

The Relationship between Social Support and Stress and Burnout Levels of Mothers of Children Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal the relationship between social support perception and stress and burnout levels of mothers with children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The sample of the research consists of 150 mothers with the children with ASD who received counseling services in 2022. The data of the study were collected using Personal Information Form, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Perceived Stress Scale and Maslach Burnout Scale. SPSS 21 Package Program was used for data analysis. Parametric and non-parametric statistical analyzes were carried out within the scope of the distribution of the data. In the analysis of the data, t-test, Pearson Correlation test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Post-Hoc test statistics were used. The findings of the study revealed that social support perceptions of mothers with the children with ASD predicted stress and burnout, in other words, there was a significant relationship between social support perceptions and stress and burnout. In the study, it was also determined that there was a statistically significant relationship between the mothers' age, marital status, education level, the number of children they had and their average monthly income, and the perception of social support, stress and burnout.

KEYWORDS

Autism spectrum disorder; perception of social support; stress; burnout; level.

INTRODUCTION

Symptoms of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are a neuro-developmental disorder that emerges in childhood, but its effects last throughout life, also it negatively affects individuals' social interaction and communication abilities, causing limited attention and repetitive behaviors (CDC, 2017; Tohum Otizm Vakfı, 2017). ASD is a group that attracts attention with its increasing prevalence rates both worldwide and in Turkey and is among the most common developmental disorders (T.R. Ministry of Family and Social Policies, 2016; Tohum Otizm Vakfı, 2017).

The diagnosis of ASD in children involves parents in the process of living together with a child with autism. In this process, parents face various socio-economic, psychological and emotional difficulties and experience many negative emotions more intensely (Ünlü & Gökler, 2021,). Studies have revealed that parents who believe that they have a child with special needs have lower levels of hopelessness and psychological well-being (Shenaar -Golan, 2017,). Also, it has been observed that the life satisfaction of parents of children having special needs diagnosed with ASD is lower than that of parents of other children having special needs (Aktan et al., 2020,).

In the literature, it has been stated that mothers of children with ASD are emotionally exhausted, and mothers' depression and hopelessness levels increase as the level of disability increases (Kandaş, 2019). Individuals who care for children with special needs have high levels of burnout, and it is observed that as their stress levels increase, their burnout levels increase significantly (Elçi, 2004). It has been seen that the burnout levels of the parents of children with ASD are higher than the parents of children with normal development (Kurban, 2019), and the social support levels of parents caring for children with special needs significantly affect their emotional burnout levels (Çengelci, 2009).

Having a child diagnosed with ASD brings with it special needs. Symptoms such as communication and relationship difficulties, repetitive behaviors, language and speech problems, especially in the three years after birth, significantly affect the life of both the child diagnosed with ASD and the individual who cares for the child because ASD is a lifelong disorder (Aydın & Özgen, 2018; Yazıcı & Durmuşoğlu, 2017). After a child diagnosed with ASD, duties and responsibilities for individuals caring for the child may become different. In this process, caregivers may experience various financial, moral, social and physical problems (Küçüker, 2001; Özkubat et al., 2014). For parents of children with ASD, a very complex adaptation process emerges, combined with the unique challenges of ASD. In this process, the parents of the child diagnosed with ASD struggle with intense anxiety, burnout and worries about the future and try to cope with various negative attitudes and emotions. Parents of children with ASD may face a range of lifelong challenges, not just in childhood (Benson, 2006; Dillenburger et al. 2010; Dunn et al. 2001).

