



PSYCI4051 / PSYCI4052 Psychology Honours Research Project

Plain English Statement

This research examined the relationship between parents' perceptions of psychological attributes of empathy, compassion and reflective practice and their perceived attachment with their child. This is important because parents often feel isolated and unsupported in parenting their child, which negatively impacts their wellbeing and attachment.

Australian parents with autistic children, and without, completed an anonymous online survey that asked about parents thoughts and feelings about their relationship towards their children.

There were 229 parents who responded, and 123 completed the full survey. These parents mostly identified themselves as female primary carers from an urban environment. The responses of the parents were split into two groups based on whether they had one or more officially diagnosed autistic children in their care. Official diagnosis was according to the DSM-5. There were 66 parents with no autistic children and 57 parents with one or more autistic children in this research.

The Results showed that parents perceived attachment with their child was significantly related to their ability to experience empathy, compassion, and engage in reflection. Of note, the findings showed significant differences between parents with autistic children and those parents without autistic children in perceived attachment and qualities of empathy, compassion and reflective capacity. Results of this research are important for informing future intervention strategies that support secure attachment between parent and child for families with and without autism.