

# The Important Role of Family on Autism Spectrum Disorder

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## Abstract:

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is considered a broad-spectrum disorder that encompasses a range of symptoms and characteristics, including social and communication difficulties, stereotyped repetitive behaviors, narrow interests and orientations, sensory hypersensitivity, and attentional difficulties. Research has shown that the optimal recovery period for children with autism is in the early childhood period from infancy to the age of 4. Family, as the first public communication environment with social attributes that children come into contact with, will have a huge impact on their rehabilitation. Therefore, the impact of families on children with autism has received much attention. This paper divides influences of family into four aspect: parenting styles, attachment relationships, parental conflicts, and family therapy. This study concludes that family factors have a holistic impact on children with autism. Positive parenting styles and healthy attachment relationships will have a positive impact on children's recovery, while parental conflicts will affect children's symptom recovery and behavioral development. Parental involvement in mediation therapy is crucial in child rehabilitation and has significant advantages in rehabilitation interventions for children with autism. This article emphasizes the important role of the family in the rehabilitation and adaptation of children with ASD.

**Keywords:** Parenting styles, autism spectrum disorder, family therapy

## 1. Introduction

Autism, as a complex neurodevelopmental disorder, usually manifests in early childhood. It can have a wide-ranging impact on a person's social communication skills, behavior patterns, and language development. The autism population has received increasing attention in recent years. The incidence of autism is increasing year by year, and its incidence rate is about 2‰ -3‰. As the primary environment for children's growth, the impact of family on children with autism cannot be ignored. Factors such as parenting style, attachment relationships, parental conflicts, and family therapy also play crucial roles in the growth process of children with autism. This paper mainly elaborates on the impact of these factors on children with autism, to demonstrate the important role of the family in autism, and to provide useful assistance for parents and more educators.

## 2. Key Variables

### 2.1 Autism Spectrum Disorder

Children with autism also exhibit unique characteristics in terms of behavior, emotions, and cognition, such as social disorders, language communication difficulties, and narrow interest behaviors. For children and adolescents with

autism spectrum disorders, anxiety is a common complication. Although the prevalence of anxiety ranges from 11% to 84%, most studies indicate that about half of children with autism suffer from at least one type of anxiety disorder. Among all types of anxiety disorders, specific phobias are the most common. For most typical children, tolerable experiences may cause fear, distress, or irritability in children with autism. Parental companionship is a great way to alleviate anxiety and fear of complications in children with autism. Therefore, in the rehabilitation process of children with autism, familiarity and intimacy between parents and children play a crucial role.

### 2.2 Classification of Family Factors

Some common parenting styles for autism include interpersonal relationship training, language barrier training, medication therapy, and more specialized ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) teaching methods (By strengthening good behavior and eliminating bad behavior, good behavior is retained and bad behavior is removed).

Attachment relationship refers to the emotional bond established between children and their parents. The attachment relationship between parents and children is of special importance in autism spectrum disorders. Attachment relationships include a sense of security and trust, helping children regulate their emotions, and regulating

their behavior. Through positive attachment relationships, children with autism establish confidence and courage to explore the world and acquire important social and emotional skills. Parental conflict and emotional issues refer to frequent conflicts between parents in terms of inconsistent beliefs, behaviors, and other aspects, resulting in strong emotional fluctuations in one or both parties. For children with autism, their perception and experience of the world are particularly sensitive, and conflict behaviors can have more serious negative effects on them, such as behavior, emotional loss, anxiety and panic attacks. Family therapy is a comprehensive treatment method that combines professional diagnosis and treatment with family intervention by improving the family environment and interactive mode. Parents enhance the language expression, social communication skills, and emotional and behavioral control of children with autism through interactions in their daily family life.

### **3. The Impact of Parenting Styles and Attachment Relationships on Children with Autism**

#### **3.1 The Impact of Parenting Styles**

Multiple studies have shown that more personalized and meticulous methods are needed for children with autism to meet their unique needs and challenges. Meanwhile, different parenting styles have an impact on children with autism. Positive and encouraging parenting styles can help children with autism establish a healthier psychological state and social skills; However, overly strict or permissive parenting methods may exacerbate their problematic behavior.

