

# Parents' Social Support as Media to Improve the Mental Health of Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder

Mohammad Nayef Ayasrah<sup>1\*</sup>, Mohamad Ahmad Saleem Khasawneh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor of Special Education, Al Balqa Applied University/ Department Science of Education, Irbid University, College. Postal code 1293, Irbid, Jordan

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Special Education Department, King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia

## Abstract

It has been established that treating the family members of autistic children has a significant impact on the development of autistic children. The quality of parental connections and social support may have a considerable effect on children's behavior, particularly in terms of their adaptation to unexpected situations. The purpose of the research is to further our knowledge of parental social support and coping abilities for children on the Autism Spectrum (ASD). As a form of study, single-case qualitative research is employed. Participants were recruited using an approach that took into consideration characteristics of parents with autism. Complementing in-depth interviews and field observations with primary and secondary sources, the data were compiled. The three steps of a typical data analysis procedure include transforming the data into a more edible format, presenting the data, and making conclusions. This study's findings indicate that parents of children with autism provide their offspring with a variety of social supports, including emotional support (such as warmth, a sense of care, and empathy), reward support (such as positive reinforcement), direct support (such as services and financial assistance), and informational support (both verbal and nonverbal) in the form of advice, new knowledge, motivation, and suggestions. As they learn to navigate the world and make friends, children with autism benefit greatly from their parents' emotional and social support at home, in treatment, and in conventional schools. Social support is beneficial for autistic children because it boosts drive and self-confidence, which leads to a broader range of skills.

**Keywords:** Parent Support • ASD • Mental Health

## Introduction

Both autistic children and their families experience significant changes as a consequence of their upbringing. What parents think of their kids is influenced by their own upbringing, the values they've been exposed to, and the order of importance in the household. Parents have a pivotal role in the lives of their children, and as such, they are in the greatest position to keep track of and comprehend the difficulties and advantages their autistic children encounter as they grow and learn.

Parents of children with autism go through a roller coaster of emotions after learning their child has been diagnosed with autism for the first time [1]. At first, the parents acted in a wide range of ways, displaying feelings such as surprise, shock, sadness, disappointment, wrath, embarrassment, burden, and even the desire to avoid being around their children. Child with autism is still a child who needs his or her parents, siblings, and extended family's love and support [2]. As a result, it is critical to have a public figure of a successful parent of a kid with autism who can serve as a role model in order to educate the public, especially other parents of children with autism, on how to best care for and educate their children. This is crucial for other parents who are trying to provide their children with autism the best possible

*\*Address for Correspondence:* Mohammad Nayef Ayasrah, Associate Professor of Special Education, Al Balqa Applied University/ Department Science of Education, Irbid University, College. Postal code 1293, Irbid, Jordan; E-mail: mohammadmtlaq@bau.edu.jo

**Copyright:** © 2023 Ayasrah MN, 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.

**Received:** 02 January 2023, Manuscript No. CSRP-23-86575; **Editor assigned:** 03 January 2023, Pre QC No. CSRP- 23-86575 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 12 January 2023, QC No. CSRP- 23- 86575 (Q); **Revised:** 14 January 2023, Manuscript No. CSRP-23-86575 (R); **Published:** 16 January 2023 **doi:** 10.3371/CSRP.MMWY.100147

care and education. If children with autism have the right kind of social support, they will supposedly be able to show off their potential and talents via enhanced communication, social engagement, and behavior. To help children with autism learn to function more autonomously in their day-to-day lives, even only by adjusting to their new environment.

A mother whose child has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) expressed concern anytime she saw her child's out-of-the-ordinary conduct. Soon after, the family brought their child to a doctor, who diagnosed autism. A parent's next step should be to do an online search for more information on autism and possible treatments. Communicating with other parents whose children have autism is the next step in gaining insight into the best treatment options available [3].