In the examination of the literature, it draws attention that there are various studies evaluating the emotions and experiences of the parents of children diagnosed with ASD. Some of these studies deal with all family members (Dillenburger et al. 2010); some of them focused only on certain family members such as mother or father (Bilgin & Küçük, 2010). In the studies conducted, it has been stated that the original attitudes and behaviors of the child diagnosed with ASD are the most difficult issues for parents (Bilgin & Küçük, 2010; Dillenburger et al. 2010). It has been observed that parents of children diagnosed with ASD exhibit negative emotions such as shock, denial, and anxiety after diagnosis, and family members have to live within the framework of ASD, which puts family members under stress (Desai et al. et al., 2012). In addition, it has been determined that raising a child diagnosed with ASD causes problems in the business life, social life, financial status of parents and mutual relations of spouses (Cavkaytar et al., 2008; Dillenburger et al. 2010; Üstüner Top, 2009); parents need educational, psychological and social service support for themselves and their children diagnosed with ASD (Cavkaytar et al., 2008; Bilgin & Küçük, 2010; Dillenburger et al. 2010); parents have difficulty in coping with the negative attitudes of the society towards ASD (Desai et al. 2012; Üstüner Top, 2009). In this context, parents of children with ASD seek social support to cope with the difficulties they face (Girli & Yurdakul, 1999).

One of the studies in the literature on the relationships between social support and demographic variables has revealed that male caregivers perceive a higher level of social support compared to females (Arslan, 2019). In this context, it can be said that among the parents of children with ASD, their perceptions of social support are lower in mothers. The results supporting this situation have also been observed in the research studies (Kandaş, 2019; Arslan, 2019). In the literature, there are findings indicating that mothers with a positive perception of social support have lower stress levels, which causes them to experience less burnout (Gezgin, 2021). However, no study was found in the reviewed sources that examines in detail the relationship between mothers' perception of social support, stress and burnout levels. In this context, this study is thought to be necessary and important in terms of revealing the relationship between social support perception and stress and burnout levels of mothers who play an important role in the care of children diagnosed with ASD and determining the direction of this relationship.

Although different emotional levels of parents with different demographic characteristics diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder have been examined in the literature, social support perception and stress and burnout parameters have not been examined together. In this context, the results of this research are expected to make significant contributions to the literature.

Research Questions

The main purpose of this study is to focus on the relationship between social support perception and stress and burnout levels of mothers with the children with ASD and to reveal the direction

and extent of this relationship. In this context, the study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant relationship between social support perceptions and stress and burnout levels of mothers with the children with ASD?
2. Does the perception of social support and stress and burnout levels of mothers with the children with ASD differ statistically significantly according to the age of the mother?
3. Do the social support perceptions and stress and burnout levels of mothers with the children with ASD differ statistically significantly according to the marital status of the mother?
4. Do the social support perceptions and stress and burnout levels of mothers with the children with ASD differ statistically significantly according to the educational status of the mother?
5. Do the social support perceptions and stress and burnout levels of mothers with the children with ASD differ statistically significantly according to the number of children the mother has?
6. Do the social support perceptions and stress and burnout levels of mothers with the children with ASD differ statistically significantly according to the average monthly income level of the family?

METHOD

In this study, the general survey model, one of the quantitative research methods, and the correlational survey model, one of the general survey models, were used. The general survey model aims to reach a general judgment about the population by surveying the whole or a sample of the population. The correlational survey model is a survey approach to determine the relationship between two or more variables and the nature of this relationship (Karasar, 2015). In this study, which was planned to examine the relationship between social support perception and stress and burnout levels of mothers with the children with ASD, "Demographic Information Form", prepared by the researchers in line with the purpose of the research, and "Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support", "Perceived Stress Scale" and "Maslach Burnout Inventory" were used as data collection tools.

The "Demographic Information Form" developed by the researchers includes five questions about some socio-demographic characteristics (age, marital status, educational status, number of children owned, average monthly income of the family) of the mothers of children with ASD included in the study.

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support was developed by Zimet et al. (1988) and the validity and reliability studies of the scale were carried out by Eker and Arkar (1995), and the Cronbach Alpha coefficients of the subscale scores were found to be 0.80-0.95, and therefore its internal consistency was at an acceptable level. The social support scale consists of a total of 12 items and 3 subscales: family (items 3, 4, 8, 11), friends (items 6, 7, 9,

12) and special person (items 1, 2, 5, 10). Each subscale consists of four items; these subscales are seven-point Likert scales. A total score of at least 12 and the highest 84 can be obtained from the scale. The high total score indicates high perceived social support (Eker and Arkar, 1995).

