

Study Confirms the Validity of the New Parental Stress Scale for Families of Children with Autism and Other I/DDs

Publicly Available Questionnaire Can Help Providers Drive Greater Wellbeing for Client Families

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EINPresswire.com/ -- The reliability and validity of a new Parental Stress Scale tailored for families of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), including autism, has been confirmed in a recently released study. With statistical confirmation, the scale – which is available to the public – enhances the capability of clinicians to assess parenting stress and effectively address it through a personalized treatment that helps mitigate the issue.



Dr. Lindsey Sneed

The Catalight Research Institute conducted study was published in the [“Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders”](#) on Dec. 28.

Parenting a child with I/DD often brings unique challenges that can affect family wellbeing and the success of behavioral interventions. Recognizing the need for an efficient tool to measure parental stress, the Catalight Research Institute analyzed responses from more than 3,000 families of diverse backgrounds.

“Parental stress is a critical variable that influences family functioning, treatment, outcomes and overall wellbeing,” said Catalight’s Vice President of Clinical Excellence Lindsey Sneed, Ph.D., the lead author of the study. “By ensuring this tool generates reliable insights into the lives of parents with I/DD, we can better understand and address the challenges these families face.”

The parental stress scale is a 15-question survey taken by parents at the beginning of treatment and every six months after, providing clinicians with actionable insights to personalize care. Families experiencing high stress levels can be flagged for additional support, ensuring interventions are both effective and responsive to individual needs.

Catalight researchers utilized the parental stress scale developed by Judy Berry and Warren Jones in 1995. The original scale consisted of 18 questions and had been widely validated across various sub-sets of parents. However, its applicability to families of children with I/DD had not been thoroughly examined. Following an initial round of statistical analysis from parents with a child with I/DD, three items were deemed not statistically relevant, thus not contributing to understanding the overall stress of these families, and removed. The resulting 15-item version of the parental stress scale specifically tailored for the I/DD population, now known as the [PSS/IDD version](#), demonstrated the same reliability and validity while enhancing brevity and remaining accessible for widespread use.

The study highlights the relationship between reduced parental stress and improved family wellbeing. Results from the families who took part in the study were analyzed in comparison to data they provided through [Catalight's Family Wellbeing Scale](#) and the Parenting Self-Efficacy Scale. High stress correlated to low wellbeing/efficacy and vice versa. Additionally, the scale proved to be reliable in how it measures both the challenges and rewards of parenting using Cronbach's alpha statistical method.

"Overall, the study showed that scales are measuring what we intended it to measure and that it's consistent over time," Dr. Sneed said. "If we can effectively manage and decrease parental stress, we're improving wellbeing for the family. When we look at our population at an aggregate level, we're seeing decreases in parental stresses over the course of treatment, which is what we would hope for."

Parents with lower stress levels are better able to participate in and benefit from behavioral health interventions, ultimately enhancing their child's progress and quality of life for everyone in the family.

"It's not just the child who can experience stress and anxiety when going through treatment – it ripples across the entire family dynamic," Dr. Sneed said. "By addressing stress proactively, we're not just improving outcomes for the child but enhancing wellbeing for the whole family."

Catalight's PSS/IDD version became available to outside providers in late summer. Turkish researchers have already adapted the revised scale for their population with early results suggesting the tool's effectiveness across cultural contexts – opening doors for broader international collaboration in understanding and reducing parental stress.

The study's findings, which build on decades of research into parental stress and psychometrics,

reflects Catalight's commitment to advancing behavioral health care through innovation, research and collaboration. It reinforces the importance of evidence-based tools in improving outcomes for families with children with autism and other I/DDs.

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