

The Psycho-Social Challenges in Raising Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Abstract

Counseling and therapy provide essential emotional support for both children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their mothers. Counseling sessions create a safe environment for mothers to express their emotions, acquire coping strategies, and build resilience in managing the challenges associated with raising a child with ASD. This study explored the psycho-social challenges faced by parents raising children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) using a descriptive phenomenological research design. Utilizing a semi-structured interview guide, one-on-one interviews were conducted with five participants. Data analysis employed Lichtman's 3Cs methodology, capturing thoughts, feelings, and interpretations. The findings revealed four main themes—physical, psychological, economic, and social challenges—each with specific sub-categories. Physical challenges included sleep deprivation, over-fatigue, and parental stress. Psychological challenges encompassed mental preoccupation and acceptance struggles. Economic challenges were marked by a lack of income sources, while social challenges involved stigma, social isolation, and limited support. The study underscores the intense emotional journey of mothers raising children diagnosed with ASD, characterized by love, frustration, and determination. It emphasizes the necessity for enhanced social support networks, inclusive educational practices, and heightened public awareness. This research contributes to understanding the complexities of parenting children with ASD and advocating for compassionate and comprehensive support systems. Consequently, it proposes practical counseling interventions to improve the quality of life for both mothers and their ASD-diagnosed children, promoting a more inclusive and supportive societal framework.

Keywords: Indigent mothers, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Psychosocial Challenges, Descriptive phenomenological research design, Central Philippines

Introduction

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of five indigent mothers raising children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) addressing a critical gap in understanding ASD's impact within under-researched contexts. It is acknowledged that the study may not fully address all psychosocial challenges or societal implications of ASD, given the complexity and multifaceted nature of the disorder and its impact on individuals and families. The findings of the study are beneficial to the following:

- **SPED Centers in Bacolod City**
The result of this study will provide opportunities to improve education programs.
- **Public and Private Schools in Bacolod City**
The results will prepare public and private schools to accommodate learners with special needs through customized curriculum and assistive school programs.
- **Indigent Mothers/ Indigent Household**
The results will help indigent families increase awareness and improve acceptance and treatment for their children. Indigent mothers will also feel empowered, knowing they are not alone and need one another as a support group. The study will also allow them to organize counseling programs for mothers.
- **Local Government Unit**
The result will actively engage leaders at various levels of governance as well as stakeholders across relevant sectors, including individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), and significant others to collaborate and participate in developing and refining policies, laws, and services designed to operate within community-based settings, thereby promoting inclusivity, accessibility, and sustainability across the spectrum of care and support.
- **Researcher**
The results of this study are poised to significantly contribute to the body of knowledge that will empower researchers to advocate for comprehensive strategies targeting mothers, families, schools, Local Government Units (LGUs), and the broader community. The collaborative efforts and evidence-based approaches will instill lasting changes that will nurture empathy, understanding, and proactive engagement.
- **Future Researchers**
The results will serve as a cornerstone for future research endeavors, providing a robust foundation upon which researchers can build by strengthening information, and evidence, leveraging interdisciplinary collaboration to empower and implement effective practices to enhance the quality of life and promote meaningful inclusion.

Theoretical Framework: Family Systems Theory

This study was anchored to the Family Systems Theory (FST), developed by Murray Bowen in 1978, which provided an insightful framework for examining the psycho-social challenges faced by mothers raising children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The theory conceptualized the family as an emotional unit, where the behaviors, emotions, and experiences of one family member may influence and may be influenced by others in the family system (Bowen, 1978). In the context of ASD, this interconnectedness was critical, as mothers often navigate multiple stressors: physical, psychological, financial, and social that impact not only their individual well-being but also the emotional and functional dynamics of the family as a whole (Giallo et al., 2022). Family Systems Theory emphasized that individuals, particularly the mother in this case, may not be fully understood in isolation; their experiences were deeply embedded within the larger family context, where every challenge faced by one member reverberates throughout the family system (Benson & Karlof, 2019). This framework underscored the need for a holistic understanding of how the emotional, physical, and social difficulties faced by mothers affect the family as a collective unit (Sarwar et al., 2022).

The Family Systems Theory was particularly useful for understanding the interconnectedness of the various psycho-social challenges mothers face in raising children with ASD. The theory illuminated how challenges in one area, such as sleep deprivation or financial stress, can impact not only the mother's well-being but also the overall functioning of the family. The following sections discuss how the four key challenges: physical, psychological, financial, and social challenges interact within the family system.