The School of Psychology at the University of Indonesia collected data through the revision of the Parent Authority Questionnaire (PAQ-R), Basic Empathy Scale (BES-PR), and Family Communication Model Revision (FCP-R), indicating that parental parenting style is one of the factors affecting children's empathy development. For example, democratic parenting style is positively correlated with emotional regulation strategies of cognitive reappraisal [1]. This paper argues that children with autism typically benefit from structured and predictable environments. Parents can help their children stay in a stable state and gain a certain sense of security by establishing routine schedules and routines in their daily lives. The Department of Psychology at Fordham University in the United States tested a model that suggests a correlation between parental stress and parenting styles used by parents of children with ASD. The severity of ASD, parental stress, and parenting styles explained the differences in internalized and externalized symptoms in children with ASD. From this,

it can be seen that parenting styles regulate the correlation between the severity of ASD and the performance of internalized and externalized behaviors [2]. And this paper suggests that parents can also use positive reinforcement, that is, by rewarding positive behavior to increase its frequency of occurrence. Parents can use this approach to encourage children with autism to exhibit the behaviors they expect, thereby promoting the development of their child's recovery.

#### **3.2 The Role of Attachment Relationships**

Attachment relationships play an inseparable role in the development of children with autism. A healthy attachment relationship can provide them with emotional support and a sense of security, promote social and emotional development; And attachment disorders may lead to emotional loneliness and social difficulties.

The Department of Pediatric and Adolescent Psychiatry at the Ankara University School of Medicine conducted a survey of samples, including children diagnosed with autism and 27 typical developing children aged 1-5 and their parents. The Crowell program, observational, and structured assessments were used, and the quality of parent-child relationships was evaluated using the Parent-child Relationship Global Assessment Scale, Toronto Alexithymia Scale. The revised version of the test in intimate relationships found that a healthy attachment relationship could help children with autism establish a sense of security, develop emotional skills, and actively respond to life challenges [3]. This paper believes that detailed and practical guidance can be provided from more perspectives, including a sense of security and trust, emotional regulation and behavioral regulation. There are three levels of learning and development. The healthy companionship and support of parents can help children build trust in them and provide a sense of security when needed. In terms of emotions, building healthy attachment relationships between families also provides opportunities for children with autism to learn emotional expression and interaction. A study conducted by Stony Brook University in the United States reviewed the developmental impact history of children with autism, as well as early attachment literature, and used longitudinal research methods to study high-risk and low-risk infants with autism. The research conclusion is that the damage to social kinship attachment relationships can cause tension in the relationship and interaction between parents and children with autism, and the pressure may have an inhibitory effect on development [4]. In addition, this paper believes that for the improvement of behavior in children with autism, child awareness is equally important. When children perceive the support and care of their parents, they can more

easily control their emotions and actively respond to challenges. In terms of learning and development, children have a healthy attachment awareness, which can better build confidence and courage to explore the world, and acquire important social and emotional skills.

### 3.3 Comparison and Summary of Research

Comparing the conclusions of different papers, it can be concluded that parenting styles and attachment relationships have complex and diverse impacts on children with autism. Different parenting styles may lead to different behavioral patterns and emotional responses in children with autism, and the establishment of attachment relationships directly affects their social skills and emotional expression. The Research Institute of the Department of Social Work at Kashmir University emphasizes the continued importance of parent-child relationships as a determining factor for the adaptation of children with autism by reviewing existing family development history and analyzing NLSCY data [5]. This paper believes that there are still many shortcomings in existing research, such as small sample size and insufficient diversity of research methods, which provide broad exploration space for subsequent research. Future research can further explore the specific impact mechanisms of parenting styles and attachment relationships on children with autism, in order to obtain more targeted, detailed, and long-term follow-up systematic diagnosis and treatment plans, in order to provide them with more effective intervention measures.

## 4. The Impact of Parental Conflict on Children with Autism

### 4.1 The Impact of Parental Conflict

Research shows that parental conflicts and emotional issues can have an impact on the psychology and behavior of children with autism. Parental conflict may lead to emotional problems such as anxiety and depression in children with autism, affecting their behavioral development.