It's unfortunate that many parents of autistic children still lack the knowledge and patience to introduce their children to the outside world in a safe and gradual manner, and are less than enthusiastic about the prospect of teaching their children. Unfortunately, the mental status of autistic children may become considerably more severe when their parents expect them to convert into "normal" children without first obtaining any type of specialist treatment. Based on what we know so far from studies and news articles, the social environment of the family, and especially the parents, seems to have a large role in and carry a great lot of responsibility for the development of autistic children. Parents may have a moral duty to meet their children's developmental requirements despite the challenges created by autism in this case.

Achieving this goal might be facilitated by ensuring that autistic children have access to specialized care in the form of schooling or instruction on par with that given to children without autism. To put it another way, this is a kind of specialized care for autistic kids. It is the goal of special education for autistic children to help these kids catch up to typically developing kids, help them learn to work together as a unit, help them become more self-reliant, and help them have the highest quality of life possible. Such an approach to teaching is made with the intention of providing autistic children

with the best quality of life possible.

Numerous factors, such as access to special education, might affect a child's rate of growth and development. One of these factors is social support. Gyasi express support from others may take many forms, including emotional care, material help, information sharing, and other forms of interpersonal contact [4]. Different forms of social support include emotional support, esteem support, physical support, information support, and network support [5].

Social support may come from a variety of individuals, including the child's parents, other family members, friends, teachers, caregivers, and those who are close to the youngster. Individuals benefit from social support when they have the reassurance that others care about them and value them enough to show it [6]. It is possible to find solace in the company of others. The way a child is treated sets the tone for how they will treat themselves and others, so it's important to show them love and care on a constant basis [7].

If the requirements of autistic children are met and they get the right kind of social assistance, their quality of life should improve, both on an individual and a communal level. As a result, public opinion might change toward the belief that children with autism can engage in social activities and interact with their environment. Socializing, or interacting with others, is mostly an exercise of self-adjustment. Humans feel inadvertent urge to interact with others due to their nature as social creatures. In light of this assumption, it is said that humans are constantly in contact with other individuals or the environment around them, making it imperative for them to have the ability to adapt.

An individual's ability to adapt to his or her social surroundings depends on his or her ability to reconcile his or her personal wants and requirements with those of his or her community. A person's rate of adjustment depends on their own unique circumstances. A person's capacity for self-adjustment varies in quality based on a variety of circumstances, such as the developmental stage they are in, the culture in which they were raised, and the existence of specific individual differences [8]. As a result, self-adjustment cannot be defined in absolute terms. Anger, bigotry, despair, and other unpleasant emotions may be managed effectively via self-adjustment, the human attempt to bring about harmony with oneself and one's surroundings. Self-adjustment is the deliberate pursuit of inner peace and external congruence [9].

It has just been pointed out that children with autism have difficulty relating to and working with the people in their local surroundings, and this has been reinforced by the previous comment. Autistic children have been demonstrated to struggle with social adaptation [10]. Autism is characterized by a lack of social interaction and a predilection for isolation, both of which are common among autistic children [11]. Therefore, in order to enhance the capacities of children with autism, including the capacity to adjust to new conditions, there is a need for cooperation between families of children with autism, especially parents, and other parties in the provision of assistance for children with autism. Coddling or rejecting one's children might have a negative impact on their development since it can limit their opportunities for growth.

If the right kind of social support is found for autistic children and if you know how autistic kids show up in the world, maybe everyone can get along. This goes for the home, the classroom, and the neighborhood as a whole. Kids on the autistic spectrum can, at the very least, manage their behavior in group settings [12]. In light of this, researchers are eager to amass more comprehensive and trustworthy information on the types of parental social support and the adjustment capabilities of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