Physical Challenges: Sleep Deprivation, Overfatigue, and Stress

The physical challenges associated with raising a child with ASD, including sleep deprivation, overfatigue, and chronic stress, significantly influence both the mother's well-being and the family dynamic. According to Family Systems Theory, the mother's emotional and physical exhaustion can disrupt the balance within the family, creating a ripple effect that impacts the functioning of all members. Research has shown that mothers of children with ASD often experience poor sleep quality, which exacerbates stress levels and impairs their ability to manage caregiving responsibilities effectively (Wang et al., 2020). Sleep deprivation and fatigue create an emotional contagion, where the mother's heightened stress levels affect the emotional climate of the entire family (Tehee et al., 2019). The theory suggests that as the mother's physical health deteriorates, it may lead to a breakdown in communication and family interactions, as stress and fatigue make it harder for her to engage positively with her child and other family members (Sarwar et al., 2022).

In a family system, when one member is under stress, other members are likely to be affected, leading to a destabilization of family dynamics. Family Systems Theory highlights that this interconnectedness can lead to maladaptive coping strategies within the family, such as withdrawal or increased conflict, further exacerbating the challenges of caregiving (Lodder et al., 2020). The lack of sufficient rest and recovery for the mother, therefore, not only affects her physical health but can also undermine the cohesion and resilience of the family unit (Giallo et al., 2022).

Psychological Challenges: Mental Preoccupation, Struggle with Acceptance

Psychological challenges, including mental preoccupation and struggles with acceptance, are central to the experiences of mothers raising children with ASD. Family Systems Theory underscores that the emotional states of individual family members, particularly the mother, affect the overall emotional climate of the family. For mothers, mental preoccupation with their child's needs, combined with the emotional toll of accepting the child's diagnosis, can lead to emotional withdrawal or difficulty in forming meaningful connections with other family members (Davis & Carter, 2018). This emotional disconnection can result in feelings of isolation and strain family relationships.

Mothers often experience a complex emotional process in which they grapple with the diagnosis, which can manifest as denial, grief, or anger. According to Family Systems Theory, this struggle with acceptance affects not only the mother but also the entire family system. The theory posits that when a mother is emotionally preoccupied or unable to accept the diagnosis, her emotional state can cause tension within the family unit, as other members may feel misunderstood or unable to provide the support the mother needs (Zeidan et al., 2022). This can lead to a breakdown in family communication, where emotions are not openly discussed, further distancing the mother from the other family members and reinforcing feelings of isolation.

Financial Challenges: Lack of Financial Resources

Financial stress is another significant challenge for mothers of children with ASD. Family Systems Theory suggests that financial challenges affect the entire family system, as they often lead to stress, conflict, and a decrease in family well-being. The high costs associated with autism therapies, medical treatments, and special education services can strain the family's resources, leaving mothers feeling financially overwhelmed (Mamador, 2023).

According to Family Systems Theory, this financial strain can create tension within the family, as it limits the ability to meet the needs of the child with ASD while also fulfilling other familial obligations.

The theory highlights that financial challenges often lead to a cycle of stress, where the mother's worry about providing for the child's needs can cause emotional strain that disrupts family harmony. This stress can lead to conflict between family members, as financial worries affect communication and decision-making processes (Benson & Karlof, 2019). Family Systems Theory further emphasizes that these financial challenges create a feedback loop, where stress and emotional exhaustion from financial difficulties undermine the ability to find effective solutions, leading to further family dysfunction (Shattnawi et al., 2020).

Social Challenges: Stigma, Misconceptions, and Limited Social Support

Social challenges, including stigma, misconceptions about ASD, and limited social support, significantly influence the family system. Family Systems Theory posits that the social environment of the family is a crucial determinant of the family's emotional well-being. For mothers of children with ASD, stigma and societal misconceptions can lead to feelings of shame and social isolation. These challenges are exacerbated by a lack of adequate social support, which is essential for coping with the demands of caregiving (Gray, 2022).

Mothers often report feeling stigmatized or judged by others for their child's behaviors, particularly in public spaces where misunderstandings about ASD are common (Perry et al., 2022). Family Systems Theory explains that such stigma affects not only the mother but the family as a whole, as it can lead to avoidance of social interactions, which in turn limits the family's ability to seek support from others (Lovell et al., 2022). Limited social support compounds this issue, as mothers often lack the necessary resources to cope with the day-to-day challenges of raising a child with ASD. According to Family Systems Theory, the absence of external support networks exacerbates the emotional burden on the mother, which can negatively impact family cohesion and increase stress within the household (Tehee et al., 2019).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Family Systems Theory provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the psycho-social challenges faced by mothers raising children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The interconnectedness of physical, psychological, financial, and social challenges underscores the complexity of caregiving in the context of ASD. By viewing these challenges through the lens of Family Systems Theory, it became clear that the well-being of the mother and the overall family dynamics are inextricably linked. Understanding these relationships was crucial for developing interventions that support both the individual mother and the family as a whole, ultimately improving the quality of life for families raising children with ASD.

