

From Challenge to Success: Lived Experiences of Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Abstract

Parenting children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is never easy and is a challenging experience that parents encounter every day. This study aimed to explore the challenges, aspirations, and coping mechanisms in dealing with the needs of their children. Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura and Family Systems Theory by Murray Bowen and others were the guiding theoretical framework of this study. A qualitative design utilizing a single case method was used with a purposeful sample of 5 parents of children with ASD. The participants were purposively chosen provided the following criteria: (1) the mother of a diagnosed ASD child, and (2) 2-3 years of experience handling a child with autism. Interviews and semi-structured guide questions were conducted to explore the parents' lived experiences of having a child with ASD. Thematic analysis was applied to the data by coding, categorizing, creating themes, and data reduction. The three themes that emerged from the data of the lived experiences of parents having a child with ASD were challenges in terms of financial aspect, emotional aspect, and time-management aspect. The findings of this study can contribute to the parents having a child with ASD about their lived experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms in dealing with their children who have special educational needs.

Keywords: lived experience, coping mechanism, ASD, qualitative research

1. Introduction

Raising a child with autism may be both happy and challenging. Greef and Watt (2010) stressed that one of the most challenging problems that families experience is looking for suitable therapies and support programs for their autistic child. This gives additional frustration that might lead to depression if not addressed (White & Davenport, 2021). Hence, this study aims to explore how parents with autistic children address family issues and challenges because if a child is diagnosed with autism, they will have to deal with many circumstances in which you as a parent may test your physical, mental, and incredibly emotional state. This study aims to explore from challenge to success: Lived Experience of Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

In 2023, 1 in about 100 children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). These individuals have varied needs and abilities. Some of them can live independently, while others are cared for and supported by their parents or caretakers. They are also provided with assistance, services, and support. Furthermore, the said demands for caring for individuals with ASD are significant. (WHO, 2023).

In Egypt, most of the individuals with ASD (autism spectrum disorder) remain at home uneducated. They are given little to no education because they either drop out of mainstream schools or their parents cannot send them to private schools. Additionally, parents experience a low level of support for their children with ASD (Omar, 2014; Mendoza, 2010). Meanwhile, Egyptian mothers of children on the autism spectrum are expected to experience more significant burdens. Omar (2014) investigated the early intervention services as perceived by parents of children with ASD in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. He reported a low level of parents' perception of early intervention and a lack of early intervention services provided to children with ASD.

In the Philippine context, Santos and Centeno's research (2017) underlined the emotional experiences of parents having ASD children, including anxiety, stress, and sadness, and their coping mechanisms. Seeking support from family and friends using adaptive cognitive strategies and engaging in self-care activities are effective coping strategies used by the parent (Paterson et al., 2020)

In the local setting, especially in the Tagum City Davao Del Norte province, parents are grappling with the challenges of being a mother, and teachers play a crucial role and are willing to go beyond their limits to take care of their children. The moment that parents know that their child has a developmental disability, they tend to be painfully surprised and suddenly adjust their roles as parents (Tripath, 2015), especially the mothers who will consistently support their child who has an autism spectrum disorder. They focus on the day-to-day activities of their child, which can result in problems related to their jobs (Jardine, 2008). Fathers most likely provide for the costly financial demands of their child with autism spectrum disorder (Bashir et al., 2014)

1.1 Research Objectives

This study aims to answer the following questions

1. To explore the challenges of parents of learners with special education needs.
2. To identify the coping mechanism of parents raising learner with special needs.
3. To investigate the available social support for the families of learners with special education needs.
4. To gain insights into the hopes and dreams of the parents for their child with special needs.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to recognize and understand the lived experiences of parents supporting their children with special educational needs. Moreover, this will shed light on how challenging the delivery of education for parents of these learners is. This will also aim to present an in-depth understanding of the experiences, challenges, and aspirations of the parents of these learners in supporting their children with special educational needs. Hence, the researcher will explore the challenges experienced by the parents and their coping mechanisms in dealing with the special educational needs of their children.

