Abstract

Psychosocial Burden among Caregivers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Najaf Province

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Considerable researches have documented the psychosocial burden of caregivers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Recently, it has been shown that burden may also seriously affect caregivers, but little empirical research has addressed this phenomenon.

Caregivers of children with ASD reported more negative impact and poor psychological wellbeing. They appear to be at great risk for depression, stress, anxiety and distress; and many caregivers have managed to overcome the constant challenge by using their patience and take the consequences to adapt well in the face of adversity.

A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out from March 10th 2016 until the June 26th 2016 in order to determine the burden of ASD on the caregivers and to identify the level of psychosocial burden in dealing with the impact of raising a child with ASD.

A non-probability purposive sample of (152) children with ASD and (152) caregivers' inpatients outpatients, were selected from AL-Hakeem General Hospital/Psychiatric Department was (32) sample and Psychiatric Private Clinics was (49) sample and from Imam Hussein Autism Center (IHAC) was (71) sample at AL-Najaf province.

Data were collected through the use of the constructed questionnaire and the process of the self- administrative report for each caregiver as a mean of data collection methods, by using the Arabic version of the questionnaire. The caregivers were gathered in one place and the purpose of the study was explained a verbal consent to participation was obtained.

The questionnaire was constructed by the investigator to achieve the objectives of the study, which consisted of two parts; the first part is concerned with the socio-demographic characteristics of the autistic children and clinical characteristics and CARS scale consist of the 15 items, to assess level of severity of ASD; second part is a covering letter to obtain the agreement of caregivers to participate in the present study and socio-demographic characteristics of the children and GHQ consists of 12 items, to assess the general mental health and ZBI, consists of 22 items to assess level of psychosocial burden for caregiver.

The validity of the questionnaire was obtained through a panel of experts and the reliability was achieved through the application of alpha correlation coefficient ($r = 0.81$) which was statistically acceptable.

Data were analyzed through the application of descriptive statistical analysis (Frequency, Percentage, Mean and Standard deviation) and inferential statistic (Alpha correlation coefficient, t-test, ANOVA, and chi-square test, stepwise regression and simple linear regression).

The results of the study revealed that caregivers of children with ASD experienced moderate level of psychosocial burden; there were significant differences between the level of psychosocial burden among caregivers and childhood autism rating scale, whereas there is a significant difference between psychosocial burden and some of socio-demographic characteristics of Child's caregivers (gender and monthly income)and GHQ.

The current study recommends providing family support for families with autistic children, especially a psychological one, and educational about clinical behaviors of ASD for early detection and Family to Family Education Programs to the existing services in community mental health programs.