

**A STUDY ON ATTITUDE AND PRACTICES OF PARENTS OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT****¹LATHA FANCY C****²Dr. M. GEORGE DAVID**

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ABSTRACT

Disability has been a universal human experience right from the inception. The term —disability derive from a limitation in the functions and activities performed by individuals as members of society, thereby circumscribing their participation in the socio-cultural, political and economic life of their communities. Autism is a brain disorder that affects the way the brain uses or transmits information. Some of the Case Studies have found abnormalities in several parts of the brain that almost certainly occurred during fetal development. The problem may be centered in the parts of the brain responsible for processing language and information from the senses. This study is started with objectives of examining socio-economic background of respondents and analysing attitude of the respondents. For that, the researcher collected 75 samples from the selected used respondents at various places in Kanyakumari District. The percentage and chi square test are tools used for this study.

KEY WORDS: Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Physical Deficiencies, Malformations and Malfunctions.

INTRODUCTION

Disability has been a universal human experience right from the inception. The term —disability‖ derive from a limitation in the functions and activities performed by individuals as members of society, thereby circumscribing their participation in the socio-cultural, political and economic life of their communities. 'Disability' is not a homogeneous category. It comprises different kinds of bodily variations, physical impairments, sensory difficulties or deficits, mental and learning deficiencies which may be either congenital or acquired. Authors have engaged with the term 'disability' in a variety of ways. It has been viewed as a marker of disease (ICD-10), of physical deficiencies, malformations and malfunctions (WHO, 2002), or alterations to kinship expectations and domestic duties (Ingstad, 1995). Disability has been conceptualized in terms of circumscribed economic and productive roles (Stiker, 1999; Foucault, 1967) or in terms of community responses and obligations.

As the term denotes a lack or deficiency, whether mental, physical or sensory, it has by and large been defined in medical terms. Yet, in all societies, the experience of disability is mediated by socio-cultural understandings that give meaning to impairments and affect the experiences of disabled people in various socio-historical contexts. Disability activists and scholars have long questioned exclusively medical definitions and have instead emphasized the social and cultural understandings that define power relations between the 'able' and disabled which result in the disabled being stigmatized and referred to the margins of social existence.

AUTISM

The term Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) constitutes a wide spectrum of neurodevelopment disorders described by impairment in several areas of development. The term pervasive' is used because many basic areas of psychological development are affected at the

same time. The impairments are qualitative and are distinctively deviant relative to the individual's developmental or cognitive age. These include difficulties in Social interaction, communication social-emotional functioning, and unusual behaviours including stereotypic behaviours and/or restricted interests.

CAUSES AND FACTORS FOR AUTISM

Autism can result from any factor that hinders healthy brain development. In many cases, doctors cannot identify any single cause for the condition. Factors involved in autism fall into the broad categories of:

- (1) Genetic and
- (2) Environmental

Genetic Factors:-

Genetic factors involve faulty chemical instructions in genes, the hereditary material in every cell. In human cells, genes are carried on 46 microscopic threads called chromosomes that are arranged in 23 pairs. Scientists have made great progress in learning how genes function. Some genetic errors cause mental retardation. In some cases, such errors are inherited. Others occur spontaneously for unknown reasons. One common genetic cause of retardation is a disorder called Down syndrome, in which people have an entire extra chromosome, for a total of 47. Another common genetic factor is called fragile-X syndrome. This condition involves an abnormality in the X chromosome, one of the chromosomes that determines a person's sex. Many less common genetic factors affect genes that control a particular chemical pathway in the body. One such condition is phenylketonuria, often abbreviated PKU. People with PKU cannot process one of the subunits called amino acids in proteins. This amino acid builds up and leads to mental disorder if their diet is not controlled.

Environmental Factors:-

Environmental factors include a wide variety of influences that can affect brain development before, during, or after birth. During pregnancy, a woman's general health and nutrition greatly affect her unborn baby. Consumption of alcohol during pregnancy can lead to a condition in the baby called fetal alcohol syndrome. This syndrome causes many serious health problems, including mental retardation. Use of prescription, nonprescription, or illegal drugs can also harm a developing baby's brain. Exposure before birth to certain infections, including rubella (also called German measles) and HIV, can also cause autism. Events at birth can also harm the brain. Premature birth, injury during delivery, and failure of the newborn to breathe properly can all lead to retardation. During childhood, autism can result from such causes as brain infections, head injuries, prolonged high fevers, or lead poisoning.

