Abstract

We examined the relationship between autistic-like personality traits and university adjustment in a sample of the general student population. Using the Broad Autism Phenotype Questionnaire (BAPQ) and the Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire (SACQ), we found that stronger autistic traits predicted poorer adjustment to university. One subscale of the BAPQ, pragmatic language difficulties, emerged as the strongest predictor of adjustment. Further, pragmatic language difficulties were higher among students in degree programs related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and mediated the relationship between student’s major and specific measures of adjustment. These findings suggest that universities, and STEM programs in particular, should consider interventions and learning environments aimed towards improving pragmatic language skills in an effort to improve university adjustment.

Keywords: university adjustment, Broad Autism Phenotype, social communication