The Perceived Stress Scale developed by Cohen et al. (1983) was adapted to Turkish by Bilge et al. (2009) and the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.81 as a result of the reliability study. The 5-point Likert (0 none, 4 very often) scale consists of a total of 8 items and two subscales: perceived stress (items 1, 2, 3, 7, 8) and perceived coping (items 4, 5, 6). Three items of the scale are inverted (items 4, 5, 6) and five items are plain (items 1, 2, 3, 7, 8). A total score of (0-32) is obtained from the scale. Perceived stress (items 1, 2, 3, 7, 8) and the scale are evaluated through both total score and subscale scores. A high total score means a high level of perceived stress. The high scores obtained from the subscales is a negative situation (Bilge et al., 2009).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) developed by Maslach (1978) was adapted to Turkish by Ergin (1992), and its validity and reliability were determined by Duygun (2001) by adapting it to evaluate burnout in mothers of children with intellectual disabilities. As a result of the reliability study, the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was found to be 0.80. Duygun (2001) examined the scale in two dimensions as "Emotional Exhaustion" and "Personal Success". Duygun examined the "Desensitization" sub-dimension in the "Emotional Exhaustion" sub-dimension and did not include item 15 in the sub-dimensions. In the evaluation of the Maslach Burnout Scale, a score higher than the "Emotional Burnout" dimension and lower than the "Personal Success" dimension is considered burnout (Bodur, 2021).

In the process of forming the data set obtained from the said forms and scales, the counseling and rehabilitation centers within the scope of the application were visited one week before the application and the mothers were given a "Voluntary Participation Form". After the necessary arrangements were made for the implementation process regarding the measurement tools, the application environment was prepared by the researcher. For the application, the mothers were taken in turn to a quiet room that the central administrations deemed appropriate. Before starting the scale applications, a short interview was held with the mothers by the researcher and information was given about the research and data collection tools. Then, the measurement tools were applied by the researcher to the mothers who filled out the "Volunteer Participation Form". It took about 30 minutes to fill in the measurement tools given to the mothers in writing.

In the data analysis process, parametric and non-parametric statistical methods were used in accordance with the structure of the variables used to answer the questions of the research and the characteristics of the data. SPSS 21 Software was used in the analysis of the data obtained from the research. Skewness and kurtosis values were taken into account to determine whether the data were suitable for normal distribution. Within the scope of the

reliability of the data, the Cronbach Alpha Internal Consistency Coefficient was calculated for the overall and sub-dimensions of the scales.

The scores obtained from the scales used represent a continuous variable and these scores are considered as the dependent variable of the research. It was assumed that the distribution of the dependent variable scores in the population was normal. The independent variable of the study includes the demographic characteristics of mothers with the children with ASD. Depending on these demographic characteristics of the mothers, the arithmetic averages of the scores obtained from the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Perceived Stress Scale and Maslach Burnout Scale were compared. In the comparison, the "t" test was used when the category number of the independent variable was two, and the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was preferred when the category number was more than two. When a significant difference was detected in the ANOVA test, the "Post Hoc Tukey" test was applied for pairwise comparisons. In addition, the differences between continuous variables accepted as continuous and the scores obtained from the scales were analyzed by t-test.

Study Group

The population of the study includes the mothers of children diagnosed with ASD who attended special counseling centers in the 2021-2022 academic year. The sample of the study consists of the mothers of a total of 150 children diagnosed with ASD, 75 of whom received consultancy services from each of the two private centers operating in the 2021-2022 academic year in Istanbul. Participation was on a voluntary basis in forming the sample and it was formed by using Quota sampling, which is one of the appropriate sampling methods. The motivation behind the selection of quota sampling is to determine and form only samples with certain characteristics from the community to show certain characteristics of the community that shaped the research. The characteristics were often formed according to criteria such as being in the same region, gender, age, and social class. However, the selection of the samples was done by selecting the number of individuals determined by the researcher without probability. This sampling method was preferred because of the time and resource constraints.

