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**Abstract**

This study aim to analyze the opinion of parents of children with ASD concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the Algerian social environment of autism and highlight the difficulties and obstacles in the strategy of working with ASD children. The results of the study have shown: misconceptions about the nature of autism spectrum disorder among families and parents, a problem of credibility and trust between specialists and parents, an imbalance in the distribution of gender responsibilities when having an ASD child. On the organizational side, Results have shown that the care of ASD children, the financial and schooling problems are geographically not equally represented.

The study has proposed (inclusivity \_Solidarity \_ early and scientific charge \_ prevention\_ And interactive Sharing) as solutions in order to improve the situation of autism in the country.

**Keywords**

Environnement social;  
Autism;  
Alegria ;

**الكلمات المفتاحية**

البيئة الاجتماعية؛  
الجزائر؛  
التوحد .

**البيئة الاجتماعية لظاهرة التوحد في الجزائر  
ملخص**

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إبراز نقاط القوة والضعف في البيئة الاجتماعية لظاهرة التوحد في الجزائر اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج التحليلي باستخدام استبيان موزع على العائلات المعنية وأظهرت النتائج وجود تصورات خاطئة حول طبيعة اضطراب طيف التوحد بين الأسر وأولياء الأمور، بالإضافة الى مشاكل المصداقية والثقة بين المختصين وأولياء الأمور، وعدم التوازن في توزيع المسؤوليات بين الجنسين في الاسرة عند إنجاب طفل مصاب بالتوحد. وعلى الجانب التنظيمي، أظهرت النتائج صعوبات تنظيمية في رعاية هؤلاء الأطفال بسبب ضخامة التمويل ومعوقات العدالة التوزيعية جغرافيا وقد اقترحت الدراسة (الشمولية \_ التضامن \_ الكشف المبكر والعلمي \_ الوقاية \_ والمشاركة التفاعلية) كحلول من أجل تحسين وضعية أطفال التوحد في البلاد.

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## **I- Introduction :**

The World Health Organization (OMS) estimates the prevalence of autism to 1% of the world's population (WHO 2022). The Algerian population count 45.02 million inhabitants on July 1, 2021 (source: Population Department of the Ministry of Health) and one million births per year. Regarding the OMS rate, the population of individuals with autism could be estimated around 450,000 people in the whole country. The question is therefore a major concern for the authorities in charge of health and education. In particular, this involves improving screening, diagnosis and care for people with autism, in line with international recommendations. (Autisme.sante.gov.dz)

According to the Algerian law, education is free and compulsory until the age of 16 years, and exceptionally the duration of compulsory schooling may be extended by two (2) years in favor of disabled students. The care of children with disabilities is also guaranteed by the state. The questions that will be addressed in this study are: Is there any regulatory framework concerning ASD population? How the regulatory requirements are applied in the real life of ASD children? What is the level of parents satisfaction as an indicator of the quality of the services provided by the state to the ASD children? What are the difficulties facing an efficient strategy of taking charge of this category of children.

### **I.1. \_ Literature review**

The autistic child's environment is the greatest element that affect and modulate his development. This environment is characterized by the contribution of multiple actors and the interaction of the relationships between them must be reorganized to ensure unity of purpose. Caring for an autistic child is not the task of one person or one institution, but rather a shared responsibility

### **I. 2. State psychological taking charge of autism in Algeria :**

Autism is a major public health problem. It is a disorder with serious consequences for those affected, families and the community. Algerian capacities are therefore still largely insufficient. Few therapists in the country are trained in the main recommended practices and procedures because training in diagnostic and stimulation methods is not integrated into university curricula of psychotherapist. In addition, certified trainers are few in number ( Hayet et al, 2020) .

