

SENSORY PROFILE AND CAREGIVER BURDEN IN YOUNG CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

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BACKGROUND AND AIM: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is associated with sensory processing difficulties and increased parental stress. This study aims to examine the relationship between sensory profiles, autism symptom severity, and caregiver burden among mothers of young children with ASD.

METHODS: The study included 73 children with ASD (aged 3–6 years) and their mothers, alongside a control group of 73 typically developing children matched for age and gender. Assessments included the Sensory Profile (SP), Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS), Aberrant Behavior Checklist (ABC), Zarit Caregiver Burden Interview (ZBI), DENVER II Test, Beck Depression Inventory, and Beck Anxiety Inventory. A child and adolescent psychiatrist conducted diagnostic interviews based on DSM-5 criteria, with confirmation from a panel of three child and adolescent psychiatry specialists. The ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Clinical Research Ethics Committee of T.C. Sağlık Bilimleri Üniversitesi, Bakırköy Dr. Sadi Konuk Training and Research Hospital on 01.11.2021 with the protocol number 2021/513.

RESULTS: Sensory processing difficulties were present in at least one domain in 77% of children with ASD. Mothers of children with ASD had significantly higher depression, anxiety, and caregiver burden scores compared to controls. A negative correlation was found between children's SP scores and maternal caregiver burden ($p<0.05$). In a hierarchical regression analysis, 63% of the variance in caregiver burden was explained by a model consisting of SP scores, CARS scores, ABC scores, and maternal depression and anxiety scores ($F=6.68$, $p<0.001$). Among sensory domains, vestibular and visual processing scores significantly predicted caregiver burden ($p<0.05$).

CONCLUSIONS: Sensory processing difficulties are highly prevalent in young children with ASD and contribute to increased caregiver burden in mothers. Addressing these sensory challenges may help alleviate parental caregiver burden.

Keywords: Autism spectrum disorder, sensory processing, sensory profile, caregiver burden