

The Challenges Faced by Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Strategies for Addressing Them from Their Parents' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT:

The present investigation seeks to elucidate the Challenges Encountered by Children Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and the Strategies for Mitigating These Challenges as Perceived by Their Parents. The research employed a descriptive analytical methodology. The sample for this study comprised eighty individuals, specifically parents of children with autism spectrum disorder residing in the capital city of Amman, to effectively fulfill the study's objectives. The researcher built the study tools and verified the truthfulness and stability of its tools, and the results indicated that there is a relationship between the areas of the Difficulties Scale facing children with autism spectrum disorder, the level of their application, and ways to treat and diagnose them from the results showed that the most prominent difficulties facing children with autism spectrum disorder and ways to address them are the lack of interest of parents in dealing with the child with autism spectrum disorder according to their different needs, and that there are statistically significant differences at the level of statistical significance in the difficulties facing children on the autism spectrum and ways to treat them due to variables (gender, age, educational level, economic status). The researcher suggested that researchers need to conduct qualitative research studies to explore the challenges which children with autism spectrum disorder face during their diagnostic assessment and educational process. Researchers need to examine the obstacles which autistic children face together with their appropriate assessment methods and required educational and therapeutic resources. Parents need to take part in their children's diagnostic process, educational experience, and treatment because it helps them understand autism better and learn how to manage it.

Keywords: challenges, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Children with Autism, Family Support.

Introduction

There is no doubt that the family, along with its members, finds it difficult to bear a child suffering from autism spectrum disorder, as it represents a dangerous turning point in the life of the family, as autism spectrum disorder is diagnosed at early ages ranging from birth to eight years of age, and the severity of the autism spectrum disorder is determined according to the levels of support, (Khawla, 2008), as it represents a serious turning point in the life of the family, and on all social, economic, behavioral, and emotional levels, through the presence of a child with disability and problems and difficulties related to it, but not limited to the disabled child, but also to the same family with all its members to different extents (El-Zraigat, 2020).

Children with autism spectrum disorder need care and attention from those in charge of special education. The past few years have witnessed great efforts that have led to attention to organizing and reforming the educational process for students with disabilities. the most important of which was the adoption of practices based on scientific research used by teachers and others who deal with people with disabilities (Simpson, 2005).

Despite the widespread spread and spread of the distance education process in the Arab countries, the technical capabilities of these countries have not been tested, and in light of the continuation of the Corona pandemic and the lack of knowing when it will end, whether locally or internationally, it is not possible to continue distance education so that the educational process for people with autism spectrum disorder does not stop, and to provide services to them, whether through the opening lesson or through the distance education platform (Ghnaim, 2020).

Study Problem and Research Questions

The problem addressed in this study is to identify the educational characteristics of children with autism spectrum disorder and their differences from the rest of their peers with disabilities and ordinary people, and this is what enables teachers to make modifications to the curricula offered to children with autism spectrum disorder based on their needs

and capabilities, especially those enrolled in partial integration programs and institutes, while in distance education, teachers and families of children with autism spectrum disorder must double their efforts to provide them with the required educational services, and this is what defines the problem of this study in light of the answer to the following questions:

1. What is the Challenges Faced by Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Strategies for Addressing Them from Their Parents' Perspectives.
2. Are the statistical differences significant at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ for average responses of a study sample members regarding the level of challenges faced by children on autism spectrum and ways to deal with them from the viewpoint of their parents due to the variables (gender, age, educational level, economic status)?

Importance of the study:

The importance of the study is in two respects: theoretical importance and practical importance:

Theoretical Importance: This study is concerned with the category of children with autism spectrum disorder, which is considered one of the special categories that has increased interest in it globally, in the Arab and locally due to the increase in the number of children with autism spectrum disorder, and the study sheds light on autism spectrum disorder and knowing its causes, symptoms and effects, especially on the child with autism spectrum disorder and his family. It has parents of children on the autism spectrum and how to care for and nurture their children.

