

Unveiling the Autistic Children's and their Parents' Daily Ordeal in the Algerian Context: Tiaret City as a Sample



Belarbi Khaled ¹, Hakim BENFERHAT, Tahar Ayoub CHIADI³

¹ University Ibn Khaldoun, Tiaret (Algeria), khaled.belarbi@univ-tiaret.dz

² University Ibn Khaldoun, Tiaret (Algeria), hakim.benferhat@univ-tiaret.dz

³ University Center of El Cherif Bouchoucha, Aflou (Algeria), t.chiadi@cu-aflou.edu.dz

Summary:

The purpose of this study is to explore the daily challenges faced by autistic children and their parents in Algeria, where autism is not widely recognized as a psychological disorder. Despite limited research, the increasing prevalence of autism underscores the needs of this vulnerable population. Lacking institutional support, these needs often remain unmet, compromising well-being. To address this gap, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing surveys from twelve teachers and interviews with six parents and a speech-language therapist to gather insights into their difficulties. The findings highlight a significant lack of autism awareness, resulting in social stigma that fosters isolation for autistic children and their families. Additionally, the scarcity of educational and therapeutic services forces parents to navigate a poorly funded and fragmented system. This situation imposes considerable financial and emotional burdens on families striving to access necessary support. Parents are continuously seeking accommodations to ensure their children receive the appropriate help.

Keywords: Autism, Algeria, autistic children, parental challenges, awareness, social stigma, educational services, therapeutic resources, emotional well-being

INTRODUCTION

The daily lives of autistic children and their families can involve various challenges, often influenced by broader misunderstandings of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and the availability of resources. These misunderstandings may contribute to social isolation for some families. Research suggests that families of autistic children encounter emotional and

practical obstacles, such as limited access to early care and specialized resources. This may impact developmental milestones and educational opportunities, while the absence of robust community support systems can lead to feelings of isolation for parents. In light of these challenges, there appears to be a need for increased awareness, education, and support systems for families affected by ASD. Enhancing community resources and encouraging connections among families may help alleviate some burdens and foster a more inclusive environment for autistic children and their caregivers.

A) Theoretical Part

1. Autism Spectrum Disorder: Overview

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex neurodevelopmental condition characterized by various origins and contributing factors, including genetic, environmental, and neurological elements. Recent studies indicate a notable hereditary component, with Sanders et al. (2015) identifying rare de novo mutations in a child's DNA as factors influencing ASD onset. Prenatal risks, such as maternal illnesses and exposure to pollutants, are also associated with increased ASD incidence; for instance, Gardener et al. (2009) cited a link to prenatal air pollution.

Individuals with ASD often exhibit structural and functional brain abnormalities, highlighting a neurological basis for the disorder. Neuroimaging studies reveal distinct brain activity patterns and connectivity, particularly in regions involved in social cognition (Supekar et al., 2013).

ASD encompasses a spectrum of neurodevelopmental disorders affecting social communication, sensory processing, and behavior. While there is no universal classification, common subtypes include:

Classic Autism: Significant challenges in social interaction, communication, and behavior.

Asperger's Syndrome: Milder symptoms, with average or above-average intelligence and social difficulties.

Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS): Social and communication issues without fully meeting the criteria for the other subtypes.

Understanding these traits is vital for effectively identifying and supporting autistic children. Early categorizations by Kanner (1943) and Asperger (1944) have furthered our insights into this diverse spectrum.

1.1. Communication and Social Interaction Challenges

Autistic children often experience significant difficulties in communication and social interaction, hindering their ability to form meaningful relationships. Unlike neurotypical individuals, who instinctively grasp social cues, autistic children struggle with initiating and maintaining conversations. This often results in a preference for solitary activities and challenges in creating lasting friendships.

Language delays and atypical development can further complicate these social barriers, emphasizing the need for tailored support in social contexts.

1.2. Limited Interests and Behaviors

Individuals with autism may display restricted and repetitive behaviors, such as hand-flapping or obsessively arranging objects. They often have intense interests in specific topics, which may overshadow broader engagement, and they typically resist changes in routine. Sensitivity or aversion to various stimuli—such as sounds, textures, or lighting—can also impede daily functioning.