The few equipped and competent centers face a growing demand from the population. These services are mainly found in psychiatric hospitals and are unevenly distributed throughout the national territory. Many children therefore do not benefit from an accurate diagnosis and the appropriate care and follow-up. Due to a lack of appropriate early support, they more frequently develop more or less severe associated disabilities ( \_Algerian Ministry of Health)

### **I\_ 3 \_ The national inter sectorial plan :**

The national inter sectorial plan of the Ministry of Health Population and Hospital Reform (MSPRH) aims to coordinate the efforts of all the sectors invested in better taking autism into account at the national level. Measures have already been implemented by the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of National Solidarity and the Ministry of Health, Population and Hospital Reform. (Algerian Ministry of Health)

### **I\_ 4 National Education sector systems :**

National Education, in conjunction with hospitals and all the structures concerned, ensures the appropriate educational care and school integration of disabled and chronically ill students. For this, several devices exist 7

In case of mild disorders, children can be accommodated in ordinary class, at primary level, in middle school and in high school, in accordance with the conditions provided for by the regulations.

-Special classes can be opened in ordinary schools at primary, middle and high school level for children with a mild mental deficiency who cannot be admitted to ordinary classes. Supervision of these special classes is provided by teachers, specialized teachers and competent specialized personnel from specific bodies of the National Solidarity sector.

In addition, the duration of compulsory schooling can be extended by two years for students with disabilities, whether they attend ordinary or special classes.

## **I\_5 : Measures in the health sector :**

Local Public Health Establishments (EPSP) constitute the first line of the public health system: they have more and more staff who are gradually devoting themselves to screening, support or at least the orientation of people with autism.

The personnel of the Maternal and Child Protection Services (PMI) can now benefit from continuous training on autism so that they can participate in the identification of the first signs.

Some Public Hospital Establishments (EPH) have staff capable of welcoming, supporting or guiding patients with autism.

19 Specialized Hospital Establishments (EHS) in psychiatry have a department or unit specialized in mental and psychological health of children.

More and more private practices of clinical psychologists, speech therapists and child psychiatrists are opening in the country.

## **I\_6\_ Support for associations :**

The Algerian State encourages associations to invest in the care of disabled children through subsidies. They are encouraged to develop and carry out activities in favor of children with disabilities, activities which may be educational, cultural, artistic or leisure.

To strengthen the capacities of social and humanitarian associations, a training program has been set up: it aims to update and enrich the practices of those who take care of and support people with disabilities.

## **I\_7\_ integration into the mainstream school environment :**

The school orientation of children with autism is carried out according to the nature and degree of their disability. The system for the integration of children with disabilities into ordinary schools in a total and/or partial manner is carried out in accordance with the interministerial decree of March 13, 2014. The latter sets the conditions for opening special classes for children with disabilities in establishments public education and teaching within the National Education sector.

A specialized commission, made up of representatives of professionals from the National Education and National Solidarity sectors, is responsible for guiding disabled children towards special classes or ordinary classes and ensuring their educational follow-up.

## **I\_8\_ Efforts to train health professionals in autism**

Efforts are currently being made to strengthen the capacities of health professionals: by including the issue of autism in initial training courses, particularly those in general medicine, paediatrics, and neurology; By providing ongoing training for staff including midwives, child nurses and doctors.

In addition, the capacity building program for general practitioners in mental health launched in 2019 includes autism. The objective is to fill the gaps of health professionals in this area and to allow the early detection and detection of autism in children. The aim is also to promote good medico-psychological support for adolescents and adults with autism.

## I\_9\_ Improving the quality of care for children with autism

Faced with the need to better meet the needs of people with autism, the Ministry of Health, Population and Hospital Reform (MSPRH) is mobilizing to:

Improve the screening and diagnosis of people with autism through the strengthening of training programs in Algeria. A Franco-Algerian partnership will also pave the way for internships, for Algerian personnel, in France;

Improve care and support for people with autism and their families, also through training programs and internships;

Support the definition of regulatory frameworks for the management of autism in order to allow the creation of reference centers on autism, to revise university training programs on this subject and to organize seminars and working groups to meet this complex challenge.

