



Service Priorities and Programmes
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The Clinical Profiles of Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Hong Kong and Parenting Stress: A Pilot Study of Cognitive-Behavioral Group Intervention

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Introduction

A systematic understanding and review of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)-related social deficits as well as its associated emotional and behavioural disturbances in local Chinese context is necessary, as it serves important functions to accurate assessment, case formulation, and treatment implementation for adolescents with ASD. It is also clinically relevant to address how these ASD-related impairments associate with parenting stress as parents usually provide large proportion of time and efforts to training and to accommodate unique needs of their children. To date, relatively few studies have been conducted in Hong Kong to profiling ASD-related impairment in adolescents with ASD; and no available psychosocial intervention outcome study has targeted to improve core social deficits and its associated co-occurring anxiety and parenting stress. Therefore, this study aims to establish a clinical profile of adolescents with ASD in Hong Kong; and to evaluate validity and effectiveness of a pilot run group intervention programme.

Objectives

The objectives are: (1) to establish a clinical profile, in social, emotional and behavioural domains, of adolescents with ASD in Hong Kong; (2) to investigate how adolescent's ASD-related symptoms associate with parenting stress; and (3) to evaluate validity and effectiveness of a pilot run manualized cognitive-behavioural group intervention programme.

Methodology

A total of 60 families of adolescents with ASD diagnosis participated in this study. Adolescent participants were aged between 12 and 18. They received 6-session group intervention on emotional management and 6-session group intervention on social competence. Concurrently, parent participants attended 6-session parent support group to understand ASD and effective parenting skills. All participants gave their informed consent and were asked to complete the self-report questionnaires

before and after the intervention.

Result

As predicted, ASD subjects were presented with observed patterns of social, emotional and behavioural problems, suggesting a high degree of similarity in psychometric findings in a cross-cultural setting. Somatic complaints and obsessive compulsive anxiety were presented as the most frequently reported anxiety symptoms. ASD-related social and behavioural problems were most associated with parenting anxiety and stress. Results of the pilot run cognitive-behavioural group intervention programme provided preliminary evidence on reducing anxiety and slightly improving social competence in adolescents with ASD. More importantly, the feedbacks indicated reducing parenting stress and improved understanding and coping for parents with ASD children.