

Parental Activation, Empowerment, Advocacy and Self-Efficacy among ASD Caregivers

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BACKGROUND

- Active parental involvement with individuals with disabilities has been associated with better child academic and behavioral outcomes, higher levels of parent satisfaction, and improved home-school relationships (Herrold, O'Donnell, & Mulligan, 2008).
- Four constructs, i.e., empowerment, advocacy, activation (e.g., belief, knowledge, action, and persistence of managing child's health care needs), and self-efficacy, have been used similarly throughout the literature when addressing parental involvement
- However, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding about how these constructs relate to and differ from one another.
- A lack of clarity in the similarities and differences between these constructs interferes with the understanding and facilitation of each in research and practical settings. The present study aimed to compare these four constructs.

STUDY AIMS

- Examine the bivariate relationships among empowerment, advocacy, activation, and self-efficacy.
- Examine how the subscales underlying the four measures are related.

METHOD

Participants

- Parents of individuals with ASD between the age of 3 and 21 years old ($N = 227$) completed an online survey through Amazon's Mechanical Turk.

Measures

- Parent Activation Measure for Developmental Disabilities (PAM-DD)
- Family Empowerment Scale (FES)
- Parent Advocacy Scale (PAS)
- Tools to measure Parenting Self-Efficacy (TOPSE)

Statistical Analysis

- Aim1: Correlations
- Aim 2: Exploratory factor analysis using principal axis factoring and orthogonal varimax rotation was conducted (an eigenvalue cut-off of 1.0) to determine how the subscales underlying the four measures were related.

RESULTS

Table 1. Demographics

Child Variables	
Age of child [M (SD)]	8.34 (5.55)
Gender (%)	
Female	30.8
Male	69.2
Parent Variables	
Age of participants [M (SD)]	33.80 (7.38)
Gender (%)	
Female	57.3
Male	42.7
Race (%)	
White	78.9
Black/African American	13.7
Hispanic/Latino	4.4
Asian	4.4
Marital Status (%)	70.9 (Married)
Working full time (%)	79.3
College graduate and above (%)	57.7

Table 2. Correlations

	Parent Activation	Empowerment	Parent Advocacy	Self-efficacy
Parent Activation	-			
Empowerment	.72**	-		
Parent Advocacy	.13	.26**	-	
Self-efficacy	.64**	.67**	.04	-

** $p < .001$

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RESULTS Cont.

Table 3. EFA

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
TOPSE_ self-acceptance subscale	0.89		
TOPSE_ play and enjoyment subscale	0.89		
TOPSE_ empathy and understanding subscale	0.88		
TOPSE_ learning and knowledge subscale	0.84		
TOPSE_ control subscale	0.82		
FES_ family subscale	0.81		
TOPSE_ discipline and setting boundaries subscale	0.80		
TOPSE_ emotion and affection subscale	0.80		
FES_ service system subscale	0.77		
TOPSE_ pressures subscale	0.71		
Parent Activation Scale	0.69		
PAS_ membership in organizations subscale		0.91	
PAS_ activity level in organizations subscale		0.77	
PAS_ total focus of actions subscale			
PAS_ role of Advocacy subscale			0.59
FES_ community/ political subscale			0.56
PAS_ total action subscale			0.53
% of Variance Explained	46.6	13.7	7.8

DISCUSSION

- The results indicate strong overlap between three putatively different measures of parental involvement (i.e., parent activation, empowerment, self-efficacy) in caring for a child with ASD.
- Parent self-efficacy, empowerment, and activation are positively related to each other and appeared to share a single underlying construct, whereas parent advocacy was independent from the other three constructs, except sharing similarities with family's perception of their empowerment in community/political issues.
- Further work using confirmatory factor analysis and exploring measure differences in predictive validity are needed to strengthen and expand these tentative initial results.