## II– Methods and Materials:

The study adopted the descriptive method by two steps.

\_ The first is related to the collection of information

\_ Second stage, we categorize the information by subject and speaker and calculate the percentages and the relationship between the variables, respectively.

### II\_1\_ Présentation of Data :

The survey was made in 2021 , The information was collected through an électronique questionnaire , we carried out a coding using the answers , The sample contain 283 fathers, mothers of an autistic child participated in the study Parents of autistic children interested in the study were asked about :

- Personal information
- Daily life with the autistic child and the type of care
- the school and social integration of the autistic child Demands and needs of parents regarding the contribution of authorities and active associations.

In what follows, the methodology, the survey plan, and the database.

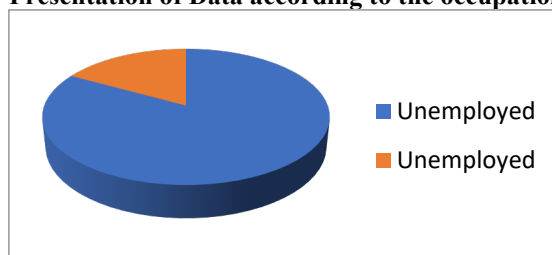
The sample contain 283 fathers, mothers of an autistic child participated in the study

### By profession

**table 01-** Présentation of Data according to the occupation variable

|                   | Number | percentage |
|-------------------|--------|------------|
| <b>Unemployed</b> | 235    | 83.3%      |
| <b>Unemployed</b> | 48     | 16.7%      |

**Graph1- Présentation of Data according to the occupation variable**



### By stability of the marital relationship

**table 02-** Présentation of Data according to the stability of the marital relationship variable

|                       | Number | percentage |
|-----------------------|--------|------------|
| ongoing relationship  | 188    | 66.7%      |
| separate relationship | 95     | 33.3%      |

**Graph2-** Présentation of Data according to the the stability of the marital relationship variable

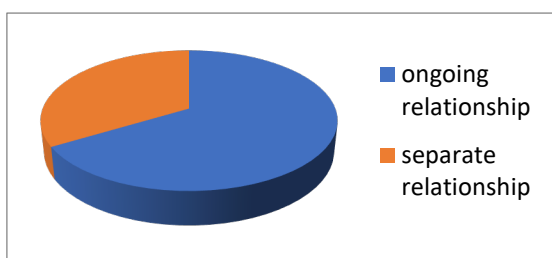


**table 03-** Presentation of Data according to the school integration variable

|                                                         | Number | percentage |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
| family of a child integrated into the school            | 186    | 66%        |
| family of a child who is not integrated into the school | 96     | 34 %       |

## III- Results and discussion :

: the personal beliefs of parents towards autism and the state care of children with ASD in Algeria:

Parents' level of knowledge about autism disorder , Wide spread of misconceptions about the nature of autism spectrum disorder among families and parents

**III\_ 1\_ Know the nature of autism disorder :** Widespread misconceptions about the nature of autism spectrum disorder among families and parents.

| Adjective                                                            | number | percentage |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
| Parents who know that autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder        | 06     | 2%         |
| Parents who do not know that autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder | 277    | 98%        |

### III\_2\_ Parents' confidence in scientific approaches provided by the state to treat autism :

There is a problem of trust between professionals and parents; The parents are not convinced by the final diagnosis and seek another, less harmful diagnosis. Many parents too have tried unscientific methods with their autistic children The results are :

| Adjective                                   | number | percentage |
|---------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
| Parents trust the scientific méthode        | 124    | 44%        |
| Parents do not trust the scientific méthode | 158    | 56%        |

### III\_3\_ Parents' satisfaction with the services provided by state centers for autism treatment

| Adjective    | number | percentage |
|--------------|--------|------------|
| satisfied    | 00     | 00%        |
| dissatisfied | 283    | 100%       |