1.3 Review Related Literature

Challenges Encountered by Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Most parents find that raising a child with autism presents the most significant challenges because caring for them requires taking on extra roles and responsibilities. Ambikile and Outwater (2012) highlighted that children develop within families and primarily rely on their parents or guardians to provide essential support such as food, shelter, education, protection, and care, particularly during challenging periods and crises. More recently, several studies have focused even more on the hurdles parents experience when raising a child with autism and the different life adjustments that a family must make to accommodate the unique needs of these children (Gray, 2006). According to Cauda-Laufer (2017), "Parents also face stressors that include financial issues, marital discord, and social isolation." These stressors could also involve emotional struggles, parenting issues, and time management.

Challenges faced by Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in terms of financial aspect

One of the challenges faced by parents of children with autism spectrum disorder is the financial struggle. According to Thwala S. et al. (2015), parents of children with autism spectrum disorder may need more support to fulfill family functions in terms of material needs, morale, work life, education, spirituality, and several others. This is supported by Thwala et al. (2015) as they stated that difficulties in financial assistance and inadequate support from the members of the family and communities are experienced by some families of children with ASD. Additionally, this financial struggle experienced by these parents adds more to the stress that they have been facing as a primary caretaker of an autistic child. Furthermore, additional family expenses have increased as these children require healthcare rather than parents with a typical child. The study by Bailey & Simonson (1998), as cited by Derguy et al. (2015), found that "financial difficulties faced by parents concern the purchase of suitable equipment, the payment of specialized services." Therefore, it implies that having a child with ASD can lead to financial strain on the family due to the extra expenses incurred in purchasing specialized equipment and services

Challenges faced by Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in terms of Emotional aspect

Caring for a child with a disability can be a daunting task and may lead to various emotional effects for both parents and the entire family. Corcoran, Berry, and Hill (2015) discovered that the struggles experienced by parents of children with autism spectrum disorder include emotional strain associated with learning about a child's ASD diagnosis and managing the care of these children. The study also discovered that caring for a child with ASD is an emotionally draining experience, with parents reporting intense negative emotions such as grief, denial, and disappointment. Bilgin et al. (2010) also added that they experience burnout and social stressors. Parents experienced these negative emotions due to the disturbing behavior of the children, extra caregiving responsibilities, family, and social problems caused by the child. Slavik Cowen & Reed (cited by Downey, 2016) also stated that high levels of caregiving responsibilities, unresponsiveness from the child, and unusual behavioral patterns have been strongly linked to elevated stress levels and depression in parents. Parents of chronically disabled children.

Challenges faced by Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in terms of Time Management aspect

Having a child with Autism requires parents' sustainability of time. According to Craig and Mullan (2010), Aside from children with special needs requiring a lot of attention and time, a corresponding factor contributes to why parents neglect the responsibilities they need to fulfill for their family and work. Parents struggle with managing various relationships with spouses, other children, and extended family due to the increased attention required for their children (Nealy et al., 2012). Additionally, Downey (2016) stated, "Factors such as doctors' appointments, health concerns, and behavioral issues are just a few mentioned. These factors require more of the families' attention and time, leading to less time for daily tasks." (Downey, 2016).

1.4 Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored on the following theories: Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Murray Bowen's family systems theory.

Social Learning Theory, proposed by Albert Bandura, states that learning happens during observation, imitation, modeling, and social engagement to foster learning and shape behaviors. According to this theory, individuals acquire knowledge not solely through direct encounters but also by watching others, especially those they admire or view as influential. Critical components of this theory include observational learning, modeling, reinforcement, and self-confidence (Cherry, 2022). Furthermore, when tending to a child with autism, caregivers can employ social learning principles to impart new abilities. This can be achieved through demonstrating desired behaviors, facilitating chances for peer engagement, and giving praise and encouragement for exhibiting positive social actions. Moreover, the Family Systems Theory states that the family is a dynamic unit where each member's actions are connected and influenced by

others. Family dynamics are shaped by various factors, including communication patterns, roles, and boundaries within the family system (Cohen, 2023). Caring for a child with autism can disrupt established family dynamics and routines, causing shifts in roles, communication styles, and stress levels within the family system. Consequently, family members might grapple with isolation, frustration, and guilt. However, they can also foster resilience and unity by offering each other mutual support and adjusting to the unique demands associated with raising a child with autism.