Applied Importance: A scientific addition that sheds light on this category, especially children with autism spectrum disorder, and this type of study helps to know what this group needs in terms of time and time in order to understand and support them, and the difficulty that this group has in diagnosis, treatment, and treatment, especially the learning aspect.

Objectives of the study:**This study aimed to:**

1. This book highlights the challenges experienced by children with autism spectrum and offers a insight of overcoming these challenges through their parent's eyes.
2. Levels of the Challenges faced by autistic children and Methods on how to handle these challenges from their parents perspective
3. This signals if there are any statistically significant differences at the level of the average of study sample members about the Challenges faced by children on the autism spectrum and how to cope with these challenges from their parents' perspective based on (gender, age, educational level economic status) was indicated.

Study Terms:

Difficulties: "Students with autism spectrum disorder are enrolled with regular students in regular classrooms on a permanent basis, as the students receive joint educational programs. In this type of integration, it is necessary to provide the conditions and factors that help achieve it and accept regular students with special needs in regular classrooms. which is to serve students with special needs within the regular study program, while providing them with specialized teachers and auxiliary services instead of placing these students in special classes independent of them, to increase the opportunities for social interaction between students Ordinary people and students with special needs, and increasing real learning opportunities for students with special needs (Ghunaimat, 2015, 197).

Autism Spectrum Disorder: "It is a developmental disorder that appears in early childhood and results in neurological disorders that affect brain function and appear in the form of problems that include two areas of behavior development, namely communication, social interaction, and repetitive restricted interests of behavior and activities (Takali, 2018, p. 17).

Parents of Autism Spectrum Disorder: The study procedurally defines them as children who have been diagnosed based on formal and informal tests

in place in private government centers and institutes in the city of Amman.

Specifics of the study:

- Objective Limitations: The research was limited by the challenges that children with the autism spectrum face and the ways to face these challenges from the perspective of the parents of these children.
- Spatial Limitations: This research was applied to the parents of children with the autism spectrum in the capital city of Amman.
- Time Limits: This research was applied in the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023.

Autism Spectrum Disorder:

Autism spectrum disorder is one of the developmental disabilities that have an impact on the individual for life, as it affects his social interaction and his surroundings, and these disorders include a wide range of disorders such as Asperger's disorder in which the individual has high intelligence and superior academic level, but suffers from disorders in social interaction and communication (Al Ali, 2013).

According to the fifth edition of the Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the name of the disorder known as autism spectrum disorder has been changed; it is now called by a different name. which is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), which includes the previously known Autism Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome, Rett Syndrome, Childhood Dissociative Disorder, and Unspecified Comprehensive Developmental Disorder under a single name, whereas the fifth edition includes Autism Spectrum Disorder under the umbrella of neurodevelopmental disorders that includes the following disorders besides the category of autism disorders: mental disorders, communication disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorders, Learning disabilities, and motor disorders (Al-Jabri, 2014).

Recently, autism spectrum disorder has been defined according to the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: (disability) or specific deficit that appears

in two developmental areas, namely interaction and social communication, limited repetitive patterns of behavior and activities that appear in an early period of development, and autism spectrum disorder (DSM-5) as one of the neurodevelopmental disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

In light of the previous two definitions, they agreed that autism spectrum disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder that includes the following characteristics: Early developmental stages, specifically prior to age eight, are characterized by a marked deficit in social-communicative engagement alongside the manifestation of rigid, repetitive, and invariant behavioral routines.

Although the main cause of autism spectrum disorder is not yet known exactly, there are many recent studies that have suggested that it is due to rubella infection, chromosomal abnormalities, or prolonged maternal hyperthermia during pregnancy due to the mother's illness, or that it may be caused by damage to the baby's brain during pregnancy (Tamimi, 2012).

Characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder

Children with autism spectrum disorder have been defined by three key characteristics: difficulty in social interaction, difficulty in communication, and difficulty in developing imagination and play, apart from these characteristics, the repetition of behavior and lack of accepting any change in their routine are also considered to be the key characteristics of autism, but these characteristics are not the same for everyone, two autistic children with the same diagnosis may differ, as autistic children form heterogeneous groups in terms of characteristics and traits, and one of these characteristics is poor social interaction Extreme emotional coldness and poor response to external stimuli, poor use of language and communication with others, self-harm and loss of sense of personality, pathological preoccupation with certain topics, children with autism spectrum disorder feeling acute anxiety, inadequacy in the performance of some independent and life skills, and a decrease in the level of mental function (Chalabi, 2007).

Based on the above, and a review of the symptoms of autism spectrum disorder and the most prominent unreassuring indicators that appear on the autistic child before the completion of his thirty months of age, it is argued that autistic children do not like to be embraced by anyone, and they do not seem to hear, and they do not care about those around them, and that autistic children do not care about those around them, and do not show their pain if they are injured, and they are always abnormally attached to things, and that autistic children do not like to play with ball, but they use many skills, and they resist Traditional methods of education, they like to be isolated from strangers and acquaintances, that they may join others under urgency, that some of them may have certain abilities such as drawing and playing, that some of them may acquire some words but quickly forget them, that autistic children may laugh and giggle for no reason, and that they do not manage dangers in general, and that they repeat words without understanding its meaning in the so-called trap (Suleiman, 2006).

Behavioral Challenges in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Children with autism spectrum disorder have many behavioral problems that may be caused by a variety of reasons, as such problems may interfere with the educational and rehabilitative process of the child, and may be harmful to him and those around him, as parents complain about children with autism spectrum disorder, especially about such problems, which may differ in terms of treatment or modification from one child to another, and such problems may include:

- Self-harm behaviors: It is aggression that aims to harm the self, and the form of self-harm takes various forms (tearing or destroying personal property, slapping the face, pulling hair, hitting the head against a wall, scratching the body with nails, biting fingers, burning parts of the body, or both with fire and cigarettes).
- Aggressive Behaviors: (Al-Khatib, 2011) defines it as aggressive behavior for any act aimed at causing harm, pain, and harm to others or to destroy their property.

- Stereotyped behaviors: Stereotypical behavior in children with autism spectrum disorder includes many behaviors, as mentioned by Mustafa and El-Sherbiny (2011) as follows:
- Swings his/her body forward and backward to the right and left with his legs resting on his feet.
- He is busy playing with his own injury or a body part, or pulling his/her own hair.
- When involuntary movements of the hand to arouse oneself, such as flapping the hands or twisting the hands.
- Walking on tiptoes or walking with a streak is as if walking two steps forward and two steps backward.
- Staring at electricity or anything in the room.
- Constantly making certain sounds and closing the ears with his fingers.
- Scratch and wipe the body by hand or with a specific object.
- Biting the pen or eraser constantly put their finger or another object in the mouth and licking it (Mustafa & El-Sherbini, 2011).

Previous Studies:

The study conducted by Jolene, Hauser & Jennifer (2018, Houser, and Jolynn) revealed that parents who believed that environmental factors contributed to their child's autism, parents who were experiencing emotional stress or confusion about the child's autism, or parents who saw the child's condition as stressful tended to exhibit more emotional and behavioral difficulties in their children.

Pellicano & Kenny (2017) conducted a study to understand the support needs of parents of children with autism spectrum disorder with the services provided, and its sample consisted of 139 parents of children with autism spectrum disorder who attend school in a suburb of London. This makes them feel lonely and isolated, and a student Parents in the interview expressed their desire to receive family-centered services that are able to understand their

specific needs, build a strong relationship with them, and are able to support them when they need support.

