Resilience as mediator: Investigate the interplay between depressive symptoms, psychosocial health, and resilience in school-aged children with autism in inclusive education

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INTRODUCTION

Despite community narratives on students’ well-being in Hong Kong [1-3], emphasizing academic achievement, uncertainties persist for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in inclusive education [4], given their vulnerability associated with autistic traits [5].

AIMS

To provide insight into the interplay between depressive symptoms, psychosocial health, and resilience in school-aged children with ASD in inclusive education, identifying potential mediators to enhance their psychosocial health.

METHODS

A cross-sectional study was undertaken from July 2023 to January 2024. Children (7-12 years old) attending mainstream schools were invited to complete a self-report questionnaire assessing depressive symptoms, quality of life (QoL), resilience, and demographic information.

RESULTS

1. 120 children with ASD (35% female, mean age 9.2 years) & 120 neurotypical children (46% female, mean age 9.7 years).
2. Children with ASD had significantly higher levels of depressive symptoms, lower QoL (physical functioning & psychosocial health), and lower resilience (all p-value < .001).
3. Resilience was a significant mediator between depressive symptoms and psychosocial health in school-aged children with ASD, with indirect effect of −0.211 with a bootstrap 95% confidence interval (−0.433 to −0.006), accounting for 14% of the total effect.

CONCLUSION

This study validates community anecdotes by demonstrating higher levels of depressive symptoms, lower QoL, and lower resilience in school-aged children with ASD. Our findings emphasize the need to address the observed phenomenon and indicate the potential of resilience-focused interventions in enhancing their psychosocial health.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Contrary to existing evidence [6], our study suggests that inclusion alone in education may not adequately promote the well-being of children with ASD, an aspect often overlooked by health and education professionals during early development [7]. Despite the importance of-upholding their inclusive education rights while embracing the uniqueness of each child on the spectrum, our pioneering study highlights the potential of resilience-focused interventions in enhancing their psychosocial health.

REFERENCES

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