Ethical Issues

Permission was obtained from Istanbul Gelişim University Rectorate ethics committee, dated 30.11.2022 and numbered 2022-17-41. Permission was obtained from the institution where the research was conducted. The participants' informed consent was obtained in written. The surveys were carried out anonymously.

FINDINGS

The data obtained from the study were discussed in terms of the relationship of each of these parameters with the perception of social support. In this context;

The distribution of the findings regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of mothers with the children with ASD participated in the study according to descriptive statistics is given in Table 1.

Table 1.*Findings Related to Demographic Variables*

Demographic variables		Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18-25	30	19.9
	26-40	110	86.7
	41 and above	10	6.6
Marital status	Married	104	69.3
	Single-Divorced	46	30.7
Education status	High School and below	70	46.6
	Undergraduate and above	80	53.4
Number of children	1	95	63.3
	2 and above	55	36.7
Average monthly income of the family	10.000 TL and below	55	36.7
	10.001 TL and above	95	63.3
Total		150	100

Table 1 shows the findings regarding the demographic variables of the participants. In this context, it is seen that the participants were mostly in the age group of 26-40 (n: 110) and this is followed by the participants in the age group of 18-25 (n: 30) and 41 and above (n: 10), respectively. In the evaluation in terms of marital status variable, it is seen that the majority of the participants are married (n: 104), followed by single-divorced (n: 46) participants. In the evaluation in terms of educational status, it is seen that more than half of the participants are at undergraduate and higher education level (n: 85), followed by participants with high school and lower education level (n: 70). In the evaluation in terms of the number of children, it is understood that the majority of the participants had one (n: 95) child, followed by the participants with two or more children (n: 55). In the evaluation in terms of the average monthly income of the family, it is seen that more than half of the participants have 10.001 TL as income and above (n: 95), followed by participants with 10,000 TL as income and below (n: 55).

Table-2 presents the findings regarding the difference between the social support perceptions of the participants according to the age variable and their stress and burnout levels. In this context, the difference between the perceived social support and stress and burnout levels of the participants based on the age variable was examined by one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

The results of the analysis demonstrates a statistically significant difference between perceived social support [F(2.813) $p < 0.05$], stress [F(2.748) $p < 0.05$] and burnout [F(2.899) $p < 0.05$].

Table 2.

Score Averages and Variance Analysis Results of Participants' Perceptions of Social Support and Stress and Burnout by Age

Scales	Age	n	\bar{x}	SS	F	P	Post Hoc Tukey
Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support	18-25 ¹	30	3.45	.673	2.813	.012*	2>1
	26-40 ²	110	3.63	.727			
	41 and above ³	10	3.28	.653			
Family	18-25 ¹	30	3.48	.667	1.891	.001*	2>1
	26-40 ²	110	3.81	.737			
	41 and above ³	10	3.24	.647			
Friends	18-25 ¹	30	3.37	.656	1.754	.002*	2>1
	26-40 ²	110	3.72	.742			
	41 and above ³	10	3.24	.634			
Special person	18-25 ¹	30	3.23	.669	1.672	.009*	2>1
	26-40 ²	110	3.70	.731			
	41 and above ³	10	3.20	.646			
Perceived Stress Scale	18-25 ¹	30	3.49	.648	2.748	.016*	2>1
	26-40 ²	110	3.51	.701			
	41 and above ³	10	3.18	.627			
Perceived stress	18-25 ¹	30	3.61	.676	1.762	.003*	2>1
	26-40 ²	110	3.78	.724			
	41 and above ³	10	3.13	.667			
Perceived coping	18-25 ¹	30	3.53	.658	1.753	.001*	2>1
	26-40 ²	110	3.77	.740			
	41 and above ³	10	3.01	.637			
Burnout Scale	18-25 ¹	30	3.42	.669	2.899	.018*	2>1
	26-40 ²	110	3.80	.736			
	41 and above ³	10	3.29	.645			
Emotional Exhaustion	18-25 ¹	30	3.57	.641	1.768	.002*	2>1
	26-40 ²	110	3.62	.702			
	41 and above ³	10	3.28	.621			
Personal Success	18-25 ¹	30	3.28	.670	1.741	.008*	2>1
	26-40 ²	110	3.77	.727			
	41 and above ³	10	3.18	.622			

* $p > 0.05$

Table-3 presents the findings regarding the difference between the perceived social support of the participants according to the marital status variable and their stress and burnout

levels. In this context, the t-test was applied to determine the difference between social support perceptions and stress and burnout levels of the participants based on the marital status variable.

