life at  $p\text{-value} = 0.001$  which reflects the quality of life improves with increasing psychological adjustment.

**Keywords---**Relationship, Psychological Adjustment, Quality of Life, Autistic Child.

**Introduction**

Autistic Disorder is a complicated childhood developmental disability that can have a severe impact on a child's intellectual, social, and language abilities, The number of children diagnosed with Autistic Disorder has risen dramatically,

leaving a large number of children and their parents in need of comprehensive support services, Parenting a child with Autistic Disorder has been reported to disrupt the entire family's life and cause a slew of economic, social, physical, and psychological issues (Clabaugh et al., 2019).

Autism Spectrum Disability (ASD) is a type of developmental disorder whose prevalence is quickly increasing around the world, It is one of the most severe developmental disorders that appears in the first three years of life, It causes problems with social engagement and communication, both verbal and nonverbal, Some persons with autism have limited hobbies, unusual sleeping or eating habits, or a proclivity for self-harming activities such as hitting their heads or biting their hands (Klin et al., 2020).

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders classifies autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) as a group of conditions known as pervasive developmental disorders (PDDs) (DSM), Autism, Asperger syndrome, PDD-NOS (persistent developmental disorder not otherwise defined), childhood disintegrative disorder, and Rett syndrome are all PDDs, Only the first three are usually considered to be on the autistic spectrum, Early-onset ASDs have negative, often lifelong, impacts on communication and sociability, as well as tendencies toward restricted interests and/or repetitive behaviors (Gyawali & Patra, 2019).

Since the 1980s, autistic disorders have become more widely recognized as pervasive developmental diseases, The American Psychiatric Association has lately dubbed them "autism spectrum disorders" They are five chronic illnesses characterized by early socialization, communication, and behavior dysfunction, Autistic disorders do not have a cure or treatments, and they are still considered lifelong illnesses (Al-Mosawi, 2020).

Parents caring or living with a child diagnosed with a chronic illness such as autism or functional impairment are more likely to experience stress-related issues and have a lower quality of life, This can lead to burnout and a persistent stress reaction as well as, many studies have documented other psychological difficulties such as greater levels of depression and anxiety symptoms among parents of children with autism (Sairanen et al., 2019).

Living with an autistic child is a multifaceted challenge that encompasses various aspects of the family system and requires practical demand and emotional burdens in addition to family stress, Stress associated with an autism diagnosis can strain a parent's marriage, increase financial burdens in the family, and cause parents to socially isolate themselves (Tadesse, 2014).

## **Method**

### **Study Design**

The descriptive correlational study design approach is carried out by questioning individuals of the research population with the goal of describing the phenomena simply in terms of its type and degree of existence. Interrogating study participants about their psychological adjustment and quality of life is how the

correlational approach is used. Since the problem of the study is related to the present, and its study will be done through direct interrogation, as well as the aim of this study is to stop at the limit of description and correlation between study variables (Psychological adjustment vs. Quality of life), and therefore the appropriate approach is the correlational design, which depends on the study of the phenomenon and the statement of its characteristics and size, as well as the collection and interpretation of information.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical obligations are one of the most important things that the researcher must follow and abide it when doing the study. Before the starting of collect the data from the community that has been identified for the study, the researcher should clarify the main purpose and desired goal of conducting this study for the sample to be included in the study, as well as adhere to the strict confidentiality of the data taken from the study sample and pledge to use it for scientific purposes related to the study only.

Before starting gathering, the data from the sample who are participating in the study, the researcher gives a brief explanation about the scientific background of the research and the purpose of conducting it. Parents were verbally informed about the study aims and were asked to participate and this participation was voluntary. After they agreed to participate in the study, an anonymous questionnaire was handed to them to maintain complete confidentiality for the participants.

### **The setting of the Study**

The research was conducted at the Dhi-Qar Center for Rehabilitation of Autistic Disorders, the researcher chose this center which is the governorate's only center that treats autistic children. The researcher assessed the psychological adjustment and quality of life of parents who have autistic children.

### **Sample of the Study**

The non-probability (purposive) sample was selected to carry out the study which consists of (120).

### **Validity of the Questionnaire**

The validity of the questionnaire entails ensuring that it will measure what it was designed to measure, To ensure the questionnaire's validity, it was submitted to 11 specialists from various domains.

### **Methods of Statistics Data Analysis**

In order to statistically analyze the data collected from the study sample to arrive at the results, the researcher used the SPSS version (20) and Microsoft Excel (2010) program to analyze this data and deal with it statistically, to find the relationships between the variables, and obtain the final results of the research based on a set of statistical tests.

## Methods of Data Collection

The data was carried out from (January first, 2022 to 20 March 20th, 2022). The questionnaire has been administered personally by the researcher to the parents. After obtaining the approval of the Nasiriyah Health Directorate and verifying the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The researcher interviewed (face to face) the participants, explained the instructions, answered their questions regarding the form, urged them to participate, and thanked them for their cooperation. The interview techniques were used on an individual basis, and each interview took (20-25) minutes after taking the important steps that must be included in the study design.

