

A Study on Psychological Problems Faced by the Parents of Autism Children

Kalaivnai P and Kali M Kalimo*

Department of Social Science Extension Education, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

Autism is a neuro-developmental disorder identified by impaired communication and social interaction and repetitive behaviors. It is more challenging for the parents to take care of their ASD children and it also affects their family life. The main objectives of the study is analyze the problem faced by parents of autism children, assess the level of stress faced by the parents of autism children and asses the level of adjustment among the parents of autism children. The total sample size fifty (18 fathers and 32 mothers of autism Children) was drawn from Mind Matters in Vilankurichi and AIM in New Siddhapudhur, Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select the sample for study. Primary data were collected from 50 parents of the autism children. There were 32 per cent had a score of less than 48 (low level of stress), about 44 per cent had a score between 48 and 57 (moderate level of stress), and the left 24 per cent had a score of greater than 57 (high level of stress). The range of score indicates that both mothers and fathers were facing moderate level of stress due to their autism child. It was concluded that parent's ability and confidence in their competence of parenting a child in challenging situations may reduce their stress to a limited extent.

Keywords: Social; Parents; Health; Children; Education

Introduction

Autism is a neuro-developmental disorder identified by impaired communication and social interaction and repetitive behaviors. The genetic, environmental, and immunological factors play an important role for the causes of autism spectrum disorder as indicated by several researches [1]. It is more challenging for the parents to take care of their ASD children and it also affects their family life. There was a higher level of parenting stress among parents of ASD children than parents of normal or ordinary children and children with other kinds of disabilities as strongly insisted [2]. Given that chronic stress can had more bad effects on a range of physical as well as psychological wellbeing [3], the parents of ASD children had also been found to report poorer health and more illnesses than parents of normal or ordinary children and children with other kinds of disabilities it was perhaps not a surprising one [4-7].

The main objectives of the study is to:

1. Analyze the problem faced by parents of autism children
2. Assess the level of stress faced by the parents of autism children and
3. Asses the level of adjustment among the parents of autism children.

Methodology

The total sample size fifty (18 fathers and 32 mothers of autism Children) was drawn from Mind Matters in Vilankurichi and AIM in New Siddhapudhur, Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select the sample for study. Primary data were collected from 50 parents of the autism children. The independent and dependent variables were identified, based on the data collected from the respondents. The independent variables such as Age, Sex, Educational Qualification, Community, Religion, Occupation, Monthly Income and Type of Family were measured with the actual information of the respondents. The dependent variables such as parental stress level, parental adjustment and concern level were

measured with Parental Stress Scale Parenting and Family Adjustment Scales (PAFAS) and problems of the children were measured with the scale developed for the study. The collected data were consolidated, analysed and presented in Results and Discussion.

Results and Discussion

Socio economic profile of the respondents

The socio economic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Sex: Table 1 revealed that the majority of the genders of parents with autistic children (64 per cent) respondents were female (mother).

Age: Regarding the age wise distribution 34 per cent of the respondents were comes under the age group of 20-30 years, whereas 62 per cent were comes under 31-40 years of age and the remaining 4 per cent were fall under the age of 41 and above.

Educational qualification: A majority of 68 percent of the respondents had education up to graduate, 12 percent of the respondents had finished their higher secondary school level, 12 per cent of the respondents were completed their primary and high school level and least 8 per cent of the respondent were illiterate.

Community: The backward class (BC) dominated as the respondents of the study 80 percent, followed by 10 per cent of them belonging to OC, 8 per cent were of them belonging to MBC and two percent of the respondents were SC.

***Corresponding author:** Kalimo KM, Department of Social Science Extension Education, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India, Tel: +91-8608369425; E-mail: pkvani12@gmail.com

Received June 06, 2018; **Accepted** June 20, 2018; **Published** June 26, 2018

Citation: Kalaivnai P, Kalimo KM (2018) A Study on Psychological Problems Faced by the Parents of Autism Children. Arts Social Sci J 9: 376. doi: [10.4172/2151-6200.1000376](https://doi.org/10.4172/2151-6200.1000376)

