

# The role of parental stress as a predictor for limit setting in families of children with autism spectrum disorders

Josh Golt B.S., Elizabeth McRae, M.A., Laura Stoppelbein, PhD  
The University of Alabama



## Background

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a pervasive, neurodevelopmental disorder
- Parents of children with ASD report increased levels of parental stress when compared to parents of neurotypical children
- A review of extant literature suggests a significant relation between parental stress and judgements on one's own parenting abilities, including limit setting
- Additionally, recent research suggests that parental cognitions are a better predictor of stress than child-centric variables

## Objective

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the role of parent's self-reported stress and psychopathology as predictors of limit setting behavior in families with a child diagnosed with ASD

## Methods

- Parents of 31 youth with ASD Age  $M = 5.21$  years ( $SD = 2.591$ ) completed a battery of self-report questionnaires during an outpatient clinic appointment.
- Parents completed the:
  - Parental Stress Scale (PSS)
  - Hopkins Symptom Checklist
  - Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI)

## Data Analytic Plan

- Correlational analyses were used to evaluate the relation between variables of interest.
- Next, linear regression analyses were conducted to determine the influence of psychopathology and parent stress on limit setting abilities

## Results

- Demographics
  - The majority of the children in the sample were male (76.5%) and all of the informants were mothers. Nearly half were white (47.1%) with the other half indicating they were African American.
- Bivariate correlations revealed significant relations between parent-rated limit setting was and parental stress ( $r = -.56, p = .001$ ) and parent-rated psychopathology ( $r = -.38, p = .046$ ).
- The regression model was significant ( $p = .004$ ) and explained about 30% of the variance ( $\text{adj } R^2 = .301$ )
  - Parental stress was a significant predictor of limit setting abilities ( $B = -.488, p = .009$ ), but psychopathology was not ( $B = -9.319, p = .129$ ).

## Conclusions

Parental stress, but not psychopathology emerged as a significant predictor of limit setting. The findings are consistent with previous research on relationships between parental stress and limit setting. Future research should focus on the direction of this relationship and potential moderators on the relationship. This research highlights the importance of understanding parent-child relationships and underlying mechanisms between the relationship. Understanding parent stress and psychopathology, and how they impact parent-child relationships, can influence family focused care for families with a child with ASD

## References

- Algarvio et al., 2018; Derogatis et al., 1974; Gerard, 1994; Fong, 1991; Faulk, Norries & Quinn, 2014; Rao & Beidel, 2009; Reed et al., 2017

## Acknowledgements

We want to acknowledge the families that are willing to participate in this research and make it possible.

## Contact Information

Josh Golt: [jdgolt@crimson.ua.edu](mailto:jdgolt@crimson.ua.edu)