## Methods

Methods from the qualitative research tradition were used throughout this examination. In this particular research endeavor, the individual case

will serve as the basic analytic unit. The person who is the topic of the research is the primary focal point of the data gathering efforts made by the individual case analysis unit. This involves identifying the tasks that are performed by the person in addition to the factors that have an effect on these tasks. The data for this research was collected via the use of a variety of approaches, including interviews, observations, and field notes. The researchers used these approaches as a tool to keep track of occasions in which they uncovered facts or information that they regarded as being relevant and fascinating enough to warrant further investigation. Investigate this matter by using the interview method and asking semi-structured questions as your research tools. During the interview that was being conducted for this research, the questions that were asked were in-depth and open-ended inquiries. The observations that were ultimately used in this inquiry were carried out over the course of the interviews with the participants. Methods for Data Analysis in Addition to Organizational Techniques. In order to carry out the procedures for arranging the data, the audio recording data of the researcher were moved from a mobile phone to a folder on the researcher's laptop. After that, the information gleaned from the interview's audio recording is transcribed word for word, together with any relevant field notes, and saved in a document format. The title of the document that includes the field notes and verbatim is decided based on the respondent code that was assigned to each participant.

## Result and Discussion

### Forms of Parental Social Support for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder

In this particular study, it was found that initially, the respondents experienced feelings of worry when they realized that some children's behavior had developmental differences from that of normal children. This was the case because the respondents became aware that some children's behavior had developmental differences from that of normal children. This was the situation as a result of the respondents being aware of the fact that the conduct of certain youngsters deviated from what is considered to be normal. When a parent finds out that their child has autism, they may experience a range of emotions, including shock, bewilderment, grief, disappointment, anger, and guilt [13]. Some parents may even deny the existence of their children. Autism manifests itself in children by making it difficult for them to mimic speech, which is something that is normally taught to them by their parents [14]. These children also frequently cry while throwing tantrums and banging their heads, and they experience sensory disturbances, such as being hypersensitive to sounds, particularly those with a high volume, as well as being hypersensitive to certain touches and smells. Additionally, they frequently cry while banging their heads.

Children who have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often struggle with sensory impairments. These difficulties may take the form of heightened reactions or even a total lack of reaction at all. In order to assist their autistic child in displaying suitable behavior, the response performed a variety of activities in the form of social support, both psychologically and financially [15]. These actions consisted of assisting the youngster in both a material and mental capacity, both of which were provided by the adult. According to the attitude that was shown by the respondents, it seems that they have established a bonding connection with other individuals in the context of receiving social assistance. The giving of tangible aid in the form of immaterial support may take several forms, including emotional support, the expressing of sentiments, guidance or information, and the offering of support in the form of immaterial assistance [16]. Emotional support, support based on admiration, support in the form of direct aid, and support in the form of information were the four categories of parental social support that the respondents supplied (verbal and nonverbal).

Emotional support may be provided to autistic children in a variety of ways, including showing care, warmth, and empathy for the child's condition [17]. The behavior of respondents embracing and kissing the children is commonly done as a way to calm the children down and minimize the

severity of their reactions when children with autism experience unstable emotions such as anger, grief, or screaming tantrums. This is done as a way to calm the children down and minimize the severity of their reactions. People are able to express their affection for one another by actions such as smiling, laughing, kissing, hugging, holding hands, coming closer, and encouraging loved ones to play. These actions include encouraging loved ones to play, smiling and laughing at them, and inviting them to join in the fun.

In addition, responders typically enquire about the necessities that are required by autistic children. This is due to the fact that children with autism are characterized by mood disorders, which means that all of their needs are changed to satisfy the criteria that are sought by children with autism. The reason for this is that children with autism are defined by mood disorders [18]. According to the behavior of emotional support that was offered by respondents, emotional support may help people feel comfortable because they are cared for by a source of social support in order for individuals to be able to confront challenges. This is because emotional support may help people feel comfortable because they are cared for by a source of social support. This gives people the opportunity to solve their own difficulties. In most instances, the client's family or spouse is the one who provides this sort of support to them. This support often takes the form of acknowledging the difficulties that the individual is going through or actively listening to their complaints.

An action that exhibits respect and support for autistic children is one in which the providing of positive reinforcement to autistic children is done as a form of expression of gratitude for the successes attained by these youngsters. Children with autism may get positive reinforcement in the form of praise and encouraging words, to name just two examples of this kind of reinforcement [19]. The relevance of offering reinforcement in the form of something that may make the child happy; this reinforcement may take the form of praises, caresses, or supplying the child with his or her chosen food or drink that is suited for the diet of children who have autism.