Copyright: © 2018 Kalaivnai P, et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Aspects	Percentage of the Respondents (N: 50)
Age (in years)	
20-30	34
31-40	62
41 and above	4
Gender	
Male (Father)	36
Female (Mother)	64
Educational qualification	
Illiterate	8
Primary Education	6
High School	6
Higher Secondary	12
Graduate	68
Community	
OC	10
BC	80
MBC	8
SC	2
Religion	
Hindu	86
Christian	10
Muslim	4
Occupation	
House wife	42
Business	6
Private Employer	18
Government employer	20
Daily wages	14
Monthly income (in Rs)	
2,000-5,000	14
5,000-10,000	16
15,000-20,000	18
20,000-25,0000	10
Not applicable	42
Type of family	
Joint family	38
Nuclear family	62

Table 1: Socio-Economic profile of the respondents.

Religion: The present study highlights the facts that 86 percent of the respondents were Hindus, 10 per cent of them were under the categories of Christian, and only 4 percent were under the categories of Muslim.

Occupation: Regarding the occupation of the respondents, it was seen that nearly half of the respondents (42 per cent) were house wives, since they have to take care of their children followed by 18 per cent were private employers and 20 per cent were government employers respectively, 14 per cent were belonged to the daily wage groups and the left 6 per cent were business persons.

Income: Around 50 respondents 14 per cent were earning income between Rs.5,000-10,000/- per month, whereas 16 per cent of them were earning in the range between 10,000-15,000 rupees, while 18 per cent were earning from 15,000-20,000 rupees, only 10 per cent were earning from 20,000-25,000. The non-earning income group consists of 21 women.

Type of family: Over the 50 respondents majority of the respondents (62 per cent) were belonged to the nuclear family and the other 38 per cent were belonged to the joint family.

Difficulties faced by the parents due to their autism children

The various difficulties faced by the parents due to their autism children are presented in Table 2. Out of the 50 parents of such children, 80 per cent of parents were having problem in finding the right school or right type of education. Travel safely and independently begin or maintain a friendship or a relationship was a problem for 52 per cent of the parents with their autistic children and enjoying leisure and recreational opportunities was a problem for with their autism children. About 48 per cent of parents were having problem from school to college or in to employment with their autism children. 40 per cent of the parents were having problem in maintaining a balanced healthy and nutritious diet for their autism children.

Level of stress faced by the parents of autism children

The level of stress faced by the parents of autism children is presented in Table 3. Sixteen respondents (32 per cent) had a score of less than 48 (low level of stress), twenty two respondents (44 per cent) had a score between 48 and 57 (moderate level of stress), and twelve respondents (24 per cent) had a score of greater than 57 (high level of stress). The range of scores in the present study shows that mothers and fathers reported that they are facing moderate level of stress because of their autism child. For a visual depiction of the restricted range for stress see Figure 1.

Correlation between the selected demographic variables vs. mental stress faced by the parents of autism children

Correlation between the selected demographic variables vs. mental stress faced by the parents of autism children are presented in Table 4. There is a significant relationship between age and financial burden, depression, treating the child in the same way at all the time at five per cent level. There is a significant relationship between the sex and the level of stress in consequences to child's misbehavior at one per cent level, stress and difficulty in balancing responsibilities at 5 per cent level.

Showing anger when the child misbehaves, annoyance and difficulty in balancing responsibilities had a significant relationship for religion at 5 per cent level. There is a significant relationship between community and depression, showing anger, treating the child in the same way at all the time and satisfied as a parent at five per cent level [8].

Type of family had significant relationship between consequences to child's misbehavior, depression and difficulty in balancing responsibilities at 5 per cent level.

Aspects	Percentage of Respondents (N: 50)*
Find the right school or right type of education	80
Enjoy leisure and recreational opportunities	52
Travel safely and independently begin or maintain a friendship or a relationship	52
From school to college or in to employment	48
Maintain a balanced healthy and nutritious diet	40

Source: Field survey 2017, *Multiple responses.

Table 2: Difficulties faced by the parents due to their autism children.

Level of stress	Frequency	Percentage
Low (less than 48)	16	32
Moderate (48-57)	22	44
High (above 57)	12	24

Table 3: Level of stress faced by the parents of autism children.