2. Methodology

This study used a qualitative design utilizing a single-case method. This method is inquiry-based and used to describe specific phenomena in detail (Hassan, 2022). This approach includes open-ended, in-depth interviews (Bliss, 2016). The design suited the way we sought data collection on how parents with autistic children address family issues and challenges.

2.1 Research Design

The Phenomenological Research Design will be used to gain rich and in-depth information from the mother of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). A phenomenologist relies heavily on interviewing rather than observing the participants (McCaslin & Wilson Scott, 2003). Most interviews are in-depth because they are often detailed and descriptive. The use of video recording devices is very common because they permit the capturing of all the details. The aim is to gain an understanding of the phenomenon through the consciousness of the participants. The major thrust of phenomenological research is to question what a phenomenon is really like or what it is like to experience the phenomenon.

This phenomenological study will be conducted to understand and describe the meanings of the lived experiences of mother of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The mother will be interviewed using open-ended questions based on their experiences as primary caregivers of their child. Phenomenological research depends upon the participant's ability to articulate vividly and with some depth his or her experiences about the phenomenon under study.

2.2 Research Participants

Creswell (2007) states that in the phenomenological study, the participant may be located at single or multiple sites based on: accessibility, rapport, and willingness to participate. In this study, the locale is only one site.

The participants in any phenomenological study are recruited from a population living the experience of the phenomenon being studied (Parse et al., 1985). The participants in this study will be recruited from a group of mother having child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Parse (1990) was more specific about participant selection when she suggested that 2 to 10 participants are an adequate number for a phenomenological study when data redundancy is sought.

The researchers will employ a purposive or judgmental sampling technique through which they intentionally selected five (5) parents of Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The inclusion criterion for the parents includes: 1.) must be the child's biological parent, 2.) must be a primary caregiver of the child, 3.) the child must have a diagnosis and assessment as a learner with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) 4.) the child must be between the ages of 5-13 years old, 5.) the parent must be able to understand Filipino or English language, and 6.) the parent must voluntarily sign the informed consent form for research participation. In this study, the participants all have experienced the exact phenomenon of parenting of a learner with special needs.

The researcher will screen each parent to ensure they will meet the criteria. Parents who will meet the inclusion criteria will be given a consent form to review. The form will be reviewed, questions will be answered, and the consent will be signed on the day of the interview. The consent form outlines the goals and method of this study. It stated that there will be no incentives, and they could withdraw at any time from the study. The interviews will be held face-to-face at a mutually agreed upon location that can ensure privacy.

As to limitations, the demographics of the parent-participants are a very homogenous group. They belong to one classroom section. They are all living in sub-urban, and socio-economic statuses are under lower or middle brackets income. These factors may limit the representation of multiple viewpoints.

2.3 Data Collection

The main instrument of this study is the researcher. Prepared semi-structured guide questions were utilized and checked by the experts. The interview questionnaires consist of introductory, transition, and probing questions. Moreover, these were things to be considered before, during, and after the conduct of the interview; this was intended to avoid researcher biases toward the process and result of the research. The participants were given prior consent to sign the agreement. During an interview, the purpose of the study was explained to the informant as the interview process. These include consent, interview time allocation, and audio or video documentation. In addition, the researchers also observed interview guide protocols. Minimum of forty-five (45) minutes for interview per informant. The recorded answers were transcribed and translated into English if the participants answered in vernacular.