1.3. Cognitive and Behavioral Features

Cognitive abilities in autistic individuals vary widely, revealing both strengths and weaknesses. Many experience challenges in executive functioning, impacting their planning, problem-solving, and adaptability. Rigid thinking patterns and abnormal sensory processing—whether heightened or diminished—are also common. Given the spectrum nature of ASD, individuals display diverse presentations, each with unique strengths, challenges, and support needs.

2. ASD Children: Specificities and Educational Care Requirements

Autistic children require specialized educational support tailored to their challenges, encompassing various approaches

2.1. Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)

IEPs are crafted to address the specific educational needs of autistic children, developed collaboratively by educators, therapists, and parents (Ruble & McGrew, 2013). These plans outline learning goals, necessary adaptations, and support programs (Etscheidt, 2006). They leverage a child's strengths while accommodating their learning styles, ensuring access to the necessary resources for success (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010).

2.2. Special Education Services (SES)

A multimodal educational approach incorporates targeted interventions and child-centered support throughout the school day (Odom et al., 2011). One-on-one or small-group tutoring addresses learning needs and fosters social and behavioral skill development (Hume et al., 2022). Occupational, speech, or physical therapy may also be provided in schools to enhance student outcomes (Accardo & Barrow, 2015).

2.3. Inclusive Education Methods (IEMs)

IEMs integrate autistic children into mainstream classrooms to foster social and intellectual growth (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010). This approach requires necessary supports and modifications, along with training for general education teachers to effectively address unique needs (Able et al., 2015). Such an inclusive environment promotes social skill development and equal educational opportunities, enhancing neurodiversity awareness (Hehir et al., 2016).

2.4. Assistive Technology (AT)

AT is crucial in autism education, enhancing communication, organization, and classroom participation (Ganz et al., 2012). Tools like communication boards and visual schedules aid autistic children in expressing their needs and navigating daily routines (Banda et al., 2014). When properly implemented, AT facilitates successful interactions with neurotypical peers (Evmenova, 2018).

2.5. Sensory Integration Therapy (SIT)

SIT addresses sensory processing challenges, such as hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity (Case-Smith & Arbesman, 2008). This therapy creates a calming environment with tailored sensory activities, helping children regulate responses to stimuli and maximize their academic and social potential (May-Benson & Koomar, 2010).

2.6. Social Skills Training (SST)

SST is essential for the social and educational development of autistic children, teaching social communication, interaction, and emotional regulation (Reichow & Volkmar, 2010). Through group or individualized instruction, children can enhance their social skills and peer relationships (McMahon et al., 2013). Techniques such as role-playing and feedback help them navigate social situations and improve problem-solving abilities (Laugeson et al., 2009), fostering inclusion in classrooms (Bellini et al., 2007).

2.7. Parent Training and Support (PTS)

Parent training programmes empower caregivers with advocacy skills and evidence-based strategies for supporting their children. They provide resources, support groups, and collaboration with school teams, enhancing the learning and social-emotional development of autistic children (Oono et al., 2013). This collaborative model strengthens partnerships between families and educators, improving academic and behavioral outcomes (Stahmer et al., 2011).

3. ASD Children in the Algerian Context

Building upon the previous discussions, this endeavor raises the following important question. Do autistic children in Algeria encounter challenges? If so, what are the underlying causes? This inquiry suggests that autistic children may face daily difficulties, largely stemming from limited parents' awareness and resources among parents.

The Algerian government is committed to improving autism policies, with a strong focus on raising awareness among parents about the critical importance of early intervention. Recognizing autism as a significant public health issue that affects approximately 1% of the global population—which translates to over 450,000 people in Algeria—the government is working to strengthen screening, diagnosis, and care practices through collaboration between health and education authorities.

In Tiaret, where the population was estimated at 846,823 in 2008, approximately 8,468 children are believed to be autistic based on WHO prevalence

rates. Although some healthcare centers have developed recommended diagnostic and treatment programmes, the country's capabilities remain insufficient, with few trained therapists available. Additionally, negative perceptions can prevent families from accessing essential support, often leading to feelings of isolation.

