

Measuring functional deficits in relation to emotion regulation problems in autism spectrum disorder using the CAFAS

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Background

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a pervasive developmental disorder
- There is increasing evidence that individuals with ASD have difficulty with emotion regulation (ER)
- Research with typically developing children demonstrates functional deficits as a result of ER problems
- The relationship between ER and functional abilities has yet to be studied in ASD and could inform potential intervention approaches to ER and functional skills

Study Objective: Investigate the functional deficits related to increased ER problems in adolescents and young adults with ASD.

Methods

- Parents of 57 ASD-confirmed youth (Age M= 15, SD= 2.59) completed an interview with a blinded evaluator within a clinical trial
- The Emotion Dysregulation Inventory (EDI; Mazefsky et al., 2018) was used to measure a child's dysregulation on both a reactivity and dysphoria scale
- Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS; Hodges & Wong, 1996) was administered to measure functional outcomes in several domains
- Pearson correlations were conducted between EDI t-scores and CAFAS subscales

Conclusions

- The CAFAS did not indicate functional problems related to ER in ASD, within a sample of participants specifically selected for having problems with ER
- Normal distribution on the CAFAS has been demonstrated in a typically developing population, but these results were not normal, indicating potential problems in psychometric properties in this population
- It would have been expected that there would be functional deficits as a result of ER problems, but results do not support this
- The Mood/Emotions subscale was not related to dysregulation, which may indicate differences in measurement of ER in ASD using the CAFAS.
- The EDI was specifically designed for measurement of ER in and ASD population, but the CAFAS was not developed for use in ASD which may contribute to the null findings.
- Future research can investigate further the effects of emotion dysregulation on functional outcomes and validation of measures of functional outcomes in ASD

Results

- Analyses indicated that the EDI t-scores were not significantly associated with any CAFAS subscales (Table 1)
- CAFAS Mood/Emotion subscale was not correlated with the EDI, which may demonstrate an incongruence in how emotion is measured across these two assessments
- CAFAS data was skewed positively 1.634 (SE= .365)

CAFAS Subscales	EDI Dysphoria	EDI Reactivity
Mood/Emotions	r= 0.120, p= 0.451	r= 0.091, p= 0.568
Self-Harm	r= 0.110, p= 0.488	r= 0.181, p= 0.251
School/Work	r= 0.097, p= 0.451	r= 0.256, p= 0.102
Home Behavior	r= 0.201, p= 0.193	r= 0.058, p= 0.715
Community Behavior	r= -0.188, p= 0.232	r= -0.004, p= 0.980
Substance Use	r= -1.88, p= 0.232	r= -0.004, p= 0.980
Thinking Problems	r= 0.027, p= 0.865	r= 0.128, p= 0.420
Behavior Towards Others	r= 0.050, p= 0.755	r= -0.043, p= 0.785

Table 1. CAFAS subscales correlated with the EDI

References

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