2.4 Data Analysis

The gathered data were analyzed following the recommended and appropriate procedures. These include conducting in-depth interviews, transcribing the recorded data, and translating notes, including all the angles in the investigation. These were done to obtain the factual findings of the research study.

After the tardy transcription of the different responses of the five (5) key informants, the researchers sought the assistance of the data analyst. The data were then transmitted to the analyst. This is for the theme identification and provided significant support to the researcher for theme analysis. Accordingly, the thematic analysis analyzed information based on commonalities, relationships, and differences. Thematic relates to the aim of searching for aggregated themes

with the data. Three identified steps were taken during the data analysis. These are reduction of data, verification, and conclusion (Gibson & Brown, 2009).

The generated themes were identified based on the various responses and descriptions of the participants. These were also anchored on the research questions that were formulated beforehand. Since a qualitative study holds no restrictions, other concerns the participants shared were also considered during the interview. However, only the substantial data were put into writing as requested by most of the participants, and the researcher's account of this study was also presented during the investigation to finalize the result of the study.

When a phenomenon arises that refers to the existing results and theories to test whether such claims are coherent with the existing principles or a manifestation of new evidence in the study's field of focus, we, the researchers, record the observations during the in-depth interview and perform further research on the impact of the answers. If necessary, research questions were translated from English to Bisaya dialect for a better understanding of the questions.

Data reductions were used in data analysis. This means that the data and information that were not useful for the study were deleted and modified for the easy understanding of various readers. In this part of the study, the researchers asked about the expertise of the data analyst, more specifically during the management and organization of the qualitative information. This was done so that it was easy for the researchers to manage, sort, and categorize the data during the merger. The interpretative analysis was conducted in three stages: deconstruction, interpretation, and reconstruction (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 2007).

2.5 Ethical Consideration

The research will diligently adhere to established ethical standards, prioritizing the maintenance of confidentiality and privacy for all participants. This commitment sets the foundation for ethical conduct throughout the entire research process.

The ethical consideration will be centered on the conditions portrayed solely from the participants' experiences, interactions, and actions observed. The researcher will seek permission from the school principal. The participants will make voluntary participation and are not compelled by researchers; informed consent will be humbly sent to the concerned individuals. As requirements for honesty, confidentiality, and anonymity, the participant's name and identity will be pseudonymized pursuant to the Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act.

The content of the interview guide will be validated by experts in the field of special education, language, and research. The researcher will also provide an agreement that will include obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, time and place commitments, permission to record, and detailing the ethical principles of research. The researcher will report authentic findings and conclusions.

3. Results

This chapter presents the findings and delve into the discussion arising from our research titled "FROM CHALLENGE TO SUCCESS: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MOTHERS OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER." Through qualitative exploration, we aimed to illuminate the multifaceted experiences of mothers raising children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and uncover the strategies, challenges, hopes, and dreams that shape their journey. The lived experiences of these mothers provide valuable insights into the complexities of caregiving, the impact of support systems, and the aspirations they hold for their children.

Throughout this chapter, we will elucidate the emergent themes derived from our analysis, examining the coping strategies employed by mothers to navigate the challenges they face, the available social supports that shape their experiences, and the hopes and dreams they harbor for the future of their children with ASD. By exploring these themes in-depth, we aim to shed light on the intricacies of maternal caregiving within the context of ASD, offering implications for support services, interventions, and future research endeavors.

Through a synthesis of our findings and a critical discussion of the implications, limitations, and future directions, we endeavor to contribute to a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of mothers of children with ASD. Ultimately, our aim is to highlight the resilience, strength, and unwavering dedication of these mothers and advocate for the development of comprehensive support systems that honor and empower their journey from challenge to success.

3.1 Challenges faced by parents of Learners with Special Educational Needs

The first major theme of "Challenges faced by parents of Learners with Special Educational Needs" encapsulates the multifaceted difficulties encountered by mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This discussion delves into the core ideas of difficulty in daily routines, financial strain, and advocacy and support for the child's needs, drawing on recent studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of these mothers.