Table 3.

Score Averages and t-Test Results of Participants' Perceptions of Social Support and Stress and Burnout According to Their Marital Status

Scales	Marital Status	n	\bar{x}	SS	t	P
Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support	Married	104	3.77	.688	2.827	.012*
	Single-Divorced	46	3.83	.739		
Family	Married	104	3.75	.646	1.899	.003*
	Single-Divorced	46	3.80	.718		
Friends	Married	104	3.73	.731	1.769	.004*
	Single-Divorced	46	3.77	.651		
Special person	Married	104	3.66	.728	1.699	.007*
	Single-Divorced	46	3.73	.658		
Perceived Stress Scale	Married	104	3.72	.722	2.746	.012*
	Single-Divorced	46	3.77	.773		
Perceived stress	Married	104	3.27	.688	1.765	.006*
	Single-Divorced	46	3.43	.718		
Perceived coping	Married	104	3.27	.647	1.753	.002*
	Single-Divorced	46	3.28	.656		
Burnout Scale	Married	104	3.77	.638	2.699	.013*
	Single-Divorced	46	3.88	.682		
Emotional Exhaustion	Married	104	3.21	.632	1.788	.005*
	Single-Divorced	46	3.43	.680		
Personal Success	Married	30	3.22	.622	1.748	.002*
	Single-Divorced	10	3.39	.627		

*p > 0.05

Table 3 presents the findings regarding the difference between the perceived social support of the participants based on the marital status variable and their stress and burnout. According to the results of the analysis, there is a statistically significant difference between perceived social support [t(2.827) p<0.05], stress [t(2.746) p<0.05] and burnout [t(2.699) p<0.05].

Table-4 presents the findings regarding the difference between the perceived social support of the participants based on the educational status variable and their stress and burnout. In this context, the difference between the perceived social support of the participants

according to the educational status variable and their stress and burnout was subjected to the t-test.

Table 4.

Score Averages and t-Test Results of Social Support Perceptions, Stress and Burnout Levels of Participants According to Their Educational Status

Scales	Educational Status	n	\bar{x}	SS	t	P
Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support	High School and below	70	3.69	.646	2.811	.012*
	Undergraduate and above	80	3.99	.737		
Family	High School and below	70	3.66	.621	1.799	.006*
	Undergraduate and above	80	3.77	.727		
Friends	High School and below	70	3.41	.615	1.731	.003*
	Undergraduate and above	80	3.63	.718		
Special person	High School and below	70	3.22	.628	1.654	.001*
	Undergraduate and above	80	3.57	.708		
Perceived Stress Scale	High School and below	70	3.75	.777	2.808	.013*
	Undergraduate and above	80	3.88	.637		
Perceived stress	High School and below	70	3.55	.661	1.768	.009*
	Undergraduate and above	80	3.57	.748		
Perceived coping	High School and below	70	3.08	.642	1.729	.001*
	Undergraduate and above	80	3.23	.680		
Burnout Scale	High School and below	70	3.37	.628	2.771	.016*
	Undergraduate and above	80	3.77	.678		
Emotional Exhaustion	High School and below	70	3.08	.602	1.751	.005*
	Undergraduate and above	80	3.30	.661		
Personal Success	High School and below	70	3.18	.622	1.715	.004*
	Undergraduate and above	80	3.22	.687		

* $p > 0.05$

Table 4 presents the findings regarding the difference between social support perceptions and stress and burnout according to the educational status variable of the participants. The results of the analysis demonstrates a statistically significant difference between perceived social support [$t(2.811) p < 0.05$], stress [$t(2.808) p < 0.05$] and burnout [$t(2.771) p < 0.05$].