Evaluate the efficacy and perception of autism-specific services in Saudi Arabia, Al-Otaibi and Al-Malki (2016) surveyed 80 parents of affected children. Their findings highlighted a spectrum of contrasting viewpoints regarding early intervention frameworks; however, a collective consensus was reached concerning their critical value, alongside a unified recommendation for expanded public-sector accountability. More services are needed by increasing the number of centers for children with autism and encouraging them to join mainstream schools, as well as increasing the information available to parents regarding early interventions.

In a study conducted by Michailidi & Stampoltzis (2016), which aimed to find out the perceptions of Greek parents about the diagnostic process for their children with autism, its sample consisted of (193) fathers and mothers.

Utilizing a descriptive methodology, Younis (2015) investigated the multifaceted requirements of parents of children with autism in Saudi Arabia, specifically analyzing how variables such as parental age, education, household income, and the severity of the disorder influence these needs. Among the 87 randomly selected participants, empirical findings identified financial support as the primary priority, yielding the highest mean score of 57.2. While the degree of autism showed no statistically significant impact at the ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level, educational disparities emerged, with those below the secondary level demonstrating distinct needs compared to their secondary and university-educated counterparts. Furthermore, significant correlations were observed regarding monthly earnings, particularly favoring the bracket ranging from 5,000 to 10,000 SAR, highlighting a critical socio-economic dimension in the provision of care.

The current study is distinguished from previous studies.

The researcher reviewed numerous Arabic and foreign studies related to the theoretical aspects of autism spectrum disorder, and found that no study had addressed the difficulties faced by individuals

with autism spectrum disorder and how they are coped with from the parents' perspective. This distinguishes this study from previous research; to the researcher's knowledge, it is the first study to address this topic.

Method and Procedures

Study Methodology:

To fulfill the research objectives, a descriptive-analytical approach was adopted, as this methodology aligns optimally with the investigative nature of the study and its specific requirements for data interpretation, which aimed to identify the difficulties faced by children with autism spectrum disorder and what are the appropriate ways to deal

with such difficulties from the parents' point of view.

Study Sample:

Comprising a cohort of 80 guardians, the research population was specifically drawn from parents whose children have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. These parents were selected from those contacted and who collaborated with the researcher at special education and autism centers in Amman. The demographic composition of the study cohort, categorized by gender, age, academic background, and socio-economic standing, is detailed in Table (1).

Table (1)

Distribution of Study Sample Members by Demographic Variables

Percentage	Repetition	Category	Variable
43.75%	35	Male	Gender
68.75%	55	Female	
100%	80	Total	
12.5%	10	Under 25 years old	Age
18.75%	15	25-35 years old	
31.25%	25	From 35-45	
37.5%	30	45 years and older	
100%	80	Total	
27.25%	22	Basic	Educational Level
35%	28	Secondary	
21.25%	17	Bachelor	
10%	8	Master	
6.25%	5	PhD	
100%	80	Total	
35%	28	Low	Economic situation
42.5%	34	Medium	
22.5%	18	High	
100%	80	Total	

Study Tool:

To fulfill the research objectives, a specialized assessment instrument was engineered to evaluate the tripartite challenges associated with autism spectrum disorder: the complexities of clinical diagnosis, the pedagogical hurdles in educational

instruction, and the multifaceted obstacles encountered during therapeutic intervention.

Validity of the study tool: The researcher verified the validity of the tool used for the study in two ways, namely the honesty of the arbitrators and the honesty of the construction.

Stability of the study tool: The researcher calculated the stability coefficients by test and retest method using the Cronbach's alpha stability

coefficient, and Table (2) shows the stability coefficient for the autism spectrum disorder scales.

Table (2)

Stability Coefficients for the Autism Spectrum Disorder Difficulties Scale

Variable	Cronbach Alpha
Difficulties in diagnosing children with autism spectrum disorder.	0.86
Educational difficulties for children with autism spectrum disorder.	0.85
Difficulties in treating children with autism spectrum disorder.	0.87
Cronbach Alpha	Total Grade

It is clear from the following table that the stability coefficients for the areas of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Scale were at the minimum (0.86) and at the highest limit (0.87), while the total score of the stability of the scale was (0.88) and all of them are acceptable until the objectives of the study are achieved.

