



MA Program “Special Education”

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Title of dissertation: Exploring the views of mental health professionals on sexual education for people with ASD in Greece

Abstract

The aim of sex education is to transmit scientific information on issues related to sexuality. Improving the sexual knowledge of adolescents and young people could improve sexual health as part of a healthy and fulfilling life and lead to less unacceptable sexual behavior. It includes critical issues related to sexuality and is an information process on sexual intercourse, reproduction, sexual relationships, sexual anatomy, consent, sexual and reproductive health, safe sex and human rights. Sex education and sexual knowledge should not be an exception for people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The important difference between people with ASD and people without disabilities is that they may express their desires differently and adopt different ways of behaving and socializing from the dominant ways of behaving and socializing. Sex education therefore has the potential to provide individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable them to make safe choices and the choices that bring them satisfaction.

This qualitative research explores the views of mental health professionals on sexuality education for people with ASD in general and specifically in relation to the Social Skills and Sexual - Reproductive Health Program for people with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) implemented for adolescents and young adults with ASD. The research sample consisted of 10 mental health professionals working in a Day Care and Residential Care Centre, working with people with ASD and implementing this sex education program. Semi-structured interviews were used as a methodological tool for data collection. Through the interviews, 2 main themes emerged. The first one refers to the views of mental health professionals on the sexual education of people with ASD and is divided into 4 themes with 9 sub-themes and the second one refers to the views of mental health professionals on the participation of people with ASD in the “Program” and is divided into 3 themes and 8 sub-themes. The main conclusion of the research is the contribution of sex education to people

with ASD according to the research participants. and the benefits of the specific sex education program for people with ASD.

Key words: sex education, mental health professionals, autism spectrum disorder, ASD, sexuality education program, social inclusion