

Well-being and social support for caregivers of children and young people with atypical development

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: Research on well-being and social support has become a central issue in the discourse and practice of professionals working with populations who are psychosocially fragile^[1,2]. The scientific literature emphasizes the vastness of this line of study, which has also gained visibility in research on families of children and young people with atypical development, in particular, on the influence of formal and informal social support in dimensions related to caregivers' health and well-being^[2,3]. As part of an inclusive approach, and in line with national and international guidelines and regulations, we recognize the role of parents in defending the educational interests of their children and as decision-makers in the educational process. Therefore, promoting their health and well-being are key areas in the context of socio-educational and therapeutic intervention. **OBJECTIVE:** Our aim is to: *i)* analyse the well-being (life satisfaction dimension) and social support (social network and satisfaction with support dimension) of parents/caregivers of children and young people with developmental and intellectual difficulties, *ii)* perceive the differences between subgroups of caregivers (according to the typology of the children's/students' difficulties: intellectual problems, motor and autism spectrum disorders) in the well-being and social support dimensions, *iii)* outline specific intervention strategies for the caregivers in the study. **METHODS:** It is a non-experimental study; the sample consists of 160 parents of atypical children/young people. The following data collection instruments were used: a sociodemographic questionnaire; the Social Support Questionnaire – SSQ6^[4] (the Portuguese version of the Social Support Questionnaire – Short Form; a Portuguese adaptation by Pinheiro & Ferreira, 2001); Life Satisfaction Scale^[5] (by Neto, Barros & Barros, 1990; Simões, 1992). Statistical analyses reveal differences among the subgroups under study, with caregivers of children with autism revealing significantly higher values in social support (support availability and satisfaction with support) and in life satisfaction. **CONCLUSION:** In light of the results, we present specific lines of intervention directed at promoting social support for and the well-being of caregivers.

Keywords: *well-being, social support, caregivers, atypical development*

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May 31st and June 1st 2019

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