4. Nurturing Spaces: Essential Facilities for Autistic Children

Creating a supportive environment for autistic children involves a combination of sensory-friendly spaces, such as quiet and sensory rooms, along with structured learning areas that include visual supports and individual workstations. Essential facilities include occupational and speech therapy rooms, as well as safe outdoor play and nature areas for exploration.

Trained personnel, such as therapists and counselors, provide crucial support, while parent resource centers offer education and assistance. Flexible scheduling allows for necessary breaks, and assistive technology—like communication devices and tailored learning software—enhances the overall experience, ensuring a nurturing and effective environment tailored to each child's unique needs.

II. The Empirical Part

For ethical considerations, we sought permission from the authorities overseeing schools for autistic children, specifically the *Direction de l'Animation Sociale 'DAS'* of Tiaret, in order to conduct this survey. It is important to clarify that the scope of this survey was confined to distributing questionnaires to teachers, focusing on their insights and experiences. This approach was chosen to ensure that we respect the confidentiality and well-being of the learners and their families while gathering valuable information that can contribute to better understanding and improving autism support in the region.

In research on autistic children and their daily challenges, the interplay between theoretical and empirical components is vital. Theoretical frameworks provide context and insights into autism's psychological, social, and developmental aspects, guiding hypothesis formulation. In contrast, empirical investigations examine real-world experiences faced by autistic children and their families. Together, these elements foster a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved, ensuring that interventions are both knowledge-based and responsive to lived realities, ultimately enhancing support and resources for autistic individuals and their families.

1. Research Methodology

To successfully carry out this research, a mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining both quantitative and qualitative data. A stratified sampling method was employed to ensure representation from key subgroups within the population, specifically targeting teachers, parents, and a therapist. In total, 9 teachers from various centers across the wilaya, including 5 special schools, participated in the structured survey. Additionally, 6 parents of children diagnosed

with autism were interviewed to gather personal insights, while 1 speech-language therapist was engaged to provide professional context regarding effective support strategies. The quantitative component involved administering a structured survey to teachers, containing multiple-choice questions and Likert scale items designed to collect numerical data and statistical insights into their experiences with autism education. Conversely, semi-structured interviews with parents allowed for deeper engagement, enabling follow-up questions to explore their experiences in more depth, while also enhancing understanding through the expertise of a therapist. This mixed-methods approach was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges related to supporting children with autism, integrating measurable data with rich, contextual insights. By triangulating findings from diverse sources, the research strengthens its validity and reliability, addressing inconsistencies and leading to more robust conclusions. Ultimately, this multifaceted methodology aims to inform best practices that support the educational and developmental needs of children on the autism spectrum.

2. Data Collection and Analysis

Understanding the experiences of autistic children is vital for the sake of developing effective support strategies. Data collection and analysis offer insights into their behaviours, preferences, and challenges, helping identify patterns that inform best practices. The beginning of quantitative analysis through questionnaires allows for a more structured approach, enabling researchers to gather measurable data. This approach empowers caregivers and educators to tailor interventions, fostering an inclusive environment.

3. Questionnaire Analysis

1. Question item one: How familiar are you with Autism Spectrum Disorder?

| Response Options | Percentage | Number |
|------------------|------------|--------|
| Very Familiar | 25% | 3 |
| Familiar | 75% | 9 |
| Neutral | 0 | 0 |
| Unfamiliar | 0 | 0 |
| Very Unfamiliar | 0 | 0 |

Table 1: Respondents' Familiarity with ADS

As given in table 1, the first question item was primarily asked to assess the respondents' familiarity and unfamiliarity with ASD. The collected responses reveal that the vast majority, 9 out of 12 respondents, representing 75 %, affirm that they are familiar with this condition. The remaining 3 respondents, or 25 %, claim they are very familiar with neurodevelopmental conditions.

Based on the above responses, the difference in familiarity levels could indicate that the 3 "very familiar" respondents may have professional or academic backgrounds related to ASD, such as in healthcare, education, or autism research. Whereas, the 9 "familiar" respondents may have general knowledge about ASD from childhood experiences, media exposure, or secondary sources.

