



Too Anxious to Achieve?

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**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



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