

Specialized Education in Enhancing Life Satisfaction Among Caregivers of Children with Autism

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Abstract

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a complex neurodevelopmental condition that significantly impairs a person's ability to communicate, engage in social interactions, and exhibit typical behavioral patterns. Raising a child with autism presents several difficulties for couples. Specialized education can be beneficial for children with autism. The study aims to identify the role of special education and satisfaction rates among autistic caregivers. The result shows that special education causes a 37.9 % change in caregiver stress. The requirement for more care and support is what makes autism a special need. These particular demands are supported and their potential is fully realized with the aid of specialized teaching approaches. Specialized teaching strategies, tailored lesson plans, and encouraging learning settings are all used in special education programs to meet the special requirements of kids with autism. These programs not only improve the educational results for kids with autism, but they also offer a disciplined environment that can lessen stress and worry in caregivers. In conclusion, because it necessitates more care and support, autism is seen as a special need. In order to meet their specific demands and enable them to reach their greatest potential, specialized education approaches have been developed. The comparatively low degree of hope and life satisfaction among parents of autistic children highlights the need for special education resources to be developed further and made more easily accessible in order to enhance the quality of life for both the children and their families. Enhancing support networks and doing continuous research are necessary to provide a more welcoming and encouraging learning environment for kids with autism.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), autism, caregiver, life satisfaction, parenting, quality of life, special education

INTRODUCTION

Caring for kids with autism spectrum disorder can be challenging and has wide-ranging effects on family dynamics. ASD is complex, involving a range of limitations, often centered on issues with communication and language, social challenges, and repetitive behaviors (Strock, 2007) [1]. Moreover,

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raising a child with autism can be extremely challenging for caregivers, leading to increased stress and distress as they try to meet their children's needs. Parents of children with ASD report higher levels of stress than parents of other parent groups. Throughout the process, caregivers' coping strategies are crucial tools that enable them to adapt healthily and achieve a high level of life satisfaction in different situations (Beck et al., 2004; Gray, 2006) [2, 3]. Caregivers often rely on a variety of coping strategies, including the use of service agencies, family support, social withdrawal, religion, normalization, individualism, and activism; however, the use of services and family

support appears to be the most successful coping strategies. According to several studies, mothers tend to experience greater levels of distress compared to fathers (Dabrowska & Pisula, 2010; Landon et al., 2018) [4, 5]. This distress is linked to the stress associated with raising a child and stems from the increased participation of mothers in caregiving responsibilities, where they play a significant role (Dabrowska & Pisula, 2010). Interestingly, while fathers are more engaged with their children's lives now compared to the 1960s, mothers still devote more hours of their day to their children, carry more responsibility for managing childcare, and perform more household chores than fathers. Hope is a crucial factor for mothers of exceptional children. It represents the capacity to envision and attain desirable outcomes in life, as well as mental health and the belief in a better future. Mothers of autistic children experience lower levels of wellbeing and higher incidence of depression. In this case, special education plays an important role in caregivers' lives. These kinds of interventions help kids become more organized and proficient time managers, but they also provide moms the tools, techniques, and emotional support they need to face everyday obstacles with greater self-assurance and fortitude. In order to improve the children's and their caregivers' general quality of life, this support system is essential.

REVIEW LITERATURE

According to Lazarus (2006), coping is the dynamic process of cognitive and behavioral efforts developed to meet specific demands [6]. This theory suggests that children who can take steps to address the source of their stress tend to have better mental health outcomes compared to those who rely on emotion-focused strategies aimed at reducing negative outcomes. The life satisfaction of caregivers with autistic children, especially mothers, is often significantly at risk (Bourke-Taylor et al., 2010) [7]. According to research, parents of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are more likely than parents of children with developmental disabilities to experience high levels of parenting stress. Moreover, Folkman and Lazarus (1980) suggested that coping involves a dynamic process, where strategies can change in different situations to effectively manage stress [8]. Also, Lai and Oei (2014) stated that parents of children with ASD may employ various coping methods to handle the significant challenges of raising a child with ASD, which could impact their level of parenting stress, reliance, and overall well-being [9]. For parents of children with ASD, the most significant stresses include difficulties with communication, disruptive and violent behaviour, and inappropriate eating and toileting (Dabrowska & Pisula, 2010). Caretakers of children with ASD have greater demands on their time and quality of life. Similarly, Van Niekerk (2023) brought attention to the degree of caregiver load, indicating the necessity for enhanced screening and psychosocial support initiatives [10]. To cope with these challenges, parents tend to use a range of strategies, such as accessing support services, relying on family support, withdrawing socially, keeping a sense of control, and engaging in self-care activities. While no single coping strategy appears to lead to definitively better outcomes, the use of support services and family support seem to be the most successful coping strategies for many parents. In this situation, special schooling is crucial. In another study, both caregivers reported similar levels of leisure frequency, parenting stress, and quality of life (Davy et al., 2024) [11]. There are several contexts in which structured education can be applied, such as the community, home, and school. In the existing literature on autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Tint and Weiss (2016) have conceptualized and assessed parental well-being in numerous ways, frequently focusing on the absence of negative factors, such as stress or mental health issues [12]. The daily challenges of caregivers are numerous and can impact the parents' physical and mental well-being, as well as their capacity to address the needs of the child and household (Bekhet et al., 2012) [13]. Alike, Bonis (2016) reported that many risk factors confronting these families, cultivating a robust sense of self-efficacy may serve as a protective factor that shields them from the demands of their environment [14]. The current study aims to explore the coping strategies used by caregivers of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as well as how these strategies relate to their overall life satisfaction. Additionally, Jonge et al. (2024) found that children from urban areas were more likely to receive intervention as compared to rural areas [15]. Further, the results highlighted the importance of addressing caregivers' challenges, such as the costs of care, barriers to accessing information, and the impact of stigma. Addressing these issues may help reduce