2. Question item two: Have you received specific training or professional development related to teaching autistic children?

| Response Options | Percentage | Number |
|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Yes | 100% | 12 |
| No | 0% | 0 |

Table 2 : Respondents' Training and Professional Development Opportunities

As explained in table above, the information reveals that all respondents unanimously affirm that they have undergone specific training or education before being placed in charge of working with children on the autism spectrum.

Conversely to what has been inferred from the first responses, the data above underscores the importance placed on ensuring the respondents have the necessary training and background knowledge to work effectively and support children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder in their care.

3. Question item three: How long have you been teaching this category of learners?

| Response Options | Percentage | Number |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Less than 5-year Experience | 41.66% | 5 |
| 5 to 10-year Experience | 41.66% | 5 |
| 11 to 15-year Experience | 16.66% | 2 |
| 16 to 20-year Experience | 0% | 0 |
| More than 20-year Experience | 0% | 0 |

Table 3: Respondents' Teaching Experience Level

The underpinning objective behind question item three is to gather information about the respondents' length of experience in working with and teaching autistic children, i.e., to gain insights into their level of expertise, the continuity of care provided, and their overall commitment to supporting the autistic learner population.

The data gathered reveals that the majority of the respondents have substantial experience in teaching autistic children. Five out of twelve of the respondents, representing 41.66 %, have been teaching autistic children for a period ranging from 5 to 10 years. Five other respondents, accounting also for

41.66% of the group, have been teaching autistic learners for a time span between 11 to 15 years. In contrast, only two teachers, representing 16.66% of the respondents, have been teaching autistic children for less than 5 years.

These findings indicate that the majority of the teachers working with autistic children have significant, multi-year experience in this specialized field. This points to an experienced workforce dedicated to supporting this population. The data paints a picture of a teaching team that is predominantly composed of individuals with substantial experience in the field of autism education, which may contribute to the quality and consistency of support provided to autistic children.

4. Question item four: What is the most prevalent subtype of Autism among this category of children?

| Response Options | Percentage | Number |
|---|------------|--------|
| Classic Autism | 75% | 9 |
| Asperger's Syndrome | 8.33% | 1 |
| Pervasive Developmental Disorder | 33.33% | 4 |

Table 4: The Most Prevalent Subtype of Autism

As highlighted above, the fourth question seeks to gather information about the specific subtype or presentation of Autism ASD that is most commonly observed among the children in the respondents' care. The findings show that classic Autism was the most common subtype, accounting for 75% of the children targeted. The second most prevalent subtype was Pervasive Developmental Disorder, making up 33.33% of the cases. Asperger's Syndrome was the third and least common subtype, presenting 8.33% of the children under study.

The above findings highlight the importance of recognizing the heterogeneity within the autism spectrum and providing comprehensive, tailored support services to meet the diverse needs of the affected children and their families.

5. Question item five: How would you describe your preferred teaching style?

| Response Options | Percentage | Number |
|--------------------------------|------------|--------|
| Visual | 25% | 3 |
| Auditory | 16.66% | 2 |
| Kinesthetic | 58.33% | 7 |
| Verbal | 16.66% | 2 |
| Other (please, specify) | 0 | 0 |

Table 5: Respondents' Preferred Teaching Approaches

As mentioned in table 5, the above question (5) aims to understand the individual's preferred methods and strategies for delivering instruction and facilitating learning. This could reveal insights into whether the child favors a more

teacher-centered, learner-centered, or balanced approach to teaching. In so enquiring, researchers can gain insights into the child's pedagogical philosophy, instructional competencies, and potential fit within the specific educational environment.

The data reveals that the kinesthetic teaching style is the most dominant, accounting for 58.33% of the preferred approaches. The visual teaching style is the second most prevalent, comprising 25% of the reported preferences. Interestingly, the auditory and verbal teaching styles share the same proportion, each representing 16.66% of the preferred methods.

By acknowledging and addressing the varied learning preferences revealed in the data, educators can work towards creating more inclusive and effective learning environments that maximize the engagement and understanding of the target audience.