Procedures carried out by the researcher:

The researcher did the following:

1. Selecting a sample by random method and approving it for parents.
2. Development of the study scale.
3. Verify the validity and consistency of the study scale.
4. Applying the study scale by the researcher himself to the study sample.
5. Data entry and analysis on SPSS software, and extract results.
6. Develop appropriate recommendations in the light of the extracted results.

Study variables: The study includes the following variables:

Independent variables:

The study included the following variables

First: Independent variables

It included four variables, namely

- Gender, with two levels
- Age, with four levels
- Academic qualification, with three levels
- Economic situation, with three levels

Dependent variable:

- Difficulties facing children on the autism spectrum

Statistical Processing:

To analyze the responses of the study sample members, the statistical analysis program (SPSS) was used by answering the study questions, using arithmetic averages and standard deviations, the (T) test, Pearson correlation coefficients, regression analysis, and one-way/ANOVA analysis of variance.

Study Results and Discussion:

To answer the first question, which reads:

To address the primary inquiry regarding the obstacles encountered by children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and the corresponding parental coping mechanisms, descriptive statistics—including arithmetic means and standard deviations—were calculated for both individual subdomains and the comprehensive assessment scale, as detailed in Table (3).

Table (3)

Mathematical Averages, Standard Deviations, and Relative Importance of Scale Domains Diagnostic Difficulties of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder from the Parents' Perspective in Descending Order

Ranking	Relative importance	Standard deviations	Arithmetic mean	Paragraphs	t
2	High	489.	4.81	Diagnostic difficulties	1
1	High	451.	4.83	Educational Difficulties	2
3	High	670.	4.76	Treatment difficulties	3
High		4.80	4.86	Total Grade	

As shown in the table (3), the arithmetic averages of the paragraphs of the area of difficulties facing children on the autism spectrum ranged from (4.76 to 4.83), the arithmetic average of the scale as a whole was (4.86) with a standard deviation of (0.670), and the arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the domains came in the following order.

Statistical analysis prioritized the second domain, which achieved the highest ranking with an arithmetic mean of 4.83, followed by the first domain at 4.81, and the third domain at 4.76; notably, all three areas demonstrated a consistently high degree of prevalence. These findings align with the research conducted by Younis (2015) in Saudi Arabia, which investigated the requirements of parents of children with autism relative to socio-demographic variables such as employment,

academic background, disorder severity, and economic status. Mirroring the current methodology, Younis utilized mean scores and standard deviations to delineate the obstacles encountered by children on the spectrum and the corresponding parental coping strategies, as categorized below:

To answer the second question, which reads?

Does the data indicate any statistically significant variances ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the mean perceptions of the study cohort concerning the obstacles faced by children with autism and their associated management strategies when disaggregated by demographic factors such as gender, age, academic background, or socio-economic standing?

Gender:

Table (8): Means, Standard Deviations, and t-Test Results by Gender Variable

Standard deviation	Arithmetic Average	Issue	Gender	Paragraphs
456.	4.90	55	Female	Difficulties facing children with autism spectrum disorder and ways to treat them
638.	4.76	25	Male	
529.	4.83	Kidney		

Table (8) shows that the arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the difficulties facing children with presence spectrum disorder,

and the total score of the scale were high according to the gender variable.

Age:

Table (9): Mathematical Averages and Standard Deviations of the Difficulties Clauses Facing Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder by Age Variable

Standard deviation	Arithmetic Average	Issue	Age	Paragraphs
533.	4.83	10	Under 25 years old	Difficulties facing children with autism spectrum disorder and ways to treat them
601.	4.82	15	25-35 years old	
670.	4.71	25	From 35-45	
518.	4.80	30	45 years and older	
508.	4.83	80	Kidney	

Table (9) shows that the arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the difficulties faced by children with autism spectrum disorder,

and the total score of the scale were high according to the age variable.

