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# Effect of incredible years autism spectrum and language delays (IY-ASD) program on stress and behavioral management skills among parents of children with autism spectrum disorder in Palestine

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This study purposed to evaluate the effect of the Incredible Years Autism Spectrum and Language Delays (IY-ASD) program in reducing parents' stress and improving aggressive and disruptive behaviors in the parents among parents of children with autism spectrum disorder in Palestine.

**Design and methods:** A one-group pre-posttest design was used. Thirty-four parents who enrolled in the Palestinian Child Institute in Nablus were recruited.

**Results:** Findings revealed a significant difference between parents' total stress pre and post-IY-ASD ( $t = 1.2$ ,  $p < 0.01$  and parents' behavioral management skills toward their children with autism spectrum disorder. The study demonstrated that the IY-ASD program for 16 sessions reduced stress among parents of children with autism spectrum disorder in Palestine and improved aggressive and disruptive behaviors in the parents.

**Conclusion:** The IY-ASD program can be successfully implemented for parents of this cohort group.

**Practice implications:** Healthcare providers can adopt such a program for enhancing parenting roles with their children experiencing autism spectrum disorder.

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## Introduction

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is classified by DSM-5 as a neuropsychiatric developmental disorder characterized by difficulties in social communication (verbal and nonverbal), limited interest, and repetitive and or sensory behaviors (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The prevalence of ASD globally was 0.6% (Salari et al., 2022). Additionally, current studies in Asia, the U.S., Europe, Africa, and Australia reported that the prevalence of ASD was 0.4%, 1%, 0.5%, 1%, and 1.7%, respectively (Salari et al., 2022).

Children with ASD experience limited desire to exchange experiences with others and reduced nonverbal communication, such as pointing, eye contact, or nodding. Which significantly reduced their

ability to develop positive and mutually beneficial relationships (Haisley, 2014). Hence, children with ASD suffer from developmental regression and impaired cognitive functions (Salari et al., 2022), which could occur as an isolated feature or in conjunction with malformation. Also, they experience challenges in carrying out daily activities, and difficulty in decision-making or changing their daily routines (Lord et al., 2018; Salari et al., 2022), requiring life-long care and support from their parents (World Health Organization, 2019). All the above-mentioned challenges could subject parents of ASD children to high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and isolation (al-Farsi et al., 2016; Bonis, 2016; Bozkurt et al., 2019; Cohrs & Leslie, 2017; Estes et al., 2013; Keenan et al., 2016; Padden & James, 2017; Rezendes & Scarpa, 2011).

Early interventions are useful for both children with ASD and their families (Koegel et al., 2014), for example, counseling, family support (Jabery et al., 2014), and parents training were found to be useful in handling challenging behaviors in children with ASD

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