AN EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR MOTHERS OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER IN JORDAN

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Statement of Originality

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

(Signed):

Amany Al-Khalaf
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Abstract

The present study aims to understand the experience of parenting a child with ASD in Jordan and to determine whether the provision of an education program in Jordan for mothers of children with ASD increased mothers’ understanding of their child’s behaviour and improved the mothers’ coping skills and reduced their stress levels. The difference between mothers’ and fathers’ coping skills and stress was also examined. In addition, this study explored the fathers’ and professionals’ views of how disability is regarded in Jordanian culture.

A mixed methods study was conducted to satisfy the research aims. The qualitative aspect involved a series of interviews and focus groups. The interviews were held with 10 mothers of children with ASD and two focus groups with 10 fathers and 10 professionals. The quantitative data involved a pre- and post-intervention questionnaire comprised of two scales assessing coping skills and stress. Pre-intervention interviews and a pre-intervention questionnaire were administered before commencing the implementation of the parent education program to identify the mothers’ needs, to understand their experiences, and to discuss how Jordanian culture understands disability. Post-intervention interviews and a post-intervention questionnaire were carried out at the conclusion of the education program with the mothers to evaluate the effects of the program. Fathers’ and professionals’ focus groups were conducted to discuss how Jordanian culture understands disability. The same questionnaire that was given to the mothers was also administered with the 10 fathers and was comprised of two scales assessing coping skills and stress.

The results showed that following the education program the mothers reported a statistically significant reduction in stress levels, an increase in coping skills, and an improvement in mother–child interaction. Furthermore, the findings showed that from the perspective of the fathers and professionals, Jordanian society did not readily accept people with a disability in general and that there were few provisions to support families with a child with ASD. The research described in this study has valuable implications for practice and intervention for families with a child with ASD living in Jordan.