disparities in autism care both globally and within individual countries. Another study by Natan et al. (2024) found lower satisfaction rate among mothers of children with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) [16].

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To assess the role of special education and satisfaction rate among autistic caregivers.

Objectives

1. To assess the role of special education among autistic children.
2. To evaluate the satisfaction rates among autistic caregivers.

Variables

Caregiver (Independent variable), Life Satisfaction (Dependent variable).

Tools

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SLS), a 5-item assessment tool, was developed to evaluate both the positive and negative consequences.

Sample and Procedure

The present study included 100 children with their caregivers (mother, father, guardian). Participants were recruited through autism centres in Himachal Pradesh (The National Trust, 2022). The research employed a multiphase sampling methodology. Both rural and urban areas provided samples for the study. Participants in the study had to be Himachal Pradesh residents and caregivers of children with autism spectrum disorders in order to be eligible.

Procedure

Data were collected after giving informed consent of the participants. The prevalence rate among participants was examined using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SLS). This five-question scale was also created by Diener, and each one is based on a seven-point Likert scale: severely disagree, disagree, disagree, agree, disagree, disagree, and disagree a little bit [17].

Statistical Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29.0 was utilized to conduct statistical analyses. Regressions analyses and ANOVA were performed to analyse the satisfaction rate of caregivers. Regressions analyses model and ANOVA were calculated to determine the influence of caregiver satisfaction on special education program among children with autism.

RESULTS

Table 1 provide the domains' mean and standard deviation for the sample under investigation. The sample consist of 87 females and 13 males, making up 87 % and 13 % of the total sample, respectively. The total standard deviation of measures was 5.056.

- a. *Predictor:* (constant) (V-1, V-2, V-3, V-4, V-5)
- b. *Dependent Variable:* Caregiver (Mother, father, guardian)

In Table 2, The model demonstrates a strong fit and significant predictive value. With an R value of .379, the result shows that variables cause a 37.9 % change in caregiver stress. These results suggest that the predictors used in the model are effective in explaining and predicting the caregiver stress & special education.

- a. *Predictor:* (constant). (V-1, V-2, V-3, V-4, V-5)
- b. *Dependent Variable:* Caregiver (Mother, father, guardian)
- c. $F(1,99) = 3.161, p < .005$

As shown in Table 3, the p-value exceeds the standard significance level of 0.05. This suggests that the mean scores are not statistically different from one another.

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics Among Participants.

Measures	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item 1	100	2.46	1.66
Item 2	100	2.67	1.12
Item 3	100	3.10	1.71
Item 4	100	3.31	1.58
Variable 5	100	5.03	1.02
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>5.05</i>	<i>5.056</i>

Table 2. Model Summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig. F change
1	.379	.144	.098	.476	.001

Table 3. ANOVA.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.586	5	.717	3.161	.001
	Residual	21.32	94	.227		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>24.91</i>	<i>99</i>			

DISCUSSION

The study assessed caregivers' life satisfaction levels, paying special attention to moms of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The results showed that these moms' stress levels and life satisfaction differed significantly from those of other caregivers, such as fathers or guardians. In particular, compared to other caregivers, moms with learning difficulties reported lower levels of satisfaction and quality of life. The differences could be caused by the communication and relationship difficulties that come with raising a child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Personalized teaching methods that are adapted to each child's individual needs are extremely beneficial for educating autistic children. Since they absorb information best through examples and visual aids, these kids frequently need instructional support in the classroom. It is clear that these kids require organized, targeted planning in order to be supported. Furthermore, the degree of child psychiatric problems varies, which highlights the significance of intensive and transient coping methods that can promote more pleasant connections between caregivers and children. Examples of these disorders include ASD and certain learning disorders.

CONCLUSION

The study shows that, in comparison to other caregivers, mothers of children with ASD have significantly different levels of stress and life satisfaction. The findings emphasize the need for structured, targeted educational approaches for kids with autism. Furthermore, coping mechanisms and specialized therapies can help moms in particular, who confront significant difficulties in caring for autistic children, feel better psychologically and provide better care overall.

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