

Mechanisms Associated with Autistic Traits and Emotional Symptoms in University Students
: An Examination Focusing on Parental Autistic Traits and Emotional Support

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This paper is an empirical examination of university students in the general population to clarify the mechanisms of association between autistic traits and emotional symptoms among university students. In Study 1, we examined the causal relationship between autistic traits and emotional symptoms in order to confirm the necessity of focusing on the mechanism of the relationship between autistic traits and emotional symptoms. The results of the cross-delayed effects model on the causal relationship between autistic traits and emotional symptoms among 88 university students in the Tokyo metropolitan area showed a significant path from high autistic traits at Time 1 to emotional symptoms at Time 2, demonstrating a causal relationship from autistic traits to emotional symptoms later in the study. The results demonstrated a causal association from high autistic traits to later emotional symptoms.

Second, Study 2 used a large sample (N = 4,120) to clarify the actual situation of university students with high autistic traits, and focused on social communication difficulties, the main symptom of autistic traits, and examined whether perceived emotional support from parents and friends could be a mediating factor in reducing emotional symptoms derived from social communication difficulties. We also examined whether perceived emotional support from parents and friends could be a mediating factor in the reduction of emotional symptoms derived from social communication difficulties. The results indicated that approximately 12.4% of university students showed cutoff values or higher on the screening scale for autistic traits, and the gender difference in the percentage was significantly higher among male university students. Furthermore, the percentage of university students who scored above the cutoff was significantly higher among those majoring in science, engineering, and agriculture. The results of the comparison of the above/below cutoff groups showed that university students above the cutoff had significantly higher emotional symptom scores and significantly lower emotional support from parents and friends compared to those below the cutoff. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the factors that predicted the emotional symptoms of the university students. The results showed that high levels of autistic traits and low levels of emotional support from parents and friends predicted the emotional symptoms of the university students. Finally, the mediating effect of emotional support from parents and friends was examined, and the results indicated that emotional support from parents and friends was a mediating factor in the relationship between autistic traits and emotional symptoms.

The limitations of Study 2 are, first, that it did not measure specific emotional aspects of parental emotional support, and second, that it is necessary to consider the strength of the genetic relationship of autistic traits. In Study 3-1, 130 families consisting of 260 twin university students and their parents were included, with the hypothesis that "higher levels of autistic traits in university students and their parents would be associated with lower levels of parental encouragement and approval, and less parental encouragement and approval would be associated with more emotional symptoms in university students. " and the hypothesis that was examined through a multilevel model analysis.

The results showed that, at the individual level, the autistic traits of each university student mediated the perception of less approval from the father and were associated with emotional symptoms; at the dyad relationship level, higher autistic traits in twin pairs mediated the perception of less approval from the twin pair's father and were associated

with emotional symptoms; and at the dyad relationship level, higher autistic traits in twin pairs was associated with less approval from the twin pair's father and was associated with emotional symptoms. and related to emotional symptoms. In addition, higher autistic traits in the twin-pair fathers mediated perceptions of less approval from the twin-pair fathers and were associated with emotional symptoms. For the mothers, higher autistic traits of the twin-pair's mothers were associated with the twin-pairs' perceived less approval from their mothers.

The limitations of Study 3-1 were that the autistic traits between parents and children did not show any association and that the mother's autistic traits did not show any association with emotional symptoms. In light of this, Study 3-2 (N = 348) added the negative relationship of discord with parents for further examination.

The results showed that parents' autistic traits were related to university students' autistic traits, and that parents' autistic traits mediated perceptions of low parental emotional support and perceptions of discord with parents, and were related to university students' emotional symptoms.

The results of this paper suggest that higher autistic traits in university students are associated with emotional symptoms and that the association may be mediated by less emotional support and approval from parents. In addition, the results suggest that high autistic traits in parents are associated with less emotional support and more discord for their university-aged children, and that less emotional support and more discord may lead to emotional symptoms, suggesting that university students with high autistic traits may benefit from increased parental support and The results confirm the importance of providing support and intervention to the entire family, taking into account the autistic traits of the parents and children, in order to maintain good relationships and reduce or prevent emotional symptoms.