Educational Level

Table (12): Mathematical Averages and Standard Deviations of the Difficulties Faced by Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and the Total Mean According to the Educational Level Variable

Standard deviation	Arithmetic Average	Issue	Scientific Level	Paragraphs
527.	4.80	22	Basic	Difficulties facing children with autism spectrum disorder and ways to treat them
483.	4.81	28	Secondary	
533.	4.82	17	Bachelor	
686.	4.70	8	Master	
638.	4.76	5	PhD	
545.	4.80	80	Kidney	

It is clear from the following table that there are differences in the arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the paragraphs of the scale and the total mean according to the variable of the

educational level and to a high degree, and to know the significance of these differences, the test of one-way ANOVA was performed and Table (13) shows the results of this analysis:

Table (13) The results of the analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA) for the paragraphs of the scale and the total mean according the educational level variable

Significance Level	Statistician (P)	Average Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Total Squares	Source of Contrast	Domains
.558	.587	.245	2	.490	Between groups	Difficulties facing children with autism spectrum disorder and ways to treat them
		.418	97	40.518	During the groups	
			99	41.009	Total	

It is clear from the following table that there are no differences in all items of the scale, and the total score of the scale according to the variable of economic status. Specifically, the data indicates a functional correlation between the study cohort's

perceptions of the challenges associated with autism spectrum disorder and their corresponding implementation levels when analyzed through the lens of the academic qualification variable.

Economic situation:**Table (10) Mathematical Averages and Standard Deviations of the Diagnostic Difficulties of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and the Total Mean According to the Economic Situation Variable**

Standard deviation	Arithmetic Average	Issue	Economic situation	Paragraphs
489.	4.81	28	Low	Difficulties facing children with autism spectrum disorder and ways to treat them
686.	4.70	34	Medium	
451.	4.83	18	High	
481.	4.82	80	Kidney	

As shown in Table (10), the arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the paragraphs of the scale and the total mean according to the variable of economic situation were high, and to know the

significance of these differences, the one-way ANOVA test was carried out, and the results are shown in Table (11):

Table (11): Results of One-Way ANOVA Analysis of Scale and Total Average Items According to Economic Situation Variable

Significance Level	Statistical F	Average Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Total Squares	Source of Contrast	Domains
.000	7.871	2.699	3	8.096	Between groups	Difficulties facing children with autism spectrum disorder and ways to treat them
		.343	96	32.913	During the groups	
			99	41.009	Total	

Table (11) indicates that there is no relationship between the axes of the scale and the total score according to the variable of economic status, and all of them are high, i.e., there is a relationship between the answers of the study sample members regarding the difficulties of diagnosing children with autism spectrum disorder and the total mean according to the variable of economic status.

Findings and recommendations

The study reached the most important findings and recommendations:

First: The Results:

1. There is a strong connection between the axes of the Difficulties Scale for children with autism spectrum disorder, the methods used to treat them, and the level of their application from the perspective of their parents .

3. The results showed that the biggest problems for kids with autism spectrum disorder and how to fix them are that their parents don't care about meeting their needs .

3. Statistically significant differences exist in the challenges encountered by children on the autism spectrum and the strategies to address them, influenced by variables including gender, age, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status.

Second: Recommendations:

Based on the results of the study, the researcher proposes a number of recommendations, which are as follows:

1- Conducting research and qualitative studies to examine the challenges encountered by children with autism spectrum disorder in diagnosis and education, as well as to investigate the difficulties faced by these children and the necessary diagnostic,

educational, and therapeutic services required for them.

2- Parents need to be involved in their children's autism spectrum disorder diagnosis, education, and treatment so they can learn more about autism and how to deal with it.

3- Carrying out further studies regarding the subject of problems facing children with autism spectrum disorder and linking them to variables related to the category of autism spectrum disorders to come up with the desired results for such a category.

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