6. Question item six: How do you incorporate sensory considerations into your teaching practice for autistic learners?

| Response Options | Percentage | Number |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Visual Aids | 16.66% | 2 |
| Quiet Areas | 25% | 3 |
| Manipulatives | 66.66% | 8 |
| Sensory Breaks | 0% | 0 |
| Other (Please, specify) | 0% | 0 |

Table 6: Respondents' Integration of Sensory Considerations into their Teaching

As shown above, the question is likely to assess the teachers' awareness, understanding, and approach to supporting the unique learning needs of autistic children. The statistical data above reveal that 66.66% (n=8) of the targeted teachers attest that they use manipulatives to support autistic children's interaction and learning. 25% (n=3) of the respondents reported using silent spaces to support this category of needy learners. The rest, around 16.66% (n=2), use Visual Aids.

The data highlights the importance of using a variety of evidence-based teaching strategies to support the diverse needs of autistic learners. The combination of manipulatives, quiet spaces, and visual aids can create a more inclusive and accessible learning environment, allowing autistic children to thrive and reach their full potential.

7. Question item seven: How do you facilitate effective communication with autistic children?

| Response Options | Percentage | Number |
|--|------------|--------|
| Visual supports (e.g., visual schedules, social stories) | 16.66% | 2 |
| Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices | 0 | 0 |
| Structured prompts | 16.66% | 2 |
| Simplified language | 58.33% | 7 |

Table 7: Respondents' Strategies for Effective Communication with Autistic Children

As mentioned in the numerical data, the underpinning objective of this question appears to be about facilitating effective communication with autistic children. This is a critical aspect of supporting the learning and development of autistic individuals, as communication challenges are a core characteristic of autism spectrum disorder. 58.33% (n=7) stipulate that they use simplified language to ease effective communication. Those who use visual supports and structured prompts share the same percentage, i.e., 16.66 % for each. Notably, the data indicates that none of the respondents reported using argumentative alternative communication devices, suggesting that these types of assistive technologies may not have been widely utilized or prioritized in the teaching strategies for autistic children in this particular sample.

The findings highlight the importance of using a multi-faceted approach to communication, combining simplified language, visual supports, and structured prompts to create a more accessible and supportive learning environment for autistic children.

8. Question item eight: How do you facilitate social interaction and peer integration for autistic children in your classroom?

| Response Options | Percentage | Number |
|-------------------------------------|------------|--------|
| Structured social skills activities | 8.339% | 1 |
| Peer buddies or mentors | 8.33% | 1 |
| Social stories or scripts | 0 | 0 |
| Cooperative learning strategies | 83.33% | 10 |
| Other (Please specify) | 0 | 0 |

Table 8: Respondents' Facilitation of Social Interaction

As illustrated above, question eight is asked to understand how teachers in charge of autistic children can create a classroom environment and implement teaching strategies that support their social and peer integration. The key strategies

employed by teachers to facilitate social interaction and peer integration for autistic children in the classroom are shared among three different types. The majority of the respondents (83.33%) affirmed that they used cooperative learning strategies to foster social interaction and peer integration. However, the two other types of strategies are shared by 8.33% for each one.

The data above suggests that the majority of educators focus on cooperative learning strategies as a primary approach to facilitating social interaction and peer integration for autistic children. However, a significant proportion also recognize the importance of individualized support and environmental modifications to create an inclusive and supportive classroom environment.

9. Question item nine: How do you collaborate with other professionals (e.g., special education teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists) to support the learning needs of autistic learners?

| Response | Percentage | Number |
|---|-------------------|---------------|
| Regular meetings and communication | 41.66% | 5 |
| Sharing resources and strategies | 0 | 0 |
| Co-planning lessons and activities | 50% | 6 |
| Co-teaching or team teaching | 16.66% | 2 |

Table 9: Respondents' Collaboration with other Professionals

As noted above, the underlying objective behind question nine is to understand how teachers work collaboratively with other professionals to provide comprehensive and coordinated support for the learning and development of autistic children. The responses to this question are shared among three options, namely co-planning lessons and activities, representing 50%, regular meetings and communication with 41.66% and co-teaching or team teaching, standing for 16.66%.