Table 1 shows the major theme and core ideas on the challenges faced by parents of Learners with Special Educational Needs.

Table 1. Major Theme and Core Ideas on the Challenges Faced by Parents of Learners with Special Educational Needs

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Challenges faced by parents of Learners with Special Educational Needs	Difficulty in daily routines
	Financial strain
	Advocacy and support for child's needs

3.1.1 Difficulty in Daily Routines

Managing daily routines poses a significant challenge for mothers of children with ASD. Research by Trembath et al. (2019) emphasizes the impact of disruptions in daily routines on maternal stress levels. Children with ASD often struggle with transitions and adherence to schedules, leading to challenges in activities such as mealtimes, bedtime routines, and school preparation (Razza et al., 2018). These difficulties can result in heightened stress and feelings of frustration for mothers, impacting the overall well-being of the family.

"Some of the challenges we often face every day as parents of a child with special needs are convincing them to go to school daily, especially dealing with their tantrums and meltdowns when they don't get what they want." (IDI1)

"Because he has a speech delay, it is difficult for us to understand what he wants... He cannot be trusted to go by himself when he goes outside..." (IDI5)

3.1.2 Advocacy and Support for Child's Needs

Advocating for the needs of a child with ASD requires significant effort and advocacy skills on the part of mothers. Recent research by Zaidman-Zait et al. (2019) highlighted the challenges faced by mothers in navigating educational and healthcare systems for their children with ASD. Mothers often report feeling overwhelmed by the complexity of these systems and struggle to access appropriate support services (Mandell et al., 2020). The lack of accessible support services further compounds the challenges faced by mothers, underscoring the need for improved advocacy efforts and support systems.

"One challenge is to ensure appropriate support and accommodations, advocate for the child's needs, manage behavioral issues or learning difficulties..." (IDI2)

"...cope with the financial strain of specialized services or therapies, and deal with stigma." (IDI2)

The challenges faced by mothers of children with ASD are complex and multifaceted, encompassing difficulties in managing daily routines, financial strain, and advocacy for their child's needs. These challenges have significant implications for maternal stress levels, family dynamics, and overall well-being. Understanding the lived experiences of these mothers is essential for developing effective support systems and interventions that address their unique needs.

Recent studies have highlighted the considerable impact of these challenges on maternal well-being and family functioning. By examining the difficulties faced by mothers of children with ASD within the context of their lived experiences, this research aims to shed light on the pathways from challenge to success. By identifying innovative strategies for supporting mothers in managing daily routines, alleviating financial strain, and advocating for their child's needs, this research seeks to empower mothers and promote positive outcomes for families living with ASD.

3.2 Coping Strategies of Parents with Challenges

The second major theme, "Coping strategies of parents with challenges," is integral to understanding how mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) navigate the complexities of caregiving and support their child's development. This discussion will explore the core ideas of seeking knowledge and support networks, collaboration with professionals, and religious and personal coping methods, drawing on recent studies conducted from 2018 and above to provide insights into the lived experiences of mothers of children with ASD.

Table 2 shows the major theme and core ideas on how do the parents cope with the challenges of parenting Learners with Special Educational Needs.

Table 2. Major Theme and Core Ideas on how do the Parents Cope with the Challenges of Parenting Learners with Special Educational Needs

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Coping strategies of parents with challenges	Seeking knowledge and support networks Collaboration with professionals Religious and personal coping methods

3.2.1 Seeking Knowledge and Support Networks

Mothers of children with ASD often employ various strategies to seek knowledge and establish support networks to cope with the challenges they face. Recent research by Khanna et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of peer support groups and online communities in providing emotional validation and practical advice for mothers of children with ASD. These support networks offer a sense of belonging and understanding, allowing mothers to share experiences, exchange information, and access resources tailored to their child's needs (Khanna et al., 2019; Burrell et al., 2020).