The Department of Maternal and Child Health at the School of Public Health, Sun Yat sen University used the Social Communication Questionnaire (SCQ) and the Advantage and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ) to collect symptoms and behavioral issues of autism in children. Measure maternal depression and anxiety symptoms using the Patient Health Questionnaire 9 (PHQ-9) and General Anxiety Disorder 7 (GAD-7) scales, and measure parenting styles using the Parental Behavior Inventory (PBI). The research results show that the anxiety symptoms of parents after parental conflict are negatively correlated with the scores of prosocial behavior in children with

autism, while the interaction scores between parents and children are positively correlated. This study emphasizes that when parents experience high levels of anxiety while adopting hostile/coercive parenting methods, their autistic children may have more serious behavioral problems [6]. This paper believes that these impacts can be refined into four aspects: anxiety, behavioral changes, emotional distress, and social interaction. Children with autism may exhibit behavioral responses to parental conflicts, such as withdrawal, emotional loss, or increased stereotyped repetitive behavior. At the same time, parental conflicts can cause distress and helplessness in children with autism, exacerbating their difficulty in social interaction and emotional expression. This will affect their communication and interaction with family members, making integration with peers more challenging.

### 4.2 Sensitivity of Children with Autism to Parental Conflict

A review of research shows that anxiety and phobia are the most common complications of autism, and therefore, children with autism perceive and experience the world in a significantly different way from normal children. Compared to other children, children are more likely to feel fearful of their general experiences, so parental conflicts are more likely to have a negative impact on autistic children.

The University of California, Irvine, and others invited 40 children with autism spectrum disorder and their primary caregivers to participate in a visit conducted in a room in the university laboratory, with primary wireless EDA (Electronic Design Automation) sensors placed outside the right wrist of each child. These families subsequently completed a series of prescribed laboratory work. They are: parent-child compliance tasks, goal oriented problem-solving/supervision tasks, and parent-child free play. The study collected reports on children's electrodermal activity, parent-child interaction, critical attitudes and warmth after parental conflicts, as well as parental behavior issues. Among them, children's skin activity utilized EDA data from children in two regulatory tasks, which can most sensitively demonstrate the statistical interaction between children and social factors. Research has shown that children with autism may be more sensitive to environmental changes and uncertainties, and conflicts between parents may lead to more anxiety and unease in children with autism [7]. This paper argues that a tense family atmosphere and emotional depression among parents can lead to a negative cycle of deterioration in a child's condition. Therefore, parents of children with autism should avoid displaying conflicts in front of their children as much as possible, or seek professional sup-

port when necessary, including learning how to handle conflicts more effectively to provide a more stable family environment, ensuring that the family environment is beneficial for the development and happiness of children with autism. Parents should establish good communication and conflict resolution methods, create a stable, warm, and supportive family environment, and help children with autism feel safe and at ease.

## **5. The Importance of Family Therapy in Autism Rehabilitation**

### **5.1 The Role of Family Therapy**

Family therapy has a wide range of effects in improving the condition of children with autism. Improving the family environment and interaction patterns by parents can help alleviate the psychological pressure of children with autism, improve their quality of life, and is an indispensable part of their rehabilitation.

A randomized controlled trial was conducted by the Department of Neuroscience at the Children's Hospital in Rome, Italy. In this randomized controlled trial (RCT), cooperative parent mediated therapy (CPMT) and individual parental guidance were used to intervene in the rehabilitation of preschool children with autism. All children received the same low-intensity social psychological intervention (LPI) provided in the community environment. The results indicate that CPMT has additional benefits for LPI, significantly improving ASD core symptoms and social communication skills. Compared with the positive control group that only received LPI, CPMT provided additional significant therapeutic benefits for core symptoms of ASD, such as a significant reduction in emotional and behavioral problems, and a more stable state of children [8]. Therefore, this paper believes that family therapy plays an irreplaceable role in the rehabilitation of children with autism. Parents have a natural and irreplaceable emotional aspect for children. They are the core and closest figures in ASD children's lives, and the family is also the first public communication environment with social attributes that children come into contact with. Therefore, sufficient and healthy parental companionship during early childhood growth will have a beneficial impact on the growth and recovery of children with autism. 50 studies from the School of Psychology of the National University of Ireland evaluated parent mediated interventions, 4 studies evaluated brother sisters mediated interventions, and 14 studies evaluated interventions using telehealth. The research results show that family telehealth care intervention and brother sisters mediation intervention are promising areas for further research and clinical practice [9]. This paper believes that remote home therapy can help

