

Do Serbian parents of children with autism spectrum disorder experience a greater degree of stigma than parents of children with physical disabilities?

Marija Čolić & Ivona Milačić Vidojević

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation, Serbia

BACKGROUND

- The literature suggests that parents of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) report a greater degree of perceived stigma (Mickelson, 2001) and affiliate stigma (Werner & Shulman, 2015) compared to parents of children with different types of developmental disabilities.
- No studies explored differences in experienced stigma between parents of children with ASD and children with physical disabilities (PD)
- Overall, no study has been conducted in Serbia to examine experienced stigma of parents of children with ASD and children with PD

OBJECTIVES

Aims of the present study were:

1. A preliminary validation of the Experienced Stigma Scale (ESS)
2. Comparison of stigmatized experiences of parents of children with ASD and physical disabilities (PD) in Serbia.

METHODS

A convenience sample

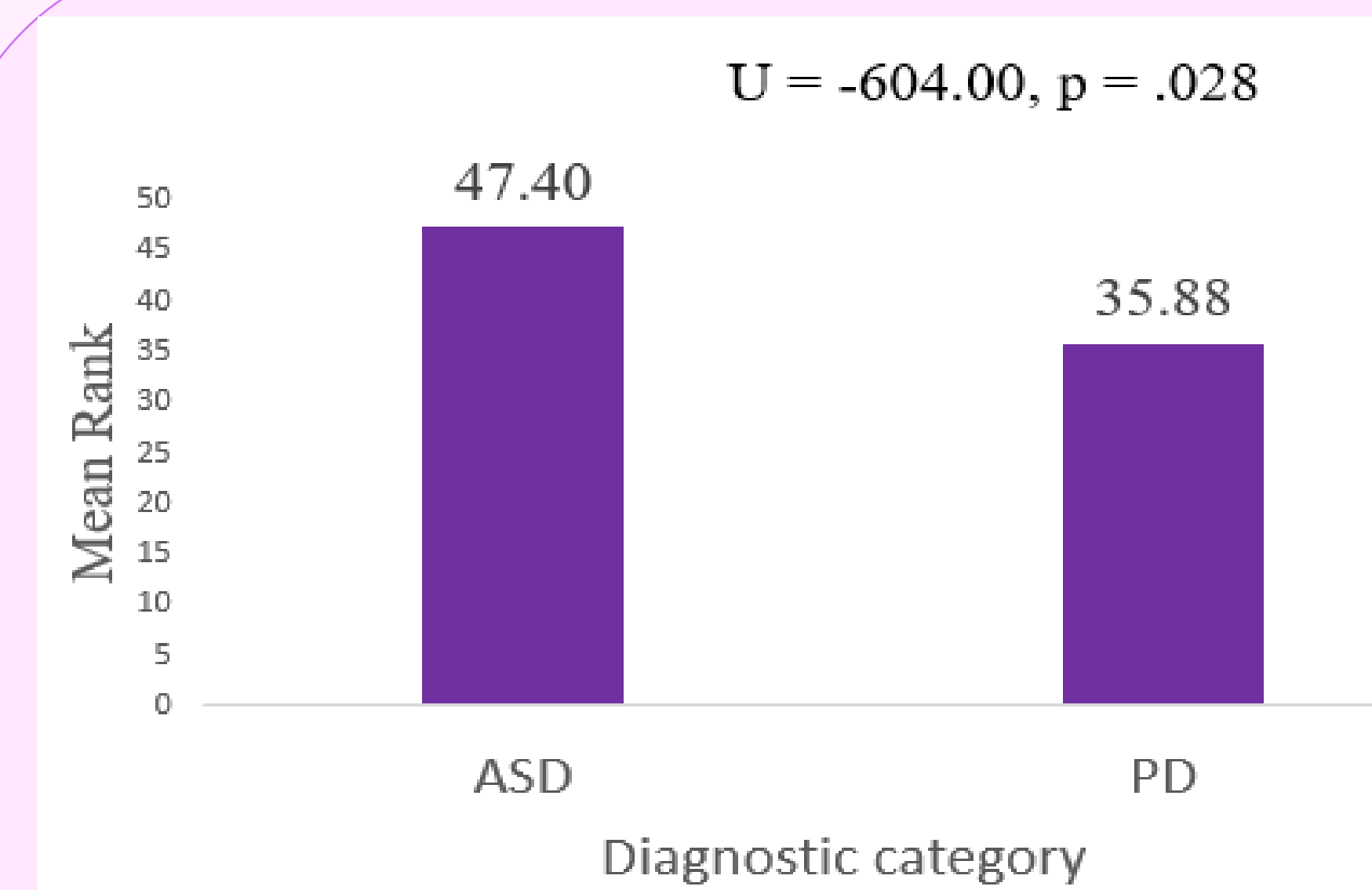
- 40 parents of children with ASD
- 42 parents of children with PD
- Recruited through NGO and public schools across the country

Instrument

- The Experienced Stigma Scale
- 8 items
- 2 subscales
 - Personal Stigma Experience
 - Lack of Professional Support
- Scale of 1 to 5: Higher score → Greater experienced stigma

RESULTS

- Originally, twenty items were administrated to the parents
- Exploratory Factor Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis yielded a two-factor solution, with the total of 8 items
- Good fit indices
 $\chi^2(df) = 24.967(19)$, $\chi^2/df = 1.314$, $p = .162$, $TLI = .966$, $CFI = .977$, $RMSEA [95\% CI] = .062$, and $PCLOSE = .350$
- Cronbach's alpha
 - The total scale = .80
 - Personal Stigma Experience = .86
 - Lack of Professional Support = .76



Descriptive statistics of 20 administrated items

- The parents of children with ASD reported the higher experienced stigma on the following items:
 1. People on the street look at me condemningly when my child with ASD misbehaves during the walk (M = 3.58, SD = 1.107)*
 2. People in public transportation comment on me and my child with ASD when my child misbehaves (M = 3.4, SD = 1.105)*
 3. I feel that my friends are uncomfortable when my child with ASD is in their company (M = 3.18, SD = 1.238)
 4. My friends visit me less often since they know that my child was diagnosed with ASD (M = 3.08, SD = 1.559)
 5. Others are telling me that they pity me a lot because I have a child with ASD (M = 2.98, SD = 1.554) *

* Excluded items from the ESS

- The least stigma parents experienced with the professionals (i.e. teachers, doctors, and therapists)

CONCLUSION

- Parents of children with ASD experienced more stigma in comparison to the parents of children with PD
- Parents of children with ASD experienced the most stigma in relation to their friends and when their child misbehaves in public
- Both groups of parents reported the least negative stigmatized experiences with professionals

REFERENCES

- Mickelson, K. D. (2001). Perceived stigma, social support, and depression. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27(8), 1046–1056.
- Werner, S., & Shulman, C. (2015). Does type of disability make a difference in affiliate stigma among family caregivers of individuals with autism, intellectual disability or physical disability? *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 59(3), 272-283.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We thank all parents, parental associations, and schools that participated in this research