There is a significant relationship between occupation and annoyance at one per cent level, source of stress, depression and stress at 5 per cent level. Income of the respondents had relationship between depression and treating the child in the same way at all the time at one per cent level.

Level of adjustment among the parents towards their autism children

The level of adjustment among the parents towards their autism

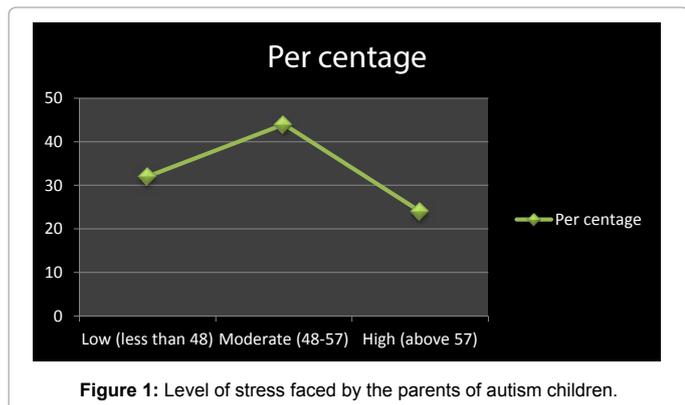


Figure 1: Level of stress faced by the parents of autism children.

children is presented in Table 5. Thirteen respondents (26 per cent) had a score of less than 31(low level of adjustment), twenty seven respondents (56 per cent) had a score between 31 and 41(moderate level of adjustment), and 10 respondents (20 per cent) had a score of greater than 41(high level of adjustment). The range of scores in the present study shows that more than 50 per cent of the parents had moderate level of adjustment with their autism children. For a visual depiction of the level of adjustment see Figure 2.

Correlation between the selected demographic variables vs. level of adjustment among the parents towards their autism children

The correlation between the selected demographic variables vs. level of adjustment among the parents towards their autism children is presented in Table 6.

There is a significant relationship between the age and satisfying the child's necessary needs, doing child's work and satisfying child wants at five per cent level. There is a significant relationship between the religion and the level of adjustment in enjoyment in spending time with child at one per cent level and feeling of closeness at 5 per cent level [9].

Satisfying the child's necessary needs and having chat/talk had a significant relationship with community at one per cent level, whereas

Factors of Mental Stress	p value							
	Age (in yrs)	Sex	Religion	Community	Family type	Education	Occupation	Income
Happiness in their role as parent	0.657	0.084	0.321	0.437	0.489	0.054	0.113	0.162
	0.064	0.246	0.143	0.112	0.1	0.274	0.227	0.201
More amount of time and energy takes for spending with children	0.455	0.462	0.035	0.013	0.229	0.16	0.467	0.409
	0.108	0.106	0.298	0.35	0.173	0.167	0.105	0.119
Worry due to doing enough for their children	0.112	0.286	0.238	0.841	0.018	0.247	0.818	0.102
	0.227	0.154	0.139	0.029	0.333	0.167	0.033	0.234
Source of stress	0.139	0.317	0.404	0.675	0.034	0.165	0.849*	0.171
	0.212	0.144	0.121	0.061	0.301	0.2	0.028	0.197
consequences to child's misbehaviour	0.203	0.969**	0.609	0.626	0.757*	0.002	0.673	0.068
	0.183	0.006	0.074	0.071	0.045	0.433	0.061	0.261
Financial burden	0.946*	0.154	0.65	0.563	0.448	0.597	0.29	0.349
	0.01	0.204	0.066	0.084	0.11	0.077	0.153	0.135
Quarrel with the child for their behaviour and attitude	0.669	0.565	0.207	0.238	0.358	0.024	0.487	0.281
	0.062	0.083	0.182	0.17	0.133	0.318	0.101	0.156
Depression	0.899*	0.492	0.028	0.882*	0.821*	0.188	0.843*	0.000**
	0.018	0.1	0.311	0.019	0.033	0.189	0.029	0
Stress	0.35	0.780*	0.021	0.896	0.238	0.153	0.709*	0.371
	0.135	0.04	0.325	0.019	0.17	0.205	0.054	0.129
Showing angriness	0.217	0.507	0.739*	0.827*	0.109	0.157	0.427	0.058
	0.178	0.096	0.048	-0.032	0.23	0.203	0.115	0.27
Giving punishment to the child	0.831	0.737	0.158	0.074	0.166	0.018	0.332	0.317
	0.031	0.049	0.203	0.255	0.199	0.334	0.14	0.144
Treating the child in a same way all the time	0.746*	0.561	0.098	0.873*	0.374	0.366	0.837	0.908*
	0.047	0.084	0.237	0.023	0.128	0.131	0.144	0.017
Annoyance	0.372	0.461	0.679*	0.465	0.11	0.619	0.994**	0.27
	0.129	0.107	0.06	0.106	0.229	0.072	0.001	0.159
Difficulty in balancing responsibilities	0.583	0.782*	0.889*	0.281	0.773*	0.424	0.479	0.06
	0.08	0.04	0.02	0.155	0.042	0.116	0.103	0.268
Satisfaction as a parent	0.236	0.25	0.088	0.685*	0.037	0.078	0.118	0.067
	0.171	0.166	0.244	-0.059	0.296	0.251	0.224	0.261