## Result

Table (1): Distribution of Sample according to Parents' Socio-demographic Characteristics

| List | Characteristics          | f                    | %   |
|------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----|
| 1    | Age<br>M±SD= 35.38±8.880 | 26 – 35 year         | 71  |
|      |                          | 36 – 45 year         | 39  |
|      |                          | 46 – 55 year         | 5   |
|      |                          | 56 ≤ year            | 5   |
|      |                          | Total                | 120 |
| 2    | Kinship                  | Father               | 50  |
|      |                          | Mother               | 70  |
|      |                          | Total                | 120 |
| 3    | Level of education       | Doesn't read & write | 36  |
|      |                          | Read & write         | 16  |
|      |                          | Primary school       | 15  |
|      |                          | Intermediate school  | 0   |
|      |                          | Secondary school     | 5   |
|      |                          | Institute/college    | 48  |
|      |                          | Total                | 120 |
| 4    | Social status            | Living together      | 94  |
|      |                          | Separated            | 26  |
|      |                          | Dead father          | 0   |
|      |                          | Dead mother          | 0   |
|      |                          | Total                | 120 |
| 5    | Monthly income           | Insufficient         | 67  |
|      |                          | Barely sufficient    | 35  |
|      |                          | Sufficient           | 18  |
|      |                          | Total                | 120 |

f: Frequency, %: Percentage, M: Mean, SD: Standard deviation

This table shows that parents of autistic children are young adult with age 35.38±8.880 years that 59.2% of them are seen in the age group of 26-3 years and 32.4% are in the age group of 36-45 years. The kinship degree refers that 58.3% of them are mothers and the remaining are fathers (41.7%). Regarding level of education, the highest percentage refers to institute/college graduation among 40% of parents while 30% of them are doesn't read and write.

The social status variable for parents refers that more of them are with normal social status in which 78.3% of them reporting they living together but 21.7% of them reported they are separated. Regarding monthly income, 55.8% of parents are perceived insufficient monthly income, and 29.2% of them perceive barely sufficient income while only 15% are perceive sufficient monthly income.

Table (2) Correlation between Psychological Adjustment and Quality of Life among Parents with Autistic Child (N=120)

| Variables                | Spearman correlation | p-value |
|--------------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Psychological adjustment | 0.584                | 0.001   |
| Quality of life          |                      |         |

This table indicates that there is high significant relationship (Strong positive) between psychological adjustment and quality of life at p-value= 0.001 which reflect the quality of life improves with increasing psychological adjustment.

## Discussion

The finding of data analysis for 120 samples of parents with the autistic child according to Table (4-1) show (50) fathers and (70) mothers were (59.2%) The majority of the participants in the study were between the ages of (26-35 years) and (4.2%) of them were with age group ( $56 \leq$  years). Females were participants more than males because most men are probably at work at that time or maybe The presence of mothers the most time with their children, makes them more aware of the condition of the child, in addition to gaining more flexibility in dealing with him. Supportive evidence has been found by the study conducted on 320 parents with autistic children to assess the burden among them, found about (57) males and (259) females (Marsack et al., 2019).

Regarding the level of education, the highest percentage refers to institute/college graduation among 40% of parents while 30% of them are doesn't read and write this result similar to the result of a study by Dawood and Khudhair, (2016) conducted in Iraq to Assess "Quality of Life for Parents of Autistic Child" showed advanced percentage of contributor within the age group (21-30) years old and more than half institute/college graduation was (10.2%) diploma and (44.9%) bachelor degree. The current study also found The social status variable for parents refers that more of them are with normal social status in which 78.3% of them reported they are alive together but 21.7% of them reported they are separated.

These findings agree with the study "Quality of life among parents of South African children with autism spectrum disorder" conducted by Alhazmi et al. (2018) showed a higher percentage of married, and according to (Table 1) Regarding monthly income, 55.8% of parents are perceived insufficient monthly income, and 29.2% of them perceive barely sufficient income while only 15% are perceived sufficient monthly income. According to the researcher's perspective on monthly income, the monthly income is insufficient due to the financial load of medicines and specific needs of the child, as well as transportation costs when visiting a rehabilitation center.

The results of the relationship analysis between psychological adjustment and quality of life reveal that there is a strong positive correlation between psychological adjustment and quality of life among parents of autistic children (Table 2) which reflects the quality of life improves with increasing psychological adjustment. The study agrees with this result and presented a high correlation between the quality of life and stress among parents with autistic children (Dardas & Ahmed, 2014; Vahedparast et al. 2022). The current study is also comparable with the result of a study that demonstrated that poor quality of life and emotion-focused strategies among parents with autistic children are significantly influenced by high levels of stress (Cappe et al, 2011). There is other supporting evidence for this study, where Siah and Tan (2016), said most parents of children with autism when they have high levels of stress lead to have lower levels of quality of life than other parents, and this means that their psychological adjustment is less than that of other parents, which affects their quality of life and makes it less than it should be. This finding also comes in the same line with Antle, (2005) confirmed that quality of life among parents of autistic children significantly positively correlated with their psychological compatibility. The positive correlation means that the psychological adjustment had been an effect on the quality of life that is, where parents with better psychological adjustment mostly better quality of life. This result can be interpreted in a way Parents feel negative feelings such as sadness, anxiety, psychological pressure, and their lack of acceptance of their children's illness on the grounds that it is less than their peers at home and school and between relatives and neighbors. Therefore, these feelings negatively affect their physical health, their daily activities, and their personal relationships with others, which affects the quality of their lives. There is very few studies on the correlation between psychological adjustment and quality of life among parents with an autistic child. Through the results of previous studies, work on educating parents of children with autism through awareness programs related to aspects of psychological adjustments, which indeed help to improve parents' quality of life.

## Conclusion

There is a highly significant relationship (Strong positive) between psychological adjustment and quality of life

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