Table 5 presents the findings regarding the difference between the participants' perceptions of social support and their stress and burnout according to the variable of the number of children. In this context, the difference between the perceived social support of the

participants according to the number of children variable and their stress and burnout was subjected to the t-test.

Table 5.

Score Averages and t-Test Results of Participants' Perceptions of Social Support and Stress and Burnout Levels According to the Number of Children

Scales	Number of children	n	\bar{x}	SS	t	P
Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support	1	95	3.38	.688	2.827	.011*
	2 and above	55	3.49	.792		
Family	1	95	3.38	.687	1.809	.007*
	2 and above	55	3.45	.781		
Friends	1	95	3.28	.668	1.736	.003*
	2 and above	55	3.37	.737		
Special person	1	95	3.03	.643	1.656	.002*
	2 and above	55	3.30	.738		
Perceived Stress Scale	1	95	3.66	.688	2.788	.010*
	2 and above	55	3.88	.772		
Perceived stress	1	95	3.43	.731	1.765	.007*
	2 and above	55	3.77	.645		
Perceived coping	1	95	3.15	.617	1.745	.005*
	2 and above	55	3.77	.658		
Burnout Scale	1	95	3.66	.679	2.758	.015*
	2 and above	55	3.77	.643		
Emotional Exhaustion	1	95	3.46	.656	1.738	.008*
	2 and above	55	3.73	.662		
Personal Success	1	95	3.28	.628	1.722	.006*
	2 and above	55	3.77	.638		

*p > 0.05

Table 5 presents the findings regarding the difference between the participants' perceptions of social support and their stress and burnout according to the variable of the number of children. The analysis results demonstrates a statistically significant difference between perceived social support [t(2.827) p<0.05], stress [t(2.788) p<0.05] and burnout [t(2.758) p<0.05].

Table 6 presents the findings regarding the difference between the participants' perceptions of social support and their stress and burnout according to the average monthly income variable. In this context, the difference between the participants' perceptions of social support and their stress and burnout according to the average income variable was examined with the t-test.

Table 6 presents the findings regarding the difference between the participants' perceptions of social support and their stress and burnout according to the average monthly income variable. The analysis results demonstrates a statistically significant difference between perceived social support [$t(2.821)$ $p < 0.05$], stress [$t(2.741)$ $p < 0.05$] and burnout [$t(2.863)$ $p < 0.05$].

Table 6.

Score Averages and t-Test Results of Social Support Perceptions, Stress and Burnout Levels of Participants According to Their Average Monthly Income

Scales	Average income	n	\bar{x}	SS	t	P
Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support	10,000 TL and below	55	3.79	.624	2.821	.012*
	10,001 TL and above	95	3.58	.734		
Family	10,000 TL and below	55	3.78	.639	1.811	.003*
	10,001 TL and above	95	3.38	.680		
Friends	10,000 TL and below	55	3.77	.747	1.765	.002*
	10,001 TL and above	95	3.61	.662		
Special person	10,000 TL and below	55	3.68	.779	1.699	.001*
	10,001 TL and above	95	3.27	.675		
Perceived Stress Scale	10,000 TL and below	55	3.69	.747	2.741	.018*
	10,001 TL and above	95	3.64	.657		
Perceived stress	10,000 TL and below	55	3.38	.727	1.786	.007*
	10,001 TL and above	95	3.18	.648		
Perceived coping	10,000 TL and below	55	3.37	.661	1.729	.001*
	10,001 TL and above	95	3.28	.638		
Burnout Scale	10,000 TL and below	55	3.86	.672	2.863	.016*
	10,001 TL and above	95	3.82	.616		
Emotional Exhaustion	10,000 TL and below	55	3.84	.659	1.788	.004*
	10,001 TL and above	95	3.77	.642		
Personal Success	10,000 TL and below	55	3.82	.653	1.761	.001*
	10,001 TL and above	95	3.78	.622		