**Significant at 1 per cent level *Significant at 5 per cent level.

Table 4: Correlation between the selected demographic variables vs. mental stress faced by the parents of autism children.

Level of adjustment	Frequency	Percentage
Low (less than 31)	13	26
Moderate (31-41)	27	54
High (above 41)	10	20

Table 5: Level of adjustment among the parents towards their autism children.

Level of adjustment and concern	p value							
	Age (in yrs)	Sex	Religion	Community	Family type	Education	Occupation	Income
Satisfying the child's necessary needs	0.801*	0.301	0.584	0.977**	0.034	0.977**	0.287	0.834*
	0.036	0.149	0.079	0.004	0.301	0.004	0.157	0.03
Doing child's work	0.747*	0.001	0.806	0.563	0.662	0.372	0.014	0.005
	0.047	0.453	0.036	0.084	0.063	0.129	0.345	0.39
Praising the behaviour of the child	0.584	0.013	0.584	0.574	0.615	0.659	0.042	0.021
	0.079	0.348	0.079	0.081	0.073	0.064	0.289	0.325
Feeling of proudness	0.524	0.088	0.032	0.764*	0.778*	0.011	0.211	0.155
	0.092	0.244	0.303	0.044	0.041	0.358	0.18	0.204
Teamwork with partner in parenting	0.026	0.237	0.554	0.095	0.108	0.088	0.024	0.02
	0.314	0.17	0.086	0.239	0.23	0.244	0.318	0.328
Enjoyment in spending time with child	0.384	0.008	.948**	0.289	0.563	0.213	0.062	0.362
	0.126	0.372	0.009	0.153	0.084	0.179	0.314	0.132
Feeling of happiness	0.544	0	0.55	0.362	.932*	0.005	0.007	0.014
	0.088	0.53	0.087	0.132	0.012	0.394	0.374	0.344
Satisfying the child's wants	0.977**	0.001	0.464	0.517	0.834	0.034	0.009	0.161
	0.004	0.442	0.106	0.094	0.03	0.301	0.366	0.201
Having chat/talk with the child	0.301	0.002	0.613	0.958**	0.597	0.673	0.014	0.223
	0.149	0.434	0.073	0.008	0.077	0.061	0.347	0.178
Feeling of closeness	0.359	0	.696*	0.425	0.287	0.155	0.024	0.021
	0.133	0.494	0.057	0.115	0.157	0.204	0.319	0.326
Flexibility provides by child in their life	0.378	0	0.406	0.948*	0.900*	0.01	0.011	0.007
	0.127	0.491	0.12	0.01	0.018	0.361	0.358	0.377
Main source of their affection	0.002	0.002	0.088	0.755*	0.817*	0.613	0.116	0.817*
	0.423	0.423	0.244	0.045	0.034	0.073	0.225	0.034

**Significant at 1 per cent level *Significant at 5 per cent level.

Table 6: Correlation between the selected demographic variables vs. level of adjustment among the parents towards their autism children.

