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## Teacher perspectives of social interaction in children with autism

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**Abstract**--Social interaction with others is considered to play an important role in an individual's growth and psychological wellbeing. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurological disorder characterized by changes in social and interpersonal interactions, as well as limited and repetitive patterns, behaviors, interests, and activities. Planning suitable interventions for social skill development in children with autism requires a clear understanding of the social skills in children with autism. Teachers being a significant people who encounter and address of this children should have a clear understanding of the condition. Thus, the study aims to study the teacher's perspective of social interaction in children with autism. 200 Teachers of children with autism were chosen for the study. The impact of variables like birth order, religion and parents' occupation were analyzed. The results of the study are discussed in detail with its relevance to day-to-day situation in this article.

**Keywords**--social skills, autism, teacher perspective

**Introduction**

Social conversation and interaction with others are considered to play an important role in an individual's growth and psychological wellbeing. The life skill approach developed by the World Health Organization has given priority to areas like social, cognitive and emotional coping skill. The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed the life skills approach, which is situated in three main areas of social, cognitive, and coping-emotional skills (Karimi, M.; Keikhavani, S.;

Mohammadi,2010). Cooperation with others, self-control behavior and assertion are considered to the areas of social skills assessment as stated by Grossman and Elliot (2011). Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurological disorder characterized by changes in social and interpersonal interactions, as well as limited and repetitive patterns, behaviors, interests, and activities. Deficits in communication skills can lead to major problems in everyday life, such as difficulty of social reciprocity, abnormal eye contact and changes in non-verbal communication (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, 2020). Problems with behaviour, communication and social interaction are considered to be predominant in children with autism. (National Institute of Mental Health Information Resource Center, 2018). Initiating, responding and sustaining conversations with others are considered as an important skill that has to be addressed in children with autism. (Condouris 2003 ; Jones & Schwartz, 2009).

The impairment of social skills and communication in children with autism is found to affect their day to day in various spheres like understanding the social norms, others' views, thoughts and beliefs. It also greatly affects their play and leisure time activities with others. (Hyman et.al 2020); Deficits in social learning also affects the child's experiential learning, self esteem and also their ability to have a positive relationship with others. (Christopher, Sheila & Shakila, Cresenta. (2015). Antisocial behaviours are also listed as a consequence of challenges in communication and social interaction in children with autism (Shea et al., 2018). Thus, the demand for effective intervention strategies to address the social skill issues in children with autism is growing every day. (Alcover et.al 2022). Various environmental and cultural factors are said to influence the development social and communication skills in children. (Sheikhzakaryaie, 2012).

Home and school are the two primary environments where any child with or without disability is usually exposed too. Parents and teachers are the common people with whom the child initiates and demonstrates the learnt and unlearned social skills. Planning suitable interventions for social skill development in children with autism requires a clear understanding of the social skills in children with autism in both home and school environment. Most of the field workers and professionals diagnose and provide appropriate services based on the reports provided by the parents and teachers in various rating scales (Lecavalier, Aman, Hammer, Stoica, & Mathews, 2004). Research findings have also revealed that there are differences in the social skill behaviours observed by parents and teachers. In a study by Murray, D. S., Ruble, L. A., Willis, H., & Molloy, C. A. (2009) the interaction skill of initiating was reported high while the teacher reports highlights the skill of responding and maintaining interaction was more in school environment. As children spend most of their active time in school environment, the rating of teachers and their observations plays an important role in proper diagnosis of the condition and in the process of planning intervention for social skills development in children with autism. Understanding the necessity and significance of the role of the teachers, this study has attempted to study the teacher perspectives of social interaction in children with autism.

## Materials and Methods

### Participants

This study aims to understand the social skills of children with autism with regard to the teacher's perspective. For the above purpose 200 children with autism and their teachers were chosen for the using purposive sampling method.

### Data collection

Teacher's Social Skill Rating form of TRIAD Social Skill Assessment (TSSA) was used for the purpose of data collection. Affective Understanding and Perspective Taking, Initiating interaction, responding to initiations and maintaining interactions are the components chosen. The data was collected from the teachers through questionnaire method. Few demographic variables such as birth order, religion and parents' occupation of children with autism were considered to analyze the teacher perspective of social interaction in children with autism.