"I educate or learn about autism. I read books, online articles, and watch videos... I also build a network of parents with children having special needs..." (ID12)
"...and discuss many parenting strategies with them." (ID12)

3.2.2 Collaboration with Professionals

Collaborating with professionals, including healthcare providers, therapists, and educators, is another essential coping strategy utilized by mothers of children with ASD. Research by Magaña et al. (2019) emphasized the significance of collaborative partnerships between parents and professionals in developing individualized interventions and support plans for children with ASD. Through collaborative efforts, mothers can access specialized services, obtain guidance on

effective parenting strategies, and advocate for their child's needs within educational and healthcare systems (Magaña et al., 2019; Baranek et al., 2020).

"I also collaborate with the special education teacher to follow up on my child's needs." (IDI2)

"...I can always approach the special education teacher regarding strategies in parenting and teaching my child basic reading and math." (IDI3)

3.2.3 Religious and Personal Coping Methods

In addition to seeking external support, many mothers of children with ASD turn to religious and personal coping methods to navigate the challenges of caregiving. Studies have shown that religious beliefs and practices serve as sources of comfort, hope, and resilience for mothers facing stress and uncertainty (McGrady et al., 2018; Aloba et al., 2020). Engaging in activities such as prayer, meditation, and mindfulness allows mothers to find solace, manage emotional distress, and cultivate a sense of inner strength and purpose (Aloba et al., 2020; McGrady et al., 2018).

"First of all, I pray to God to guide me and my family in this journey." (IDI2)

"I also make sure I am not stressed and burned out." (IDI2)

Understanding the coping strategies employed by mothers of children with ASD is crucial for developing comprehensive support systems and interventions that promote resilience and well-being. Future research should explore the effectiveness of different coping strategies in mitigating stress, enhancing parental self-efficacy, and fostering positive outcomes for both mothers and their children with ASD. By identifying effective coping mechanisms and support networks, interventions can be tailored to meet the diverse needs of mothers and empower them in their caregiving journey.

In conclusion, the coping strategies utilized by mothers of children with ASD encompass a multifaceted array of knowledge-seeking behaviors, collaborative efforts with professionals, and religious and personal coping methods. Recent research underscores the importance of holistic and individualized approaches to supporting mothers in managing the challenges of caregiving and promoting their well-being. By acknowledging and understanding these coping strategies, interventions can be developed to empower mothers and foster success and resilience for families living with ASD.

3.3 Available Social Supports for Families

The third major theme, "Available social supports for families," illuminates the importance of external resources and networks in assisting mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in navigating the challenges they face. This discussion will explore the core ideas of government assistance, community services, and support from family and friends, drawing on recent studies conducted from 2018 and above to provide insights into the lived experiences of mothers of children with ASD.

Table 3 shows the major theme and core ideas on the available social supports for the families of Learners with Special Educational Needs.

Table 3. Major Theme and Core Ideas on the Available Social Supports for the Families of Learners with Special Educational Needs

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Available social supports for families	Government assistance Community services Family and friends support

3.3.1 Government Assistance

Government assistance programs play a crucial role in providing support to families of children with ASD. Recent research by McDowell et al. (2020) highlighted the significance of social welfare programs in alleviating financial strain and accessing essential services for children with ASD. Government agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Office of the Vice President (OVP) often offer financial aid, medical assistance, and educational support to families in need (McDowell et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2020). These programs aim to enhance the well-being and quality of life for families living with ASD by addressing their diverse needs and challenges.

"Children with special needs can also receive social assistance from the government through DSWD." (ID11)

"They can also seek financial help from PCSO and OVP (Office of the Vice President)." (ID11)

3.3.2 Community Services

Community-based services and organizations play a vital role in providing additional support and resources to families of children with ASD. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of community-based interventions, such as counseling services, support groups, and advocacy organizations, in promoting parental well-being and enhancing the quality of life for children with ASD (Yu et al., 2020; Russell et al., 2018). These services offer a range of supports, including parent education, respite care, and social activities, tailored to meet the unique needs of families living with ASD.

