

Examining Body Functions and Participation in Autistic Adolescents: Associations with Parental Stress and Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction

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What was examined?

Background

Adolescence brings unique challenges as autistic youth navigate developmental changes alongside core symptoms¹, increasing parental demands and stress².

Objective

Examination of the association between:

- 1. Adolescents' body functions and participation**
- 2. Body functions and parental stress**
- 3. Parental stress and satisfaction of parents' basic psychological needs**

Method

Cross-sectional study among 51 families:

51 autistic adolescents (age 12-18, Level 1)

- **Body functions** (Executive functions: BRIEF; sensory processing: SP2; Social-communication: SSIS)

- **Participation** (CASP)

49 mothers and 23 fathers (mean age 41)

- **Parental stress** (APQ)
- **Basic need satisfaction** (BPNSR)

¹Picci, G., & Scherf, K. S. (2015). A two-hit model of autism: Adolescence as the second hit. *Clinical Psychological Science*, 3(3), 349-371.

²Shepherd, D., Landon, J., Taylor, S., & Goedeke, S. (2018). Coping and care-related stress in parents of a child with autism spectrum disorder. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping*, 31(3), 277-290.

What was found?

Key Findings

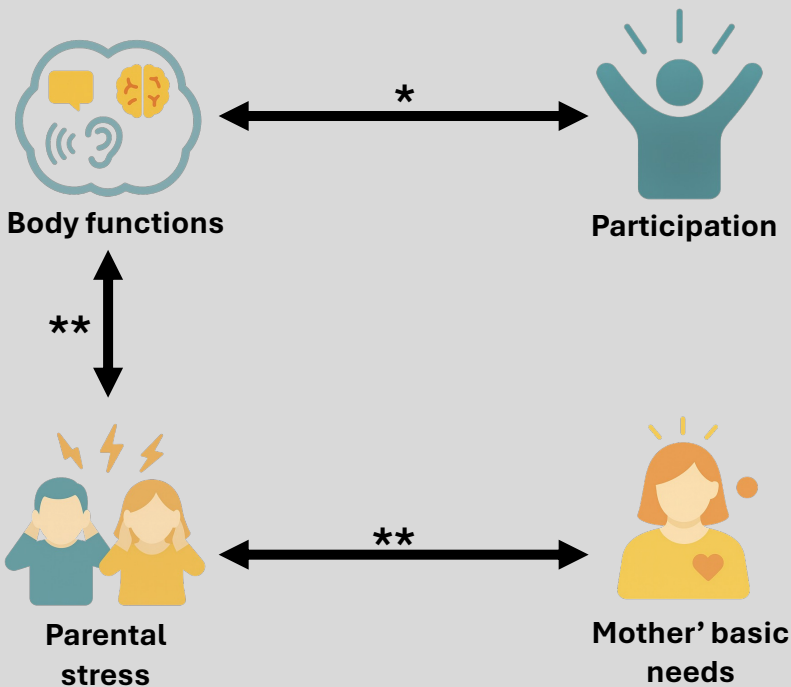


Adolescents showed **difficulties** across **all three body functions** (n=42)



Adolescents experienced participation limitations (n=51)

Correlations between adolescent's body functions, participation, and parental factors



Greater difficulties in body functions ↔ **lower participation**
Higher parental stress

Higher parental stress ↔ **lower satisfaction of basic psychological needs**

Body functions ↔ Participation: $r = -.29$ to $-.49$, $p < .05$ – $.001$

Body functions ↔ Parental stress: $r = -.39$ to $-.61$, $p < .01$

Parental stress ↔ Mothers' basic psychological needs: $r = .39$ – $.58$, $p < .05$ – $.001$

Why does this matter?

Key implications

- Adolescent participation reflects the interaction of **multiple body functions**
- Parental stress is linked to **unmet basic psychological needs**
- Adolescent participation and parental experiences are **interconnected**



Supporting **adolescent participation** is enhanced by **addressing parental stress** and **parents' basic psychological needs**.

Significance to Occupational Therapy



Develop a **multidimensional functional profile** (cognitive-behavioral, social-communication, and sensory-motor).



Use this profile as the **foundation for intervention planning**



Implement interventions aimed at **reducing parental stress** and **support parents' needs**.