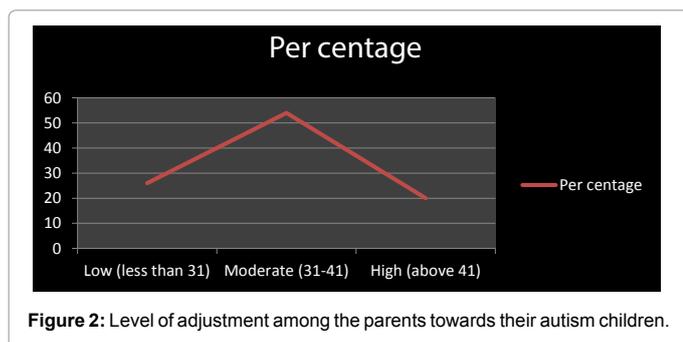


Figure 2: Level of adjustment among the parents towards their autism children.

proud feelings, flexibility and considering child as the main source of their affection had a significant relationship with community at 5 per cent level.

Type of family had significant relationship between proud feelings, feeling of happiness, flexibility and considering child as the main source of their affection at 5 per cent level.

There is a significant relationship between education and satisfying the child's necessary needs at one per cent level. Income of the respondents had relationship between satisfying the child's necessary needs and considering child as the main source of their affection at 5 per cent level [10]. There is no relationship between sex and occupation with the level of adjustment among the parents towards their autism children.

Suggestions

1. The parents have to spend more time with their autism children for their betterment.
2. The parents and other family members allow their autism children to play with the other children.
3. No restriction from the parents, other family members, and the outside environment in play and activities of the autism children.
4. To encourage the interests and talents of the autism children.
5. The parents have to treat the autism children as ordinary children.

Conclusion

It is revealed that parents who have an autism child had undergone multiple challenges in various aspects of care, impacting or had influence or parents' stress and adaption. Delays in communication and language development are apparent early in life in ASD children, and emphasizes that for delays in gesture, developmental surveillance, which may be among the earliest signs of ASD were confirmed [11,12].

There is a dire to need to spread awareness among local masses specifically parents to get sensitized about the alarming disorder so to come forward and have exposure of different remedial measures which helps to bring holistic changes in ASD children. Most of the

parents have facing problems in finding the right school or right type of education for their autism children. However, it was concluded that parent's ability and confidence in their competence of parenting a child in challenging situations may reduce their stress to a limited extent.

References

1. Kim (2015) Recent update of autism spectrum disorders, Korean Journal of Pediatrics 58: 8-14.
2. Hoefman R, Payakachat N, van Exel J, Kuhlthau K, Kovacs E, et al. (2014) Caring for a Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Parents' Quality of Life: Application of the Carerqol. Journal of Autism Developmental Disorder 44: 1933-1945.
3. Ludlow A, Skelly C, Rohleder P (2012) Challenges Faced by Parents of Children Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. J Health Psychol 17: 702-711.
4. Bonis S (2016) Stress and Parents of Children with Autism: A Review of Literature, J Issues Ment Health Nurs 37: 153-163.
5. Burge P, Ouellette-Kuntz H, Isaacs B, Lunsky Y (2008) Medical students' views on training in intellectual disabilities Canadian Family Physician 54: 568-569.
6. Cooper SA, Smiley E, Morrison J, Williamson A, Allan L, et al. (2007) Mental ill-health in adults with intellectual disabilities: prevalence and associated factors. The British Journal of Psychiatry 27: 35-25.
7. Hodgetts S, Nicholas D, Zwaigenbaum L (2013) Home sweet home? Families' experiences with aggression in children with autism spectrum disorders Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities 1-9.
8. Lecavalier L, Leone S, Wiltz J (2006) The impact of behavior problems on caregiver stress in young people with autism spectrum disorders. Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, pp: 172-183.
9. Lecavalier L (2006) Behavioral and emotional problems in young people with pervasive developmental disorders: Relative prevalence effects of subject characteristics and empirical classification. Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, pp: 1101-1114.
10. Mandell DS (2008) Psychiatric hospitalization among children with autism spectrum disorders. Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders 38: 1059-1065.
11. Mazurek MO, Kanne SM, Wodka EL (2013) Physical aggression in children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders. Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders, pp: 455-465.
12. Hus V, Bishop S, Gotham K, Huerta M, Lord C, et al. (2013) Factors influencing scores on the Social Responsiveness Scale. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry 54: 216-224.