Direct support includes not only the delivery of goods and services but also the provision of financial aid and the encouragement of the development of beneficial coping strategies. Respondents said that they had seen children with atypical health conditions, and that after seeing the children, they took the children to different medical experts, such as general practitioners, pediatricians, psychiatrists, and ear, nose, and throat specialists. The diagnosis of autism in the autistic child was able to be obtained by the responder after they talked with the child's attending physician. The autistic child is a member of the autistic spectrum. The response was effective in raising the respondent's urge to face and persist in the process of caring for children as a result of the impression that was given by the physician [20]. The vast majority of individuals with autism get their first diagnosis from trained medical experts, such as pediatricians and psychiatrists.

In addition, there is direct assistance accessible in the form of coping tactics that are centered on the individual's sentiments. For example, one may reduce mental stress and physical exhaustion by going on vacation with one's family to visit tourist locations. Taking autistic children to see medical professionals, shelling out cash to meet the requirements of autistic children, and enrolling autistic children in inclusive schools and treatment programs are all potential solutions that can be considered in the context of addressing the issues that were brought up by the respondents. Individuals participate in coping strategies as a reaction that assists them in maintaining homeostasis, finding solutions to issues, and lessening the influence that stressful circumstances have on their life.

Throughout the course of this investigation, both verbal and non-verbal forms of informational support have been taken into account. The provision of verbal information aid in the form of advice, information in the form of knowledge, as well as incentive or suggestions, may be of value to children diagnosed with autism. Counseling services are provided in the context of this kind of assistance. When asked about how they taught their autistic children independence by having them pick up things and objects that were within easy reach, parent responses said that they also offered verbal

guidance to their children. Teaching children who have autism how to be self-sufficient so that they won't bother other people is one of the strategies that may be used to assist these youngsters in being more qualified despite the limitations that they have.

The non-verbal information support that was provided by the respondents came in the form of restrictions, a differentiation between acts that were permitted and those that were not, as well as the danger of being penalized. Respondents exhibited their hands in a manner that suggested they were ready to pinch the autistic child when the youngster made a mistake; however, they did not actually pinch the child. Instead, participants applauded, gave the autistic youngster a thumbs up, and caressed the child's head whenever the child shown interest in participating in an activity on his own. The provision of information, both verbal and nonverbal, actual assistance, and certain behaviors by individuals who are familiar with the topic in their social environment in order to be able to provide emotional benefits and influence on the recipient's behavior is an example of what is referred to as social support. Another example of social support is the provision of information by a third party who is not familiar with the topic in their social environment.

### **Adjustment ability in children with autistic spectrum disorder**

Children with autism may display behaviors associated with adjusting in a number of contexts, including the home environment, treatment venues like the Autistic Service Center, inclusive schools, and public areas. These may all be considered "public" settings. To be more specific, the setting in which the youngster is most likely to feel at ease is the one that is found in the home. This is consistent with the idea of relative adaptation, which states that the degree of adjustment varies according to personality values and developmental stages, in addition to society and culture, in addition to the existence of certain disparities within each individual.

The degree to which autistic children are able to modify their conduct, as evaluated by the first criterion, is directly proportional to the degree to which the kid is motivated to conform to the accepted standards. The only area where respondents do not follow their autistic children is the classroom, which is either where the children are having therapy or where they are attending school. Respondents follow their autistic children everywhere else. Therefore, parents of children who have autism have the opportunity to continually review these recommendations in order to keep control over the behavior of their children who have autism. It is necessary for parents of children with autism to exercise authority, supervise their children's conduct, pay careful attention, and lead their children in every part of their life. Autism is a developmental disorder that affects brain development.

