Evaluation of the York University Asperger Mentorship Program

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Introduction

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
- The number of students with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) pursuing post-secondary education has significantly increased (VanBergeijk et al., 2008), with estimates as high as 30% of adults with an ASD attending post-secondary institutions (Raves & Ho, 2008).
- Many students with an ASD require social and behavioural supports (Farrell, 2004).
- Services provided by most universities may not address non-academic concerns, such as life skills and day-to-day social skills (Dillon, 2007; VanBergeijk et al., 2008).
- Mentorship programs have been found to be beneficial in providing flexible and responsive support to students with a variety of needs (Fishman et al., 1997).

THE ASPERGER MENTORSHIP PROGRAM
- The York University Asperger Mentorship Program (AMP) aims to: 1) provide a supportive environment for students with Asperger Syndrome (AS); 2) help students build a social network within the university community.
- Program components:
  1) Weekly meetings with an individual peer mentor
  2) Group meetings/social events

Purpose
- To critically evaluate the AS Mentorship Program
- Examine the effectiveness of the program in meeting the students’ needs and meeting the aforementioned goals

Method

MEASURES

Social Provisions Scale: Assesses feelings of social support provided by an individual’s relationships.

Satisfaction with Program: Students were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the program from 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied). Students were also asked what they most enjoyed about the program and what they would change.

Achievement of Goals: Students asked if they achieved their goals for the year and whether or not AMP helped them to achieve their goals.

Results

DEMOGRAPHICS

- N = 9 (3 female), \( M_{age} = 21.63 \) (SD = 2.6), range 19-27

SOCIAL SUPPORT

- Students’ perceived level of social support did not change from Time 1 to Time 2, \( t(7) = -1.28, p = 0.247 \)

Satisfaction with the Program

- Average satisfaction rating = 4.4 (SD = 0.52)

Discussion

No difference in social support scores across the year.
- Students report high levels of satisfaction with the program.
- Students enjoyed the social aspect of the program and the intimate peer-to-peer individual meetings.
- Possible areas of improvement include number of students involved, facilitating a greater number of group events throughout the year, and accessibility of mentors.

IMPLICATIONS

- Inform future development of AMP
- Help to provide quality services to address the needs of students with AS in the university setting.
- Encourage other universities to assess the effectiveness of their supports for students with ASDs.

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