



Parental Hope Among Children Diagnosed With Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

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Abstract

While parenting could be strenuous in general, however parents of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) confront additional complications. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is widely regarded as one of the most difficult disabilities for children and their families. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is widespread and affects the developmental progression of a child in various ways. Overcoming the obstacles of an autistic child may also increase parents' susceptibility to psychological issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, and hopelessness preventing children's basic needs. Though many parents hold a hopeful attitude when meeting the needs of an autistic child. Despite growing interest in hope and the role of hope in parents dealing with the challenges of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) symptoms, there exists scarce literature in this domain. Considering the scope and the importance of the topic, an attempt has been made to review prior studies to understand parental hope when dealing with the difficulties associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Keywords: *Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Parental Hope, Parenting, Psychological issues*

Introduction

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2007) Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), also referred to as "Pervasive Developmental Disorders", lead to profound and persistent impairments in those who are affected. Likewise, American Psychiatric Association (2013) defined Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are a group of childhood-onset and lifelong neurodevelopmental disorders that have an impact on many areas of functioning and are marked by persistent deficits in social interaction as well as limited and monotonous behaviour. The symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) appear at an early age and persist through childhood and adulthood. An autistic child finds difficulty in making eye contact with others. Furthermore, they frequently distance themselves from others and express resentment at socialising with family members. Communication disablement proved to develop poor parent-child relationships (Ello & Donovan, 2005). Although there is no common agreement regarding the causes of the disorder, however, the diathesis-stress causation (Kabot et al., 2003) and widespread abnormalities in the brain anatomy and irregularities in the functioning of the brain have seen considered promising evidence to understand the nature of the disorder (Minshew et al., 2005). A diverse range of severe psychological issues such as stress (Tomanik et al., 2004;

Duarte et al., 2005; Yamada et al., 2007) anxiety and depression (Hastings, 2003; Bitsika & Sharpley, 2004) were seen commonly noted among parents of an autistic child. Moreover, parents often report feeling shocked, even when the symptoms of the disorder are quite clear, parents report feeling shocked (Fleischmann, 2004; Hutton & Caron, 2005). Being the parent of such a child will consequently have to overcome several stressors (feeding, toileting, and dressing) which are the major concerns for parents (Plant & Sanders, 2007). Guilt and longing for their child have been reported when parents have left no option but to admit their child to a residential facility (Benderix et al., 2006).

Method

Eligibility criteria

The current research incorporates findings from several disciplines, including psychology and education. Additionally, both quantitative and qualitative studies were used to develop a more holistic picture of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and its detrimental effects on parental hope when dealing with issues related to the disorder.

Inclusion criteria

Using Academia, Research Gate, Google Scholar, PubMed, and Elsevier, relevant studies examining the nature of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their impact on parental hope were investigated. The literature used in the present research was limited to the years 2003-2022.

Exclusion criteria

Studies that did not evaluate hope among parents of an autistic child were excluded from the present study. Furthermore, the present piece of the study did not incorporate any studies conducted before 2003.

Screening

Multiple databases were searched, examined and rated on eligibility criteria following the research title, abstract, keywords, and findings. However, due to inclusion and exclusion criteria, publications that were irrelevant or duplicated were removed. Lastly, each study has been evaluated and interpreted in the current piece of investigation.

Parental Hope and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Hope is an evolving concept among the parents of autistic children. Snyder et al. (1991), stated hope “a positive cognitive state based on the sense of successful goal-oriented determination and planning to meet these goals.” He and his associates posited hope as the wish to achieve the objectives that exist in two ways– (a) pathway thinking “the capacity to develop specific strategies to reach these goals” and (b) agency thinking “the ability to initiate and sustain the motivation for using those strategies”. Additionally, Snyder (2002 a) recognized that stressors can be viewed by people in one of two ways: (a) either as a setback that will cause destructive emotions or (b) as an obstacle that must be faced. Moreover, he suggested that an individual’s capacity to experience hope is influenced in part by the optimistic and goal-driven behaviour of those around them, particularly family members. Thus, a parental belief to fulfil the requirements of an autistic child plays a significant role in their general well-being mediated by family support (Shenaar-Golan, 2017; Lloyd & Hastings 2009). Hope among family members helps parents (Erickson, 2015) and mothers in specific (Ekas et al., 2016)

to overcome the obstacles related to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Likewise, Kozachuk (2020) educational status of the mother, the verbal aptitude of the child, maternal optimism, and family cohesion was found to help mothers deal with the difficulties associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Social support, child factors, family support (Ekas et al., 2010) and family resilience (Lopez & Magana, 2018) were also found to be associated with increased optimism among mothers when overcoming the challenges of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Snyder (2002 b) claimed that hope may serve as a defence mechanism that aid in overcoming suffering and failings. So, for parents of autistic children, hope may play a key role in helping them cope objectively. In sum, it can be inferred that hope offers a strength-based perspective to comprehend the perceptions of parents of autistic children. Having hope is essential to determining how someone will react to pushing forward with their objectives. When a person fails or succeeds in attaining their objectives, the ensuing cognitive state will impact their hope, which will help develop a hopeful attitude to attain future goals. Hence, Snyder's theory of hope links an individual's cognitive state and perception of an objective's viability among parents without an autistic child and an autistic child in specific. Also, raising an autistic child with optimism helps parents develop healthy social relationships (Zhao et al., 2022).

However, unhealthy familial relationships may lead to depression, grief, anxiety, helplessness (Higgins et al., 2005; Sen & Yurtsever, 2007; Ogston et al., 2011; Manor-Binyamini & Nator, 2016) and poor marital satisfaction among parents raising autistic child disorder (ASD) when compared with the control group (Risidal & Singer, 2004).

Tips for the Parents to deal with an autistic child

There are no set guidelines for overcoming the challenges associated with an autistic child. However, below are some promising ways to deal with the situation efficiently.

- Stay patient.
- Be positive.
- Engage your child in physical activities.
- Be affectionate and respectful with your child.
- Reinforce positive behaviour.
- Stay consistent on routine.
- Take care of yourself.
- Manage your stress.
- Meditation

Limitations

- A comprehensive study is required to address the individual maternal and paternal challenges in raising an autistic child.
- Understanding the social stigma associated with the ill effects of autism among parents with an autistic child.
- Additionally, the parental attributes (personality traits) can be incorporated for a better understanding of practices parents employ to overcome the difficulties of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Implications

- A healthy parent-child relationship along with family support can be developed to deal with the challenges of an autistic child.
- Better apprehending of familial hope, help mental health professionals develop intervention techniques to enhance hopeful attitudes among parents with an autistic child.
- Social support may serve as a significant factor to develop an optimistic attitude among parents to overcome the obstacles related to an autistic child.

Conclusion

Parents of an autistic child is a chronic situation that can increase vulnerability to stressors exposures. Raising an autistic child always means taking on more caregiving responsibilities. However, most children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) require complete assistance throughout their lives. The sort of assistance and care an autistic child requires has a significant impact not only on the mental health but also on the positive constructs (hope) of the parents. Moreover, raising an autistic child also results in stress, depression, and even hopelessness among parents. However, active parenting, family cohesion, and healthy social support may help the parents overcome the challenges associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) optimistically.

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