VARIOUS TYPES/FORMS OF AUTISM

These are the most common disorders, all presenting in a somewhat similar manner, but having slight variations:

Autistic Disorder –

As stated above, and defined by the Autism Society of America (ASA): "Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life and is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the normal functioning of the brain, impacting development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Both children and adults with autism typically show difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities.

Autism is one of five disorders that falls under the umbrella of Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD), a category of neurological disorders characterized by —severe and pervasive impairment in several areas of development."

Pervasive Developmental Disorder (P.D.D) –

Also called "Atypical Autism" Children with this disorder have many of the same characteristics of Autism, but not all the criteria associated with Autism.

Asperger's Disorder –

Children with this disorder do not have the usual language barriers associated with Autism and are generally very intelligent. However, they do tend to struggle with social interactions, and can possess on a particular object or subject they take an interest in, and talk about it constantly.

Retts Disorder –

Retts is rather similar to Autism, but presents only in girls. The children begin to develop on target, but then begin losing some communication abilities. The symptoms of Retts can begin to occur between ages 1 and 4.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In the present scenario, there is a growing demand of medical & psychiatry social work in India & abroad...with growing problems getting more complex day by day, there was a need for a timely intervention. Autism is a severe disorder of brain function marked by problems with social contact, intelligence and language, together with ritualistic or compulsive behavior and bizarre responses to the environment. Autism is a lifelong disorder that interferes with the ability to understand what is seen, heard, and touched. This can cause profound problems in personal behavior and in the ability to relate to others. A person with autism must learn how to

communicate normally and how to relate to people, objects and events. However, not all patients suffer the same degree of impairment. There is a full spectrum of symptoms, which can range from mild to severe. This is an attempt to understand the perception, knowledge, Attitude and Practices towards the autistic children's daily schedule, their life style, behavior, supportive programmes, ministry of education and upbringing including the developmental aspects of the autistic children.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

AlAlmaei Asiri WM and Shati AA (2023), "Assessment of Parental Knowledge, Awareness, and Perception About Autism Spectrum Disorders in Aseer Region", the study showed that parents had poor knowledge levels regarding autism and its related clinical features especially male parents with a low level of education. On the other hand, their perception about the disease and its frequency in the study area was satisfactory. An early and accurate diagnosis plays a significant role in outcomes and development of behaviour in the child. If the parent recognizes the symptoms of autism in their child, like lack of eye contact, hyperactivity, increased attachments to toys, and lack of reactivity to verbal cues then they can seek medical help.

Jubina Bency A.T, John George (2017), "A Study on Knowledge, Attitude and Practice on Child-Rearing among Parents Having Childrewn With Intellectual Disabilities in Thrissur District Kerala", it was found that the knowledge level of parents of children with ID regarding child rearing was moderate to high, attitude and practice was found to be unsatisfactory. Parent's education, occupation and socio economic status had a significant role in determining their child rearing practices which in turn will lead to a better child development. So, interventions have to be focused on specific areas to improve the

attitude and practice of parents with intellectually disabled children on child rearing. The extend of problem of intellectually disabled child and their parents is still not fully appreciated by the society and the Government. There is a dominantly pessimistic view and despondency among the parents of these children which also needs to be addressed to alleviate their mental sufferings by extending social and economic supports.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To know socio economic background of sample respondents.
- To study the level of Knowledge of parents about Autism.
- To study the attitude of parents towards Autistic child.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher has used both primary data and secondary data for the study.

Primary data

The primary data has been directly collected by Questionnaire.

Secondary data

The secondary data for this study has been collected from various publications, Journals, Magazines and Books.

SAMPLING DESIGN

The consumers are large number in the study area. So, the researcher has selected 75 customers used Convenience Sampling Method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Demographic Variables of the Respondents

VARIABLES	No of Respondents	Percentage

Age	Upto 20	8	11
	21-30	27	36
	31-40	21	28
	Above 40	19	25
	Total	75	100
Family Types	Nuclear	39	52
	Joint	36	48
	Total	75	100
Educational Qualification	Upto SSLC	11	15
	HSC	23	31
	Graduation	27	36
	Post-Graduation	14	19
	Total	75	100
Occupation	Farmer	10	13
	Business	21	28
	Employees	28	37
	Labor work	16	21
	Total	75	100
Income Per Month	Less than 10000	6	8
	10001-20000	16	21
	20001-30000	29	39
	30001-40000	17	23

	Above 40000	7	9
	Total	75	100

Sources: Primary Data

Table No.1 shows demographics wise distribution of the respondents. It reveals that most of the respondents were living with Nuclear family. Majority of respondents in the age group of 26-30 and Graduates were high as compared to other Educational groups. Majority of the respondents were Employees and 30001-40000 respondents were high as compared to other Income per Month for respondents.