These three collaborative approaches, namely co-planning lessons and activities, regular meetings and communication, and co-teaching or team teaching highlight the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in supporting autistic learners. By engaging in these collaborative practices, teachers and other professionals can provide a more comprehensive, coordinated, and effective support system for autistic children, addressing their academic, social, communication, and sensory needs holistically. The distribution of responses, with a slightly higher percentage for regular meetings and communication, suggests that maintaining ongoing dialogue and information-sharing is a critical component of the collaborative process. However, the significant proportion of co-planning also underscores the value of joint efforts in designing and implementing tailored learning experiences for autistic children. These responses indicate that teachers

recognize the necessity of collaborating with other professionals to effectively support the diverse learning needs of autistic children.

10. Question item ten: Do you think the integration of these autistic children into traditional classrooms has a positive or negative impact?

| Response Options | Percentage | Number |
|------------------|------------|--------|
| Negative | 50% | 6 |
| Positive | 50% | 6 |

Table 10: Respondents’ Perspectives on Integrating Autistic Children into Classical Classrooms

As explained above, the underlying objective behind this question is to understand the perceived impact of integrating autistic children into traditional, mainstream classroom settings, rather than segregated or specialized educational environments. With regard to this question, the respondents’ opinions share the same percentage, i.e., 50% each.

The equal distribution of responses suggests that the integration of autistic children into traditional classrooms is a complex and nuanced issue, with valid perspectives on both sides. This feedback highlights the need for a careful and multifaceted approach to inclusive education, one that balances the benefits of integration with the provision of appropriate support, resources, and training for both educators and the broader school community. The concerns of those who perceive a negative impact may require a deeper examination of the factors that contribute to successful integration, such as staff professional development, classroom environment adaptations, and the availability of specialized interventions and therapies.

11. Question item eleven: How do you ensure that autistic children feel included and valued in the classroom?

| Response Options | Percentage | Number |
|---|------------|--------|
| Encouraging peer support and understanding | 33.33% | 4 |
| Promoting a culture of acceptance and tolerance | 16.66% | 2 |
| Modifying the physical environment | 25% | 3 |
| Providing opportunities for self-advocacy | 25% | 3 |

Table 11: Respondents’ Evaluation of the Inclusion and Value of the Autistic Children’ in the Classroom

As numerically described above, the above question (11) is meant to explore strategies and approaches that can help ensure autistic children feel included and

valued within the traditional classroom environment. The responses regarding strategies to ensure that autistic children feel included and valued in the classroom are as follows: The majority of the responses (33.33%) focus on strategies that encourage peer support and understanding for autistic children in the classroom. A smaller proportion of the responses (16.66%) highlight the importance of promoting a broader culture of acceptance and tolerance within the school community. Both 'modifying the physical environment of the classroom' and 'providing opportunities for self-advocacy' share the same percentage, i.e., (25%; n=3). The predominant focus on encouraging peer support and understanding suggests a strong recognition of the vital role that the broader classroom community plays in creating an inclusive environment for autistic children. The equal distribution of responses across the other strategies (promoting acceptance, modifying the physical environment, and providing self-advocacy opportunities) highlights the multifaceted nature of ensuring autistic children feel included and valued in the classroom. This feedback underscores the need for a comprehensive, holistic approach to inclusive education, one that addresses the diverse needs of autistic children, empowers them to self-advocate, and fosters a culture of acceptance and understanding within the entire school community.

12. Question item twelve: Do you actively seek professional development opportunities to enhance your knowledge and skills in teaching autistic children?

| Response Options | Percentage | Number |
|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Yes | 91.66% | 11 |
| No | 8.33% | 1 |

Table 12: Respondents' Willingness to pursue Professional Development

As explained in the table, asking teachers about their commitment to professional development and desire to always improve their skills in working with autistic children might be the main goal of this inquiry. The results show that 91.66 percent of people who took the survey are open to taking advantage of chances for professional growth. On the flip side, a tiny fraction (8.33%) said they aren't interested in or excited about learning more about their field.