"There are counseling services that are offered for a lesser price by private practitioners in my area... The public school I work at also offers special education..." (IDI2)

"...the stigma of having a child with autism or having students with autism is slowly gone." (IDI2)

3.3.3 Family and Friends' Support

Support from family members and friends constitutes a crucial source of emotional and practical support for mothers of children with ASD. Research by Russell et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of informal social networks in providing emotional validation, practical assistance, and respite care to mothers of children with ASD. Family members and friends often serve as a source of empathy, understanding, and companionship, helping mothers navigate the challenges of caregiving and fostering a sense of connectedness and belonging within their social circles (Russell et al., 2018; McDowell et al., 2020).

"My sister-in-law supports his occupational therapy twice a week..." (IDI5)

Understanding the availability and effectiveness of social supports for families of children with ASD is essential for developing comprehensive interventions and policies that address the diverse needs of these families. Future research should focus on evaluating the impact of government assistance programs, community services, and informal support networks on parental well-being, child outcomes, and family resilience. By identifying effective support mechanisms and enhancing access to resources, interventions can be tailored to meet the unique needs of families living with ASD and promote positive outcomes for both parents and children.

In conclusion, the availability of social supports for families of children with ASD encompasses a range of government assistance programs, community services, and informal support networks. Recent research underscores the importance of these supports in promoting parental well-being, enhancing access to services, and fostering resilience within families living with ASD. By recognizing and strengthening available social supports, interventions can be developed to empower families and promote success and well-being for children with ASD and their caregivers.

3.4 Hopes and dreams of parents for their child

The fourth major theme, "Hopes and dreams of parents for their child," delves into the aspirations and desires that mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) hold for their child's future. This discussion will explore the core ideas of independence and survival skills, academic and personal development, and utilizing talents and abilities, drawing on recent studies conducted from 2018 and above to provide insights into the lived experiences of mothers of children with ASD.

Table 4 shows the major theme and core ideas on the hopes and dreams of the parents for their child.

Table 4 Major Theme and Core Ideas on the on the Hopes and Dreams of the Parents for their Child

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Hopes and dreams of parents for their child	Independence and survival skills Academic and personal development Utilizing talents and abilities

3.4.1 Independence and Survival Skills

One of the primary hopes that mothers of children with ASD harbor is for their child to develop independence and essential survival skills necessary for navigating daily life. Research by Hartley et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of fostering independence in children with ASD, particularly in activities of daily living such as self-care, communication, and social interactions. Mothers aspire for their children to acquire skills that will enable them to thrive independently, despite the challenges posed by their diagnosis (Hartley et al., 2018; Hillier et al., 2018).

"My dream for my child is to become a good citizen... I hope that even if I or our family is no longer there for him, he can survive on his own..." (ID11)

"I hope that he grows up independent and capable of doing basic chores." (ID12)

3.4.2 Academic and Personal Development

Mothers of children with ASD often envision academic and personal development as key milestones for their child's future success. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of early intervention and educational support in promoting academic achievement and social-emotional growth in children with ASD (Magiati et al., 2019; Estes et al., 2020). Mothers hope for their children to excel academically, develop meaningful relationships, and cultivate a sense of self-confidence and resilience in navigating the world around them (Estes et al., 2020; Magiati et al., 2019).

"...I also dream of him to finish senior high school. It is also his dream to finish school and go to college." (ID12)

"...Looking forward for another milestone to unlock through the help of his teachers and moving on to be part in general education..." (ID15)

3.4.3 Utilizing Talents and Abilities

Another aspiration of mothers of children with ASD is for their child to identify and utilize their unique talents and abilities to pursue fulfilling paths in life. Research by Howlin et al. (2018) underscored the importance of recognizing and nurturing the strengths and interests of individuals with ASD, which can serve as avenues for personal fulfillment and success. Mothers aspire for their children to find joy and purpose in activities that capitalize on their talents, whether it be in arts, music, technology, or other domains (Howlin et al., 2018; Granader et al., 2020).