Table 2: Showing Number of children

Number of Children	No of Respondents	Percentage
1 st born	12	16
2 nd born	35	47
3 rd born	18	24
4 th born	10	13
Total	75	100

Sources: Primary Data

As shown in table Respondents children in the family frequency distributions of this investigate; There are 12 respondent have 1st born in the family. There are 35 respondent have 2nd born in the family. There are 18 respondent have 3rd born in the family. There are 10 respondent have 4th born in the family.

Table 3: -General appearance & behavior

Appearance Behavior	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Normal	61	81
Abnormal	14	19
Total	75	100

Source: Primary Data

As shown in table Respondents General appearance & behavior in the family frequency distributions of this investigates is shown, there are 61 Child have normal General appearance & behavior Developments in the family, there are 14 Child have abnormal General appearance & behavior Developments in the family.

Table 4: Showing parents attitude towards child that he/she is Burdon for them.

Valid	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	9	12
Agree	15	20
Disagree	16	21
Strongly Disagree	35	47
Total	75	100

Source: Primary Data

From above table 9 respondents strongly agree that autistic child is burdon on their family, 15 respondents are agree, 16 are disagree, 35 are strongly disagree about the attitude.

ANALYSIS THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS AND LEVEL OF PARENT'S ATTITUDE

In this research a careful analysis is done to find whether there is any significant relationship between the Parent's attitude and the Socio-economic factors such as age, Family Types, education, occupation and income. The null hypothesis formed to test whether there is any significant difference between the Parent's attitude and Socio-economic factors. The null hypothesis is tested with the help of chi-square test.

Table 5: Socio Economic Characteristics and Level of Parent's attitude

Character	Calculated Value	Degrees of Freedom	Table Value	Result
Age	15.73	12	21.02	Accepted
Family Types	5.87	3	7.81	Accepted
Education	16.75	9	16.92	Accepted
Income	21.13	12	21.03	Rejected
Occupation	10.65	9	16.91	Accepted

Computed data

From the above table it is clear that there is no significant difference between Parent's attitude and socio-economic factors of Income. But there is a significance difference between Parent's attitude and the Socio- economic factors such as age, Family Types, education and occupation of respondents.

FINDINGS

- ❖ Most of the respondents were living with Nuclear family.
- ❖ Majority of respondents in the age group of 26-30.

- ❖ Graduates were high as compared to other Educational groups.
- ❖ Majority of the respondents were Employees.
- ❖ 30001-40000 respondents were high as compared to other Income per Month for respondents.
- ❖ 12 respondent have 1st born in the family.
- ❖ There are 35 respondent have 2nd born in the family.
- ❖ There are 18 respondent have 3rd born in the family.
- ❖ There are 10 respondent have 4th born in the family.
- ❖ 61 Child have normal General appearance & behavior Developments in the family.
- ❖ There are 14 Child have abnormal General appearance & behavior Developments in the family.
- ❖ 35 respondents strongly disagree that autistic child is burdon on their family.

SUGGESTIONS

- Parents need to consider counseling to help manage their own feelings about their child's diagnosis.
- Parents should develop their vision to give best treatment to their children and also develop their way of approaching to them.
- Doctor or pediatrician and Psychiatrist also may the mediator for the behavior modification among autistic children.
- There is a need for support for parents immediately after the diagnosis of autism and while raising their autistic child. Perhaps, a service could be offered to parents immediately after the diagnosis.
- Education and Training are very much necessary in Child rearing practice.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that the key variables i.e. Attitude & Practices are inter correlated with each other and single independent variable can affected on the key variable. As such family is a place where child can get all kind of emotional bondage, love and warm. The study also revealed that the parental practices affected by the independent variables. When the Age increased it affected on the parent's knowledge regarding the rearing up to the child. Parents are agree that to have an autistic child is a matter of shame and sometimes they also feel it is Burdon on the family. Parents cannot live normal life due to autistic child they sometimes feel social, economic stress while some parents believe that an autistic child a gift given by god. When compare with socio-economic factors and attitude of the respondents, there is no significant difference between Parent's attitude and socio-economic factors of Income. But there is a significance difference between Parent's attitude and the Socio- economic factors such as age, Family Types, education and occupation of respondents. While some parents also agree about the belief that to have an autistic child is a result of their deeds of their previous birth.

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