



Too Anxious to Achieve?

Jac den Houting, Dawn Adams,
Jacqueline Roberts, Deb Keen







**Is anxiety linked
to academic
achievement for
autistic students?**



Background

What do we already know?



40%
of the population
is in poverty



Typical

“I worry that something bad will happen to me”

“I worry what other people think of me”

“When I have a problem, I get a funny feeling in my stomach”

“I am scared of the dark”

Atypical

“I worry if I don’t know what will happen”

“I worry people will bump into me or touch me”

“When I don’t know what will happen, I can’t do things”

“I am afraid of new things, or new people, or new places”



**Autism
+
Academic
=
Underperformance**





**Anxiety
+
Academic
=
Underperformance**



Method

What did we do?

**Longitudinal
study of
Australian
Students
with Autism
(LASA)**

6
year
longitudinal
project

2
cohorts: 4 – 5
years old and
9 – 10 years
old

130
families in
each cohort



Who were the participants?



30 autistic children, aged between 10 and 12, living in Queensland...



and one parent for each child. All parents were also participants in the LASA.



25 (83%) of the children were male...



and 5 (17%) were female.

What did the participants do?

Children:

- Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAS)
- Anxiety Scale for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASC-ASD)
- Child Anxiety Life Interference Scale (CALIS)
- Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, Third Edition Brief Form (KTEA-3 Brief)

Parents:

- Spence Children's Anxiety Scale
- Anxiety Scale for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Child Anxiety Life Interference Scale
- Conners-3



Summary

- High rates of anxiety symptoms, especially atypical
- Variable academic achievement; overall underperformance
- Academic achievement scores not related to anxiety scores; BUT
- Anxiety symptoms had a considerable impact on school performance



Where to from here?

For educators:

- Remember, anxiety might look different in autism
- Don't make assumptions about academic ability
- Be conscious of the impact of anxiety



References

- den Houting, J., Adams, D., Roberts, J., & Keen, D. (2018). Exploring anxiety symptomatology in school-aged autistic children using an autism-specific assessment. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 50, 73 – 82. doi: 10.1016/j.rasd.2018.03.005
- Keen, D., Adams, D., Simpson, K., den Houting, J., & Roberts, J. (2017). Anxiety-related symptomatology in young children on the autism spectrum. *Autism*, Advance online publication. doi: 10.1177/1362361317734692
- Keen, D., Webster, A., & Ridley, G. (2016). How well are children with autism spectrum disorder doing academically at school? An overview of the literature. *Autism*, 20(3), 276 - 294. doi: 10.1177/1362361315580962
- Lyneham, H. J., Sburlati, E. S., Abbott, M. J., Rapee, R. M., Hudson, J. L., Tolin, D. F., & Carlson, S. E. (2013). Psychometric properties of the Child Anxiety Life Interference Scale (CALIS). *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 27(7), 711-719. doi: 10.1016/j.janxdis.2013.09.008
- Rodgers, J., Wigham, S., McConachie, H., Freeston, M., Honey, E., & Parr, J. R. (2016). Development of the Anxiety Scale for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASC-ASD). *Autism Research*, 9(11), 1205 - 1215. doi:10.1002/aur.1603



Jac den Houting



@JacdenHouting



jacquiline.denhouting
@griffithuni.edu.au