They are able to convey their wants and desires to people around them in the home environment if they need help with carrying out a routine duty. They are able to communicate their needs and desires to others in the home setting. At the location where the Autism Service Center provides treatment for children with autism, the behavior that is observed when a child is undergoing therapy for autism is sitting on the bench that is provided, being willing to be quiet, and taking lessons according to the therapist's commands. At the site of the inclusive school, the behavior that is seen that is in compliance with the first criterion is listening to and following the orders given by the teacher. Children who have autism are not known for having outbursts in public places, which is a trait that appears to meet the first condition in terms of public behavior since it eliminates the possibility of such outbursts.

The initiative and participation behavior of children with autism in participating in activities that are directed either by parents, teachers, or therapists is an indicator of the adjustment behavior of children with autism in the second criterion. These behaviors are seen in children with autism when they are participating in activities that are directed by any of these individuals. Children who have autism often display this behavior while taking part in activities. Instructions that entail an activity that is carried out regularly or a behavior that is consistent or repetitive are more likely to be

followed by children who have autism because these types of instructions are more familiar to them. This is due to the fact that children with autism have an increased likelihood of remembering a behavior and adopting it if it is consistent or recurrent. It is the obligation of parents to continuously supply stimulation and stimulation to their children so that their children's development may be maximized according to their capacities.

When the responder is at home, the ability to support the responder in their tasks without the responder being informed of the aid is vital. Children diagnosed with autism who are undergoing treatment in a facility that is managed by the Autism Service Center have shown an interest in competing in games and cooperating with one another while having fun. Children with autism who are educated in an inclusive setting are more likely to be able to make accommodations and demonstrate empathy for their fellow students. As long as they do not throw tantrums or cry in public places, children who have autism are permitted to take part in public activities such as going on casual walks, attending prayer gatherings, and other such activities.

Children who have autism need to show that they are able to have a good attitude within their friendships in order to fulfill the third behavior criteria for adjusting to their environment. This behavior was carried out in the presence of his brothers when they were playing at home, while visiting with his cousins in the village, while engaging in leisure activities together, and while getting together with friends. If a person is able to effectively change their behaviors and mindsets, they will become more pleasant to others who are in their immediate environment, which will boost their likelihood of being accepted. Children who have autism may participate in activities within the framework of the home environment, such as playing tickle or hide and seek with their siblings, which fits the third criteria. When they come to the Autism Service Center, the children who have been diagnosed with autism are given the chance to participate in gymnastic activities while wearing happy grins. Children with autism who attend an inclusive school are better able to maintain their self-control because they are able to give their peers the option to grab toys that have been given to them by the therapist so that they can play together. This allows the children with autism to interact more socially with their peers. Children who have autism have a great desire, while they are remaining in the village, to mingle with their siblings and other members of the extended family in public spaces. This is because they feel more comfortable in these settings.

## Conclusion

A child's development and growth are greatly influenced by the care provided by those closest to them, especially the family. As part of this treatment, autistic children are provided with social services to meet their needs as they go through typical childhood stages. Emotional support, appreciative support, direct assistance, and informational support are all forms of social support that parents may provide for their autistic children. Physical contact in the form of hugs and kisses, as well as genuine expressions of compassion and genuine interest in the well-being of autistic children, may go a long way toward showing the children and their families that they have emotional support. The expression of gratitude support is shown when people are praised for their successes. The provision of suitable settings for the growth of children with autism is one example of direct assistance. Providing information is one way to show your support. It is hard to disentangle the ability of children with autism to self-adjust from the good parenting behavior and the provision of social support by parents. Adjustment skills may be shown by children with autism who are compliant with the norms established in their environment, who take the initiative to engage in the activities designed for them, and who keep a positive outlook in their peer interactions.

## Acknowledgments

The authors extend their appreciation to the Deanship of Scientific Research at King Khalid University for funding this work through Big Research Groups under grant number (RGP.2 /136/43).