* $p > 0.05$

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aims to determine the relationship of social support perception and stress and burnout levels of mothers with ASD. According to the analysis results made after the relevant scales and data set, it was concluded that there was a significant difference between the perceived social support status and stress and burnout scores of mothers with the children with ASD according to their age, marital status, education level, number of children and average monthly income. The research results showed that the hypotheses surrounding the questions of this study were supported and that perceived social support had a significant effect on the psychosocial outcomes and emotional states of mothers with the children with ASD. Similarly, a study by Baruch-Feldman et al. (2022) examined the relationship between social support and

burnout and revealed that burnout decreased as the perception of social support increased. Görgü's (2005) study investigated the differences between the perceived social support levels and depression levels of mothers with the children with ASD. This study revealed that the level of stress decreases as the perception of social support of mothers with the children with ASD increases, and these findings in the literature have parallels with the results of the study presented.

According to the research results, it was determined that there was a statistically significant difference between the ages of mothers with the children with ASD and their Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support scores, Perceived Stress Scale and Maslach Burnout Scale scores. Similar results obtained in Kaner's (2004) study, which examined the relationship between social support and stress of mothers and fathers of disabled children, and Kahriman and Bayat's (2008) study, in which they investigated the perceived social support and difficulties experienced by mothers and fathers of disabled children, have parallels with the results of this study. In addition, in the study by Kirbaş and Özkan (2013) examining the relationship between mothers' perception of family functions and social support levels, it was found that there was a significant relationship between age and social support perception, which supports the relationship between age and social support perception in this study. At this point, it is seen that these findings from the literature are in line with the results of this study. Within the scope of the research, a significant difference was found between the ages of mothers with the children with ASD and perceived stress, and it was observed that this difference was more pronounced in young mothers and that stress perception tended to decrease as the mother's age increased. In a study conducted by Firat et al. (2002), it was found that the psychopathological status of young mothers with the children with ASD was more significant. This finding reveals that young mothers have higher stress levels than mothers who are older than them. In this context, it is seen that these findings from the literature are consistent with the results of the current study.

The research results demonstrate a significant difference between the ages of mothers with the children with ASD and burnout. In a study conducted by Bilgin and Küçük (2010), it was stated that there was a significant relationship between the ages of mothers with the children with ASD and their burnout status. These findings in the literature are in agreement with the results of the current study and support the tendency of young mothers to decrease in burnout status with age.

According to the results of the research, a significant difference was found between the ages of mothers with the children with ASD and burnout. The study of Weiss et al. (2012) also showed a significant relationship between age and burnout in mothers with the children with ASD, and revealed that burnout levels of young mothers were higher. Therefore, these findings from the literature are consistent with the results of the current study and support the tendency of young mothers to decrease in burnout status with age.

Within the scope of the study, a significant difference was found between the marital status of mothers with the children with ASD and the scores of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, as well as between the scores of the Perceived Stress Scale and the Maslach Burnout Scale. In the study conducted by Dunst et al. (1986), it was found that mothers' sharing the burden of childcare with their spouses had a positive effect on perceived social support. This finding is consistent with the findings obtained from the presented study.

Within the scope of the research, a significant difference was found between the marital status of mothers with the children with ASD and perceived stress. In a study conducted by Yıldırım, Hacıhasanoğlu and Karakurt (2012), it was determined that perceived stress was higher in single mothers with mentally disabled children, while perceived stress was lower in married mothers. These findings are consistent with the results obtained from the presented research. According to the results of the research, a significant difference was found between the marital status and burnout levels of mothers with the children with ASD. When the difference between the marital status of the mothers and burnout was evaluated independently, a significant difference was found, and it was observed that this difference was higher in single-divorced mothers than in married mothers. In a study conducted by Kim et al. (2016), it was emphasized that married mothers experience less burnout, while single mothers experience burnout more than married mothers. As can be seen, these findings in the literature are in line with the results of the presented study.

According to the findings of the study, statistically significant differences were found between the educational status of mothers with the children with ASD and the scores of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Perceived Stress Scale and Maslach Burnout Scale. In the examination of these differences, it was observed that mothers with undergraduate and higher education levels had higher social support perception, lower stress and burnout levels than mothers with high school and lower education levels. Similarly, in a study conducted by Banach et al. (2010), it was revealed that there is a positive relationship between education level and perceived social support in families with the children with ASD. In this context, the results of the presented research are consistent with the findings of similar studies in the literature.

