

Challenges of Parents with Autistic Children in Ghana

Hilda Aboagyewaa Agyekum*
University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana

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Abstract

This study looks into the challenges that parents with autistic children face in Ghana. The study looks specifically at challenges that being a parent in Ghana entails. Semi structured interviews were used as a form of data collection. Prominent themes the study highlights are the challenges of parents, which was associated with the inability of the parents to have meaningful conversations

with their children, the financial burden of taking care of them, and stigmatization of their autistic children as well as themselves. The study was measured against already done work on the topic. From the study, parents major challenge had to do with finances, they explained the various sources in which these expenses were incurred to include transportation, medical bills and school fees. The study brought out transportation as a financial expense because of the where the study was conducted. Parents went on to address how people stigmatize them and their children whenever they are in public. The study also highlighted the challenge of not being able to communicate with their children with disability. Over the years, autism has seen a widespread throughout the world. Bolte [1] defined autism as "a neurodevelopmental disorder persisting deficits in social interaction across multiple contexts, alongside restricted, repetitive patterns, interests, or activities as manifested by at least two prototypically inflexible behaviors". Marcus [2] asserted that parents have a hard time with the day to day management of their children. The time that could have been used by the parents for productive activities like working, would have to be used up in taking care of their child, since they cannot do anything by themselves. Although the symptoms of autism tend to last for a long period of time, it is stated that, it is more difficult for the parents to take care of the child when he is younger [3] or when the child is a toddler. Autism is a developmental disorder characterized by difficulties with social interaction, social communication and an unusually restricted range of behaviors and interests [5]. Autism symptoms can be seen by parents or daycare givers, upon the realization that the child is growing differently from his peers [6]. It is a highly delved into topic, hence the numerous changes in the understanding

of the disorder [7]. Wolff hinted that, since its discovery, there have been a lot of journals and publications on it, which were mostly funded by parents' associations. This goes to prove that, parents are always eager to know more about their children with autism and what they can do to help them. Parents with autistic children daily go through challenges in the upbringing of their children. This point has been implicated by many researches [8], and this study serves as a confirmation of what has been documented. The challenges faced by these parents though may be different still have an underlying problem that is common to them, to which the study has outlined. Parents from this study explained challenges with respect to their financial life, stress in performing their childcare duties, and having to face stigma. The aim of this study is to explore the challenges that parents are facing in their daily activities of taking care of their children. Even though, parents with autistic children go through many challenges, much work has not been done in Ghana to ascertain the particular problem that these parents here are facing. With this, there is the need for a research work that will look at the challenges that parents with autistic children in Greater Accra, the capital city of Ghana goes through in their daily lives.

Conclusion

The study looked at the challenge's parents with autistic children in Ghana face. One major challenge parent in this study have with their autistic children, is the struggle to have meaningful conversations with their children. Parents shared that they had a hard time trying to figure out what their children wanted at a particular point in time. Parents also live with the pain of experiencing financial challenges in their daily activities with their autistic children. These financial challenges usually emanate from the cost involved in paying for medical bills of their children, the cost of educating their children as well as the cost of transporting with them. Parents additionally face stigmatization from the public especially when the children are sent to public gathering. Much concern on stigma was raised by parents whose children had mild autism, as such, were enrolled in mainstream school. Issues on the demandingness of autistic children posing stress on their children was also raised as part of the challenges parents in this study are facing.