## References

1. Boshoff, K., et al. "A meta-synthesis of how parents of children with autism describe their experience of advocating for their children during the process of diagnosis." *Health Soc Care Community* 27.4 (2019): e143-e157.
2. Pavlopoulou, G., & Dimitriou, D. "'I don't live with autism; I live with my sister'. Sisters' accounts on growing up with their preverbal autistic siblings." *Res dev disabil*. 88 (2019): 1-15.
3. Tesfaye, R., et al. "Assuming ability of youth with autism: Synthesis of methods capturing the first-person perspectives of children and youth with disabilities." *Autism* 23.8 (2019): 1882-1896.
4. Gyasi, Razak M., et al. "Social support networks and psychological wellbeing in community-dwelling older Ghanaian cohorts." *Int psychogeriatr*. 31.7 (2019): 1047-1057.
5. Baker, B., & Yang, I. "Social media as social support in pregnancy and the postpartum." *Sex Reprod Healthc*. 17 (2018): 31-34.
6. Lin, J., et al. "Understanding Chinese consumer engagement in social commerce: The roles of social support and swift guanxi." *Internet Res*. 28.1 (2018): 2-22.
7. Tolbert, E., et al. "A qualitative exploration of the experiences, needs, and roles of caregivers during and after cancer treatment: 'That's what I say. I'm a relative survivor'." *J Cancer Surviv*. 12.1 (2018): 134-144.
8. Potapchuk, T., et al. "Professional self-identification of future educators as a form of personal growth." *J Hist Cult Art Res*. 9.2 (2020): 72-89.
9. Grinchenko, A., et al. "The Influence of Self-Control on the Artistic and Performing Quality of a Musician." *J Hist Cult Art Res*. 9.4 (2020): 47-59.
10. Lawson, Rebecca P., et al. "Adaptation of social and non-social cues to direction in adults with autism spectrum disorder and neurotypical adults with autistic traits." *Dev Cogn Neurosci*. 29 (2018): 108-116.
11. Fyke, W., et al. "Communication and social interaction in the cannabinoid-type 1 receptor null mouse: Implications for autism spectrum disorder." *Autism Res*. 14.9 (2021): 1854-1872.
12. Newcomb, Eli T., & Hagopian, Louis P. "Treatment of severe problem behaviour in children with autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disabilities." *Int Rev Psychiatry* 30.1 (2018): 96-109.
13. Legg, H., et al. "Exploring the Experiences of Parents Whose Child has Received a Diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder in Adulthood." *J Autism Dev Disord*. (2022): 1-11.
14. Thomas, N., et al. "Autism and primary care dentistry: parents' experiences of taking children with autism or working diagnosis of autism for dental examinations." *Int j paediatr dent*. 28.2 (2018): 226-238.
15. Lu, Ming-Hui, et al. "Social support as mediator and moderator of the relationship between parenting stress and life satisfaction among the Chinese parents of children with ASD." *J autism dev disord*. 48.4 (2018): 1181-1188.
16. Waters-Lynch, J., & Duff, C. "The affective commons of Coworking." *hum relat*. 74.3 (2021): 383-404.
17. De Clercq, Lana E., et al. "Expressed emotion in families of children with and without autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy and down syndrome: relations with parenting stress and parenting behaviors." *J Autism Dev Disord*. 52.4 (2022): 1789-1806.
18. Ogundele, Michael O. "Behavioural and emotional disorders in childhood: A brief overview for paediatricians." *World j clin pediatr*. 7.1 (2018): 9.
19. Hardy, Jessica K., & McLeod, Ragan H.. "Using Positive Reinforcement With Young Children." *Beyond Behav*. 29.2 (2020): 95-107.
20. Hall, Judith A., & Ruben, Mollie A.. "First impressions of physicians according to their physical and social group characteristics." *J Nonverbal Behav*. 44.2 (2020): 279-299.

**How to cite this article:** Ayasrah MN, Saleem Khasawneh MA. "Parents' Social Support as Media to Improve the Mental Health of Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder". *Clin Schizophr Relat Psychoses* 17S2 (2023) doi: 10.3371/CSRP.MMWY.100147