"...He is skilled in arts and drawing so I am hoping he can develop that skill and be able to use that talent in the future." (IDI2)

"...to make friends and excel in the field of academic cause I believe this is a blessing and every child has special needs." (IDI5)

Understanding the hopes and dreams of mothers for their children with ASD is essential for informing interventions and support services that promote holistic development and well-being. Future research should focus on exploring the factors that facilitate the realization of these aspirations, as well as barriers that hinder progress. By aligning support systems with the goals and aspirations of mothers, interventions can be tailored to foster success and fulfillment for children with ASD as they navigate their unique paths in life.

In conclusion, the hopes and dreams of mothers for their children with ASD encompass aspirations for independence and survival skills, academic and personal development, and the utilization of talents and abilities. Recent research highlights the importance of recognizing the individual strengths and potential of children with ASD and fostering environments that support their holistic growth and well-being. By understanding and supporting the aspirations of mothers, interventions can be designed to empower children with ASD to achieve their full potential and thrive in their journey towards success.

4. Conclusion

This research delves into the profound journey of mothers raising children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Through a thorough analysis, three major themes emerged, encapsulating the multifaceted experiences these mothers navigate daily. The challenges faced by parents of learners with special educational needs are multifarious, encompassing difficulty in daily routines, financial strain, and the relentless pursuit of advocacy and support for their child's needs. These core ideas underline the arduous yet courageous efforts mothers undertake to ensure the well-being and development of their children with ASD.

Additionally, the research reveals the coping strategies employed by parents to tackle these challenges head-on. Seeking knowledge and support networks, collaborating with professionals, and drawing upon religious and personal coping methods emerge as vital mechanisms for resilience. These coping strategies not only serve as lifelines for parents but also underscore the importance of holistic support systems in effectively managing the complexities of raising a child with ASD.

Furthermore, the study sheds light on the available social supports for families grappling with ASD. Government assistance, community services, and the unwavering support of family and friends emerge as pillars of strength for these

families. However, amidst these support systems lies the fervent hopes and dreams parents harbor for their children. The aspirations for independence and survival skills, academic and personal development, and the utilization of talents and abilities underscore the unwavering commitment of parents to nurture their child's potential and facilitate their integration into society. In conclusion, the findings of this research underscore the resilience, determination, and unwavering love of mothers raising children with ASD. Their lived experiences provide invaluable insights into the challenges they face, the coping strategies they employ, and the support systems they rely on.

4.1 Implications for Teaching Practice

In terms of implications for teaching practice, understanding the lived experiences of parents is paramount for educators working with children with autism. Recognizing the challenges faced by parents and the coping strategies they employ can inform more empathetic and supportive teaching approaches. Educators can strive to foster collaborative partnerships with parents, providing resources and guidance while acknowledging and validating their experiences. Moreover, promoting awareness and accessibility to available social supports within the community can further alleviate the burdens faced by families navigating the complexities of autism.

4.1.2 Recommendations for Further Research

Moving forward, further research is warranted to delve deeper into the nuanced experiences of both parents and children within the autism community. Exploring additional factors influencing parental experiences, such as cultural influences or socioeconomic status, can provide richer insights into the diverse needs of families. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking the efficacy of various support systems and interventions over time can offer valuable insights into optimizing resources and enhancing outcomes for families raising children with autism spectrum disorder.

In conclusion, "From Challenge to Success" not only underscores the resilience and strength of mothers of children with autism but also serves as a clarion call for greater understanding, support, and advocacy within our educational and societal frameworks. By embracing the voices and experiences of parents, we can cultivate more inclusive and compassionate environments where every child, regardless of ability, can thrive and realize their fullest potential.

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