This high proportion suggests that the participants understand the significance of always learning more, especially when it comes to helping autistic children. An individual with a growth mindset is one that is receptive to new information and is willing to change their approach in order to improve their skills and advance in their career.

It is possible that this small group does not see the need of keeping up with the ever-changing landscape of autism education, or that other concerns take precedence. Based on the statistics, it seems that this group could not be as

motivated to seek out professional development opportunities, which could affect their capacity to help their learners the most.

Question item thirteen: What are the most significant challenges you face when teaching autistic children?

- *Difficulty in focus and attention*
- *The autistic child needs behavior modification as the priority, secondly they need to develop verbal comprehension, as well as the development of visual communication and response to stimuli. Each autistic child is a different case, so they need proper diagnosis and clarification of the degree of autism to establish an effective treatment program.*

- *Language issues*
- *Negative behaviors and mood swings*
- *Parents' non-acceptance of their children's differences*
- *Social issues and parents' non-acceptance of their children*
- *Sensory attention*

The teaching staff's responses provide crucial insights into the multifaceted challenges faced by autistic children, including issues with focus, attention, behavior, communication, language, social interaction, and sensory processing. They also highlight the need for childalized treatment plans based on thorough diagnosis and the struggles experienced by parents in accepting their children's differences. These findings underscore the importance of comprehensive, tailored support to address the unique needs of the autistic community.

Question item fourteen: What do you find most rewarding about working with autistic children?

The main purpose is to explore the rewards and gratification that can come from this important work, which can help highlight the value and impact of supporting the needs of autistic individuals.

- *Patience - Working with autistic children requires patience, understanding of their psychological state, and continuous effort without feeling discouraged.*
- *Focusing on the child's strengths*
- *Tools*
- *Positive and negative reinforcement*
- *Patience and perseverance*
- *Various types of sports like horseback riding and swimming, etc.*
- *Social learning through play*

The above answers emphasize the importance of patience, a strengths-based approach, specialized tools and techniques, and the rewarding experience of supporting autistic children's social and developmental growth. These elements can be argued as key factors that make working with this population a profound and meaningful experience for the professionals involved

Question item fifteen: Do you want to share anything about your teaching style or experiences working with autistic children?

The above question aims to gain a richer, more well-rounded understanding of the respondents' approach and experiences in teaching autistic children, beyond the initial points covered. This can help paint a more comprehensive picture and provide additional valuable information for the inquirer.

- *Using the child's interests as a motivator. The goal is to increase the child's focus and motivate them to move forward.*
- *Taking sufficient time to build a relationship with the child and trying to enter their own world to start physical and visual communication, etc.*
- *ABA (Applied Behaviour Analysis)*
- *Considering individual differences in the teaching process*
- *Training using a natural approach with accompaniment*

The above responses highlight key strategies and philosophies that are both effective and deeply meaningful when working with autistic children. They emphasize the importance of understanding the individual, building connections, leveraging strengths, and using evidence-based practices - all of which can contribute to the profound sense of reward and purpose that educators often experience in this field.

Conclusion

The questionnaire responses reveal a deeply troubling reality for families of children with ASD in Algeria - a surge in prevalence accompanied by a severe lack of support and systemic failures to integrate these children into the education system. As the number of ASD diagnoses rises at an alarming rate, parents find themselves increasingly isolated, facing overwhelming obstacles when attempting to enroll their children in schools. Widespread shortages of specialized programmes, reluctant teachers, and insufficient government funding collectively conspire to deny these families access to the resources and accommodations their children desperately need. Worse still, the challenges appear most acute outside of urban centers, exposing stark geographic disparities that further compound the despair. Amidst this bleak landscape, parents expressed profound frustration, not merely with the deficiencies of the system, but with the general lack of public awareness and support for the ASD community. Urgent, comprehensive reforms are necessary to transform this untenable situation, ensuring inclusive educational opportunities and holistic care for all Algerian children living with autism.

4. Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis of Interviews

The interviews conducted with a speech therapist and six parents of autistic children provide valuable insights into the experiences, challenges, and support systems surrounding autism. The analysis reveals several key themes:

1. Diagnosis and Access to Support

A prominent theme is the delayed diagnosis of autism, as noted by the speech therapist. Late identification can hinder access to early interventions, which are crucial for the developmental progress of children with autism. Parents echoed this concern, reflecting on the impact of delays in obtaining a diagnosis and the subsequent barriers to early therapeutic support. The lack of collaboration among professionals during the diagnostic phase further complicates access to necessary resources, highlighting a need for improved communication and cooperation among specialists.

2. Acceptance and Psychological Support

Another critical theme is the emotional journey faced by families following a diagnosis. The speech therapist emphasized the challenges parents experience in accepting their child's diagnosis, which can prevent them from seeking ongoing psychological support. Parents shared similar sentiments, expressing feelings of uncertainty and anxiety about their children's future. This indicates an important area where additional support and education are needed to help families navigate the emotional landscape of autism.

3. Diverse Manifestations of Autism

The speech therapist's experience across the autism spectrum highlights the diversity in autism presentations. She mentioned working with children ranging from those with milder forms, such as Asperger's syndrome, to those with more severe conditions like Rett syndrome. This diversity necessitates individualized strategies for support and care, emphasizing that one size does not fit all when it comes to therapeutic approaches.

4. Communication Challenges

A theme that emerged strongly is the communication difficulties faced by autistic children. The speech therapist identified key characteristics such as challenges with eye contact and both verbal and nonverbal communication. Parents confirmed these challenges, describing daily interactions where misunderstandings often occur. This underscores the need for tailored communication strategies that can help facilitate better interactions between children and their families or peers.

5. Socialization Strategies

In discussing socialization, the speech therapist provided recommendations that differ based on the severity of autism. For mildly autistic children, she suggested integration into regular classrooms, aiming to provide exposure to a more normalized social environment. Conversely, she recommended specialized classrooms for moderately autistic children to address their unique needs. However, parents raised concerns about the potential drawbacks of these placements, including a lack of tailor-made curricula and the risk of negative behavioral influences among peers.

6. Educational Support and Curriculum Development

A recurring theme is the need for more tailored educational programs that better cater to the needs of autistic children. The speech therapist pointed out the limitations within existing school curricula, which may not adequately address the specific learning styles and requirements of autistic individuals. Parents echoed the need for improvements in educational resources to support their children's social and cognitive development more effectively.

Conclusion

The interviews reveal a complex landscape of challenges, insights, and recommendations related to autism. The themes of diagnosis, acceptance, communication, and educational support underscore the diverse needs of autistic children and their families. Addressing these areas through enhanced collaboration among professionals, improved educational resources, and ongoing psychological support can foster a more inclusive environment that benefits all stakeholders involved.

Recommendations for Improving Care

The recommendations made by parents reflect both immediate and structural needs. Improved access to early diagnostic services ranks highest, with 83% of responses. Additionally, 67% of parents request increased support for families, particularly regarding the daily management of autism at home and school. Other recommendations include a greater number of specialized professionals (50%), more suitable educational programs for autistic children (50%), and increased awareness in schools and communities (50%).

These recommendations underscore the necessity for collective action to promote the integration of autistic children into society and to equip families with essential resources to address daily challenges.

General Conclusion

In Algeria, families of children with ASD are grappling with a troubling increase in diagnoses amid a significant lack of educational support. Parents encounter formidable challenges, including late diagnoses and limited resources, which contribute to feelings of isolation and frustration. Systemic failures in integration, particularly in rural areas, further complicate the situation. Insights from speech therapy emphasize the critical need for early diagnosis and intervention, yet existing healthcare and educational frameworks are inadequate, with insufficient collaboration among professionals hindering comprehensive care. While individualized educational approaches—such as integrating mildly autistic children into mainstream classrooms and placing moderately autistic children in specialized settings—are suggested, the absence of tailored curricula and adequate support underscores the urgent need for reform. Comprehensive changes are essential to foster an inclusive environment that meets the diverse needs of all autistic children in Algeria, ensuring they receive the care and opportunities they

deserve. In a nutshell, fostering understanding and acceptance of ASD is crucial, as cultural perspectives significantly influence support systems, with some cultures embracing neurodiversity while others perpetuate stigma and misconceptions.

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