Parent satisfaction with the quality and completeness of care is very low, parental satisfaction with government centers is non-existent, while the degree of satisfaction with private schools and active associations no more than 16 %

### III\_4\_ Sufficit time allowed for the child by the mother

| Adjective                        | number | percentage |
|----------------------------------|--------|------------|
| mother has enough time           | 76     | 00%        |
| mother does not have enough time | 206    | 73%        |

- the responsibility is always placed on the mother and this has negative repercussions on her psychological and physical health and negatively affects the care of her autistic son.
- 43% of mothers see autism as a reason for having family problems with their husband, with 27% considering a separation.
- 78% of mothers consider that the father is uncooperative and does not make an effort for his son

### III\_5\_ conflicts between parents or guardians of a child with ASD

|                                                                                      |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Parents do not have the same concerns about a child's development                    | 45% |
| Dealing with autism challenges differently                                           | 40% |
| Disapproval of certain treatments                                                    | 75% |
| Either parent disagrees with how much time and money should be devoted to your child | 80% |

- There is an imbalance in the distribution of gender responsibilities within the Algerian family regarding the care of autistic children.
- Mothers are more involved than fathers in the care of the autistic child within the family compared to fathers.

### Discussion :

There are several studies that have examined the Relationship between maternal mental health problems, caregiving time and experience of time pressure , Mothers of autistic children experience the stressors of parenting, as well as the effects of caregiving for disabled individuals( Nicole ( 2020) ) , Taking care of an autistic child is a real problem for a family in Algeria

According to this study 43% of mothers see autism as a reason for having family problems with their husbands, 27% of whom are considering separation , The results of our study are consistent with many studies in the field , Research shows that parenting a child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is associated with increased marital conflicts and reduced marital love ( Kevin Ka Shing Chan ( 2020) , Autism in children often leads to disagreements about the best treatments, the validity of a diagnosis, and how much time and money to devote to the child. ( Lisa ( 2023) ) conflicts that parents or guardians of a child with ASD are too

- we cannot judge the statistical presentation of the research sample in relation to the general population \_ The
- credibility of the information declared is not guaranteed because the questionnaire is electronic (there is no means of verifying the identity of persons).
- The global school integration rate is almost between 10 to 15 per 100 children, which is almost the same in this study, Statistically, this percentage can be obtained naturally without any human effort, and therefore one can ask a question about the effectiveness of the care

- We do not know if school children have been in integration or inclusion due to lack of additional data
- The school curriculum is not officially adapted, which creates a real problem for autistic children, the question here is to know on what basis these are evaluated later. And what are the obstacles that prevent the scientific adaptation of curricula in Algerian schools?

#### IV- Conclusion:

we propose an effective social policy to take care of the autistic child in Algeria based on six major axes as objectives:

- 1\_ inclusiveness
- 2\_ the free one
- 3\_ early scientific treatment
- 4\_ prevention
- 5\_ interactive sharing

##### 5 \_ 1 : inclusiveness:

- We can achieve coverage to support the autistic child in Algeria thanks to the cooperation between active associations and the authorities according to the following path: \* Facilitate the process of creating associations for autistic children, at the local level according to needs.

##### 5 \_ 2 \_ Freebies : Free care for an autistic child in Algeria can be achieved through:

- \_ Diversify sources of financial support for associations (social security, local authorities, research projects with universities and training centres) .
- \_ helps these associations to achieve LAUTO \_ FINANCE

##### 5 \_ 3: Early treatment of autism.

- The improvement and development of crèches, especially the specialized training of educators for the detection of disorders at a young age
- provide free specialized training and supervision to these associations by the health, education and higher education sectors within a common training system .

##### 5 \_ 4 \_ interactive sharing

- Formulate clear and measurable common objectives between the actors in the field (objective, time, duration of achievement, costs, measurement method).
- Continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation
- Set up a referenced national body that includes all actors in the field.

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