PURPOSE

Interventions for autism can be considered for use by service providers in the United States and India, evidence-based practice and awareness. Addressing stigmatizing beliefs among parents in India could provide information on how to direct efforts to raise awareness among parents about the diagnosis and care of their children. Despite decreasing rates of autism in India, the exact number of diagnoses is unclear due to the challenges of accessing specialized pediatric care. This project aims to examine the relative contributions of perceived stigma, stigmatizing beliefs, positive aspects, and fear of disclosure on help-seeking among parents of young children in India. Past research has shown that stigmatizing beliefs and perceived positive aspects were indicators of help-seeking in India. Building upon this work, this project examines the relative contributions of perceived stigma, stigmatizing beliefs, positive aspects, and fear of disclosure on help-seeking and compare these effects between families in the United States and India.

METHODS

An online survey was conducted using participants (N = 108) recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) service. MTurk is an online marketplace where workers are paid to complete tasks. In this study, workers were paid for completing a survey. Participation in the study was voluntary, and workers were paid for their participation. The survey included measures of help-seeking propensity, perceived stigma, stigmatizing beliefs, positive aspects, and fear of disclosure. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement to questions using a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Items from these pre-existing scales were adapted to include ASD-specific language. Linear regression was used to examine variable relationships.

RESULTS

Using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, we regressed help-seeking onto participants' self-reported perceptions of stigma, stigmatizing beliefs, positive aspects, and fear of disclosure. The predictors in the model accounted for significant variance in the dependent variable of help-seeking: F (4, 108) = 4.719, p < .005. Significant predictors in the model included stigmatizing beliefs and perceived positive aspects. Specifically, stigmatizing beliefs were negatively associated with help seeking (b = -.325, p < .005) while perceived positive aspects were a positive predictor in the model (b = 0.221, p < .05). Fear of disclosure (b = -.06) and perceived stigma (b = .53) were non-significant predictors in the model.

DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to examine associations between help-seeking and dimensions of stigma (perceived stigma, stigmatizing beliefs, positive aspects, and fear of disclosure). The results suggest that greater stigmatizing beliefs are associated with a lower likelihood of parents seeking help. In contrast, positive aspects were a positive predictor of help seeking. These findings suggest that addressing stigmatizing beliefs among parents in India is a potential strategy for increasing ASD-related help-seeking in India.

REFERENCES


This research has been supported by the Magellan Scholars Grant.