

## Introduction

In January of 2020, I began working as a Behavioral Technician (BT) at Autism Learning Partners (ALP), one of the country's leading full service providers that focuses on the treatment of ASD and other developmental disabilities. As a BT, we provide services to children and families using Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), the "science devoted to the understanding and improvement of behavior." I chose to work with this company because I believe that every child and family with a developmental disability deserves the right to receive the highest level of clinical expertise that is available.

My duties include teaching our client's communication skills, social skills, and self-help skills, while following our Behavioral Intervention Plan that is designed by a Board Certified Behavioral Analysts. In addition, we are responsible for accurately recording treatment data, engaging in and ensuring client safety, while maintaining client confidentiality at all times.

After interacting with other BT's during social events, it became relevant that these individuals are kind, nurturing, patient, and determined to see their clients achieve their learning goals. Therefore, I wanted to see if certain styles of parentification during adolescence had an influence on healthcare professionals working with children with developmental disabilities?

## Methods

➡ **Participants:** A total of 12 healthcare professionals from Autism Learning Partners (ALP) participated in this study. Participants were obtained through two different sampling methods. Six participants from Portland's ALP branch, voluntarily signed up to take the study via QualtricsXM. The remaining 6 participants were obtained through convenience sampling, they were solicited through a Facebook ALP Support Group and given a direct link to the survey.

➡ **Procedure:** All surveys were completed using QualtricsXM. All participants filled out a sociodemographic information sheet (asked for their gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, job title and work experience). Followed by completing Hooper's *Parentification Inventory* scale (2009), a 22 questioner set that focused on their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, concerning themselves and their family during their adolescence (age 10-19) or current self.

## Project Question

Does Parent-Focused Parentification or Sibling-Focused Parentification during adolescence have an influence on healthcare professionals working with children with developmental disabilities?

## Additional Information

➡ **Parent-Focused Parentification (PFP):** "reflects caregiving roles and responsibilities (instrumental and/or emotional) that are directed to the parent or primary caregiver." – 2

➡ **Sibling-Focused Parentification (SFP):** "describes caregiving roles and responsibilities (instrumental and/or emotional) that are directed to a sibling or siblings." – 2

## Data

Total Mean Values of Participants (1-5 scale)

PFP	SFP	PBP
2.63	2.37	3.36

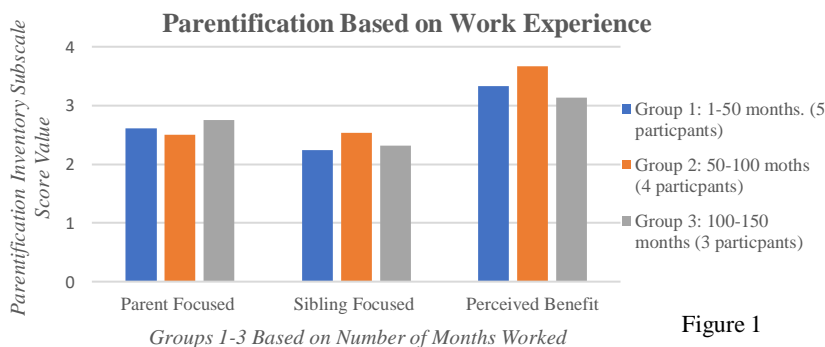


Figure 1

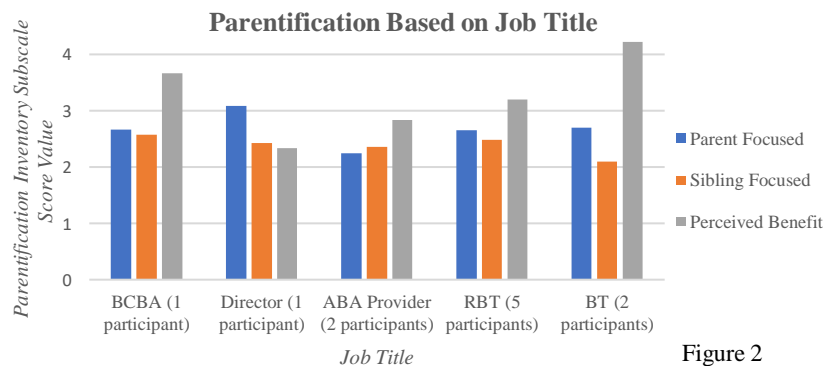


Figure 2

## Results

The results revealed a positive correlation between the three subscales of Parentification and healthcare workers. The Perceived Benefit of Parentification (PBP) for all participants, had a mean value of 3.36 (all subscale scores range from 1 to 5). There was a higher mean value for PFP (2.63) than SFP (2.37). The relationship between Parentification based on Work Experience and Job Title was also examined.

Results revealed that there was a significant correlation with Work Experience,  $F(2,6) = 22.34, p = 0.00166$ . Figure 1. shows a higher Parentification Inventory Subscale Score Values for Group 2 that have completed 50-100 months of work experience. In addition, there was also a significant correlation with Job Title,  $F(2,12) = 4.45, p = 0.035822$ . As seen in Figure 2. the Parentification Inventory Subscale Score Value varied based on Job Title. For instance, the Director had the highest PFP score of 3.08. The highest SFP score was seen from a BCBA at 2.67. Lastly, the highest PBP score was seen from a BT at 4.22.

Ethnicity, years of education, and age primarily worked with was also examined, however there was no significant correlation.

## Discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of Parentification on healthcare professionals working with children with developmental disabilities. This study also looked into determining if these relationships were perceived to be as a benefit or a burden. As predicted, Parentification does have an influence on healthcare professionals working with children with developmental disabilities, primarily focusing on those diagnosed with ASD. Future research can focus on the long term impact Parentification roles can have on mental health.

*"I have become a more calm and positive person while working in this field. The progress I see the children make is motivating."* –Anonymous RBT

*"I enjoy being able to look back at the progress the kids I work with have made."* –Anonymous RBT

## References

- Hooper, L. M. (2009). Parentification Inventory. (Available from L. M. Hooper, 108 Schindler Education Center, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa, 50614 – 0410)
- [https://voxcms.com, V. C. M. S.-. \(n.d.\). What is Parentification? Retrieved from https://parentification-researchlab.com/what-is-parentification/](https://voxcms.com, V. C. M. S.-. (n.d.). What is Parentification? Retrieved from https://parentification-researchlab.com/what-is-parentification/)