According to the results of the research, there is a significant relationship between the educational status of mothers with the children with ASD and burnout. In the evaluation of the difference between mothers' educational status and burnout independently, it is seen that there is a significant difference, and this significant difference is more evident in mothers with undergraduate and higher education levels. Similarly, Bilgin and Küçük (2010) determined in their study that the burnout status of highly educated mothers increased, and as the level of education decreased, there was a decrease in their burnout status. In this context, the results of the presented research are consistent with the findings of similar studies in the literature. Within the scope of the research, significant differences were determined between the number of children of mothers with the children with ASD and the scores of Multidimensional Scale of

Perceived Social Support, Perceived Stress Scale and Maslach Burnout Scale. These significant differences reveal that various dynamics interact between mothers' perception of social support, perception of stress and burnout levels, especially according to the number of children. These findings, which are in line with the study of Shepherd et al. (2020), which is based on a similar perspective in the literature, emphasize the effects of the number of children on perceived social support. In this context, the findings of the presented research evaluate the effects of the number of children on the experiences of mothers with the children with ASD and their perception of social support from a broader perspective.

According to the results of the research, a significant difference was found between the number of children and perceived stress levels of mothers of children diagnosed with ASD. It has been observed that the perception of stress among mothers increases with the increase in the number of children. In addition, the research of Önal, Zengin, and Döğler (2022) has a similar perspective; it has been found that mothers with one child have a lower perception of stress, but mothers with more than one child have a higher perception of stress. The results of the presented study are consistent with the findings in this literature.

Based on the research findings, a significant difference was found between the number of children and burnout levels of mothers with the children with ASD. With the increase in the number of children, it was observed that the burnout status was more significant among mothers. The studies of Yazıcı, Barut and Özcan (2022) also revealed a similar result; it was found that as the number of children increased, the burnout status of mothers with the children with ASD increased. The findings of the presented study are consistent with similar studies in the literature.

According to the results of the research, there are significant differences between the average monthly income of mothers with the children with ASD and the scores of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Perceived Stress Scale and Maslach Burnout Scale. In the evaluation of these differences according to the income level of the mothers, they are more evident in mothers with low-income levels. Özyürek and Ergün's (2021) study revealed a similar result, finding that mothers with high income levels had lower perceived social support. On the other hand, it has been observed that the perception of social support decreases as the income level increases. This can be interpreted as mothers with high income levels need social support networks less or feel these supports less. In this perspective, it can be said that the effect of income level on perceived social support involves a complex relationship. These findings are in line with the results of the presented research.

According to the results of the research, there is a significant difference between the average monthly income of mothers with the children with ASD and perceived stress. When the difference between mothers' income status and perceived stress was evaluated, it was observed that perceived stress was higher in mothers with low average monthly income, and perceived stress was lower in mothers with high income levels. The study of Fletcher et al. (2012) also supports these findings; it has been determined in this study that mothers with low income have

higher stress levels and mothers with high income have lower stress levels. These results show that there is a strong link between the income level and stress levels of mothers with the children with ASD, which is consistent with the findings of the present study.

According to the results of the research, a significant difference was found between the average monthly income and burnout levels of mothers with the children with ASD. In the evaluation of the difference between mothers' income status and burnout levels independently, it was concluded that the burnout level was higher in mothers with low average monthly income, and the burnout level tended to decrease in mothers with high average monthly income. A study by Şimşek (2015) examined the relationship between perceived social support and burnout levels of mothers with the children with ASD. According to the results of this study, there is a significant relationship between the income levels of mothers with the children with ASD and burnout. It has been determined that burnout decreases as the income level increases, and burnout increases as the income level decreases. These results obtained by Şimşek's study coincide with the findings of the presented research.

As a result, it was determined that social support perceptions of mothers with the children with ASD predicted their stress and burnout states, in other words, there was a significant relationship between social support perceptions and stress and burnout states, and this finding was consistent with other study findings in the literature.

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