family members establish a safe support system, including family, professional, and community resources. This support system can provide families with more resources and professional support, helping them better cope with the challenges of autism. At the same time, this system can reduce time and space costs and achieve efficient intervention treatment results.

### **5.2 Comparison and Summary of Research**

Comparing the conclusions of different papers, this paper concludes that family therapy has great advantages in intervention for children with autism, but also has certain limitations. Ohio State University conducted regression-based interaction analysis using data from online surveys (n=235), and the results showed that critical consideration is still needed to determine whether family therapy is the most adaptive support strategy for children with autism [10]. This paper believes that family therapy can help improve the emotional support and social skills of children with autism, help them establish a healthier and more stable living environment, and promote their all-round development and recovery. However, family therapy still faces challenges in the development of personalized treatment plans and the stability of long-term outcomes. In order to further optimize the effectiveness of family therapy, future research needs to pay more attention to personalized customization of treatment plans, adaptive adjustment of family environment, and improvement of long-term follow-up evaluation, providing more accurate and comprehensive support for the rehabilitation path of children with autism.

## **6. Discussion and Suggestion**

### **6.1 Significant Impact of Family on Children with Autism**

Based on the analysis of the above viewpoints, this study concludes that family factors have a holistic impact on children with autism. Factors such as parenting styles, attachment relationships, parental conflicts, and family therapy play important roles in the growth process of children with autism. A positive parenting style has a beneficial positive impact on the recovery of children with autism, while the opposite can exacerbate behavioral problems in children. Establishing healthy attachment relationships can provide emotional support and a sense of security, promote social and emotional development. On the contrary, attachment disorders may cause emotional loneliness and social difficulties. Due to the anxiety and fear of complications caused by autism, children with autism are more sensitive to parental conflicts and emotional fluctuations, so family conflicts can have a serious negative

impact on their recovery. Parents should try to avoid displaying conflicts in front of their children as much as possible to provide a more stable family environment. Family therapy has significant therapeutic benefits in improving symptoms in children with autism, and professional guidance is necessary. Family mediated intervention can better address the special needs of children with autism and promote their social, emotional, and cognitive development.

## 6.2 Completely Investigations on Various Aspects Family Impact

Based on research findings, this paper provides targeted recommendations for parents and educators, such as adopting positive parenting methods, including following structured and predictable approaches, establishing personalized learning models, establishing stable and healthy attachment relationships, guiding children to establish healthy self-awareness and self-esteem, reducing parental conflicts, establishing a healthy growth environment for children, participating in family therapy and child intervention programs. Parents should collaborate with professional medical experts, psychologists, and educators to receive more comprehensive support and guidance.

## 6.3 Future Research Directions

Comparing literature, it can be concluded that the interaction between family factors and other influencing factors, as well as the effectiveness of different intervention strategies, still need to be evaluated. Family therapy still faces challenges in developing personalized treatment plans and ensuring long-term stability. Therefore, the personalized customization of treatment plans and the long-term data of professionals also need to be improved. At the same time, adaptability to the family environment and adaptation to different stages and intervention plans for children with autism should also be flexibly and accurately adjusted.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper investigates the impact of family factors on children with autism, including parenting styles, attachment relationships, parental conflicts, and family therapy. Through a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, this study recognizes the important role of the family in the growth process of children with autism. Based on these conclusions, this paper proposes targeted recommendations. Researchers and educators should pay attention to the impact of family factors on the rehabilitation of

children with autism, and pay attention to the interaction between family factors and other influencing factors. The author hopes these efforts can provide useful assistance for improving the condition of children with autism.

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