### Statistical Analysis

The analysis was carried out using the statistical software SPSS (version 17.0).

## Results and Discussion

### One way analysis of variance based on birth order of children with autism and dimensions of social skills

| S. No | BIRTH ORDER                                                                       | TEACHERS PERSPECTIVE |                    |                    |                                  |                                      |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|       |                                                                                   | Df                   | SS                 | MS                 | $\bar{X}$                        | Statistical Inference                |
| A)    | Affective Understanding and Perspective Taking<br>Between Groups<br>Within Groups | 2<br>197             | 75.991<br>6485.50  | 37.996<br>32.921   | G1=20.48<br>G2=20.22<br>G3=22.85 | F=1.154<br>P>0.05<br>Not Significant |
| B)    | Initiating Interactions<br>Between Groups<br>Within Groups                        | 2<br>197             | 470.088<br>18839.4 | 235.044<br>95.632  | G1=25.99<br>G2=26.46<br>G3=32.31 | F=2.458<br>P>0.05<br>Not Significant |
| C)    | Responding to Initiations<br>Between Groups<br>Within Groups                      | 2<br>197             | 14.178<br>1719.81  | 7.089<br>8.730     | G1=10.37<br>G2=10.54<br>G3=11.46 | F=0.812<br>P>0.05<br>Not Significant |
| D)    | Maintaining Interactions<br>Between Groups<br>Within Groups                       | 2<br>197             | 83.241<br>5855.3   | 41.621<br>29.722   | G1=21.28<br>G2=21.70<br>G3=23.92 | F=1.400<br>P>0.05<br>Not Significant |
| E)    | Overall Level of Social Skill<br>Between Groups<br>Within Groups                  | 2<br>197             | 1820.5<br>78155.0  | 910.250<br>396.726 | G1=78.12<br>G2=78.92<br>G3=90.54 | F=2.294<br>P>0.05<br>Not Significant |

G1=First      G2 =Second    G3 = Third and Above

The results of the above table shows that there is no significant ( $P>0.05$ ) difference between dimensions of social skills in comparison with birth order of the children with autism. On viewing the results on the basis of mean value it is found that children who were born third and above were found to show better social skills. It is obviously true that the presence of siblings in the family environment gives more opportunity for the children with autism to interact, observe and imitate social skills and learn social behaviors. On the other hand children with autism show difficulties in social skills irrespective of their birth order. Birth order can cause a greater impact only with the presence of the siblings and their interaction. The level the acceptance by the siblings affects the quality of interaction and social skills in children with autism. The result is inconsistent with the result of Reichenberg et al. (2007) who observed the birth order of the children with autism and showed significantly decreased useful speech and increase in behavior repetition in first and second born child with autism.

**One way analysis of variance based on parent occupation of children with autism and dimensions of social skills**

| S. No | PARENT OCCUPATION                                                                 | TEACHERS PERSPECTIVE |                    |                    |                                              |                                           |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
|       |                                                                                   | Df                   | SS                 | MS                 | $\bar{X}$                                    | Statistical Inference                     |
| A)    | Affective Understanding and Perspective Taking<br>Between Groups<br>Within Groups | 3<br>196             | 218.634<br>6342.86 | 72.878<br>32.362   | G1=20.27<br>G2=22.88<br>G3=19.22<br>G4=20.67 | F=2.252<br>$P>0.05$<br>Not Significant    |
| B)    | Initiating Interactions<br>Between Groups<br>Within Groups                        | 3<br>196             | 848.894<br>18460.6 | 282.965<br>94.187  | G1=28.73<br>G2=30.54<br>G3=23.71<br>G4=26.64 | F=3.004<br>$P<0.05$<br>Significant        |
| C)    | Responding to Initiations<br>Between Groups<br>Within Groups                      | 3<br>196             | 98.514<br>1635.48  | 32.838<br>8.344    | G1=11.80<br>G2=11.79<br>G3=9.69<br>G4=10.39  | F=3.935<br>$P<0.01$<br>Highly Significant |
| D)    | Maintaining Interactions<br>Between Groups<br>Within Groups                       | 3<br>196             | 145.303<br>5793.2  | 48.434<br>29.557   | G1=24.40<br>G2=22.04<br>G3=21.02<br>G4=21.36 | F=1.639<br>$P>0.05$<br>Not Significant    |
| E)    | Overall Level of Social Skill<br>Between Groups<br>Within Groups                  | 3<br>196             | 3604.95<br>76370.5 | 1201.65<br>389.646 | G1=85.20<br>G2=87.25<br>G3=73.65<br>G4=79.06 | F=3.084<br>$P<0.05$<br>Significant        |

G1=Agriculture      G2 =Business    G3 = Government Employee    G4=Other

In the above results teacher's perspective reflects a significant ( $P < 0.05$ ) difference in the level of social skills and parents' occupation. Usually parents are from different occupational background try to teach their children a better social skill through various intervention process when compared to others. The results of improved social skills have been evident in the perception of teachers. Various other studies have also reported that there exists a significant relationship between the paternal occupation and development of social and soft skills in children. (Rani, P., & Dhanda, B. 2003).

**One way analysis of variance based on religion of children with autism and dimensions of social skills**

| S. No | RELIGION                                                                          | TEACHERS PERSPECTIVE |                    |                    |                                  |                                      |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|       |                                                                                   | Df                   | SS                 | MS                 | $\bar{X}$                        | Statistical Inference                |
| A)    | Affective Understanding and Perspective Taking<br>Between Groups<br>Within Groups | 2<br>197             | 212.340<br>6349.16 | 106.17<br>32.229   | G1=20.96<br>G2=20.93<br>G3=17.88 | F=3.924<br>P<0.05<br>Significant     |
| B)    | Initiating Interactions<br>Between Groups<br>Within Groups                        | 2<br>197             | 494.704<br>18814.7 | 247.352<br>95.50   | G1=27.07<br>G2=27.45<br>G3=22.50 | F=2.590<br>P>0.05<br>Not Significant |
| C)    | Responding to Initiations<br>Between Groups<br>Within Groups                      | 2<br>197             | 29.832<br>1704.1   | 14.916<br>8.651    | G1=10.66<br>G2=10.58<br>G3=9.50  | F=1.724<br>P>0.05<br>Not Significant |
| D)    | Maintaining Interactions<br>Between Groups<br>Within Groups                       | 2<br>197             | 128.838<br>5809.71 | 64.419<br>29.491   | G1=21.97<br>G2=21.63<br>G3=19.54 | F=2.184<br>P>0.05<br>Not Significant |
| E)    | Overall Level of Social Skill<br>Between Groups<br>Within Groups                  | 2<br>197             | 2845.1<br>77130.3  | 1422.59<br>391.525 | G1=80.66<br>G2=80.58<br>G3=69.42 | F=3.633<br>P<0.05<br>Significant     |

G1=Hindu      G2 =Christian      G3 = Muslim

The above results showed that there is a significant difference in the overall level of social skills based on religion with regard to teachers' perspective. Whatever children see and practice regularly in home and school environment are often exhibited in other places. The effects of religious practices have caused an impact in the social skills of children with autism with regard to the teacher's perspectives. Emotions and expressions of other people and its empathetic understanding gives way for the development of affective understanding and perspective taking. With regard to the above the mean value children with autism from Hindu and Christian religion show better affective understanding and perspective taking when compared to Muslims. The religious practices of Hindu and Christian religion involve more pictorial representation of Gods and their life history through stories and books. Constant exposure to such materials and

practices might have caused an impact in the social behaviour of children with autism.

## Conclusion

Socialization with others make an individual's life more comfortable and meaningful rather than being isolated. Though children with autism demonstrate characteristics of innate deficits in socializing with other, there is always a need for parents, teacher and the members of the society to interact with them in variety of context. Helping these children to understand and adapt to basic conversation and social norms is very essential. The results of the study which analyzed the impact of significant variables on the social skill development of children with autism has given us the hope that basic activities and practices and common environmental factors can cause an effect in the social skills development in children with autism. Teacher being a social person who encounter with the child to address their problems should be keep in mind the influence of these factors on the social skill development of children with autism. This understanding will help in better educational and other intervention planning for children with autism.

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