Review of Related Literature

This section provided a comprehensive review of existing research and theoretical perspectives that explored the psycho-social challenges encountered by parents, particularly mothers, in raising children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Autism Spectrum Disorder, a neurodevelopmental condition, presented significant challenges not only for the children diagnosed but also for their families. The review examined various dimensions of the challenges faced by parents, including physical, psychological, financial, and social struggles, and how these dimensions interacted with one another within the family context. By exploring the intersection of these challenges, the review established a foundational understanding of the multi-faceted nature of the psycho-social difficulties experienced by parents of children with ASD.

Physical Challenges of Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) faced numerous physical challenges, with sleep deprivation, overfatigue, and stress being among the most commonly reported. These challenges significantly affected their overall well-being and quality of life. This section delves into these challenges in greater detail, supported by empirical studies and literature.

Sleep Deprivation

Sleep deprivation was a pervasive issue among mothers, particularly those caring for children with ASD. Studies highlighted that the caregiving demands associated with managing the needs of children with ASD frequently disrupted mothers' sleep cycles. For instance, Giallo et al. (2022) found that mothers of children with ASD experienced reduced sleep duration and quality, leading to chronic exhaustion and compromised mental health. Similarly, Davis and Carter (2018) noted that mothers reported difficulties in maintaining regular sleep patterns due to the need to monitor their children throughout the night.

Wang, Hu, and Han (2020) emphasized that sleep disturbances were not merely the result of caregiving responsibilities but were also exacerbated by the anxiety and stress associated with their children's behavioral challenges. These findings were consistent with other studies, such as those by Hayes and Watson (2021), which concluded that sleep deprivation among mothers of children with ASD was significantly higher than in mothers of typically developing children. Prolonged sleep deprivation had far-reaching effects, including reduced cognitive functioning, emotional instability, and heightened susceptibility to physical illnesses.

Overfatigue

Overfatigue emerged as another critical challenge for mothers. The constant demands of caregiving, coupled with limited opportunities for rest, often left mothers physically drained. Tehee, Honan, and Hevey (2019) highlighted that the physical demands of managing meltdowns, ensuring safety, and addressing the repetitive behaviors characteristic of ASD required substantial energy and endurance.

Studies conducted in various cultural contexts, such as those by Shattnawi et al. (2020) in Jordan and Ilias et al. (2019) in Southeast Asia, revealed that mothers frequently reported feelings of physical exhaustion. This exhaustion was compounded by a lack of social and institutional support, forcing mothers to bear the brunt of caregiving responsibilities alone. Overfatigue was not merely a physical condition but was closely intertwined with emotional and psychological challenges, creating a vicious cycle of stress and burnout.

Stress

Stress was a ubiquitous experience among mothers of children with ASD, stemming from the complex and often unpredictable nature of the disorder. Numerous studies documented the heightened stress levels experienced by mothers. For example, Soltanifar et al. (2022) compared parental stress levels among mothers and fathers of children with ASD in Iran, revealing that mothers were often more severely affected due to traditional caregiving roles.

The stress experienced by mothers was multifaceted. Lovell, Moss, and Wetherell (2022) identified social stigma, financial strain, and concerns about their children's future as major stressors. Similarly, Lodder, Papadopoulos, and Randhawa (2020) highlighted the impact of societal stigma on mothers, which often led to feelings of isolation and helplessness. Stress was further amplified by the lack of adequate resources and support systems, as noted by Mamador (2023) in her study on autism resources in the Philippines.

Chronic stress among mothers was found to have profound implications for their physical and mental health. Benson and Karlof (2019) demonstrated that prolonged exposure to stress increased the risk of developing conditions such as hypertension, depression, and anxiety. Furthermore, the interplay between stress and other physical challenges, such as sleep deprivation and overfatigue, created a compounding effect, further deteriorating mothers' health and well-being.

Implications

The findings from these studies underscored the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the physical challenges faced by mothers of children with ASD. Strategies such as providing access to respite care, improving social support systems, and promoting awareness of mothers' needs were identified as critical steps toward alleviating these challenges. Additionally, fostering collaborative efforts among healthcare providers, policymakers, and community organizations was deemed essential to creating a more supportive environment for mothers.

Overall, addressing the physical challenges of sleep deprivation, overfatigue, and stress required a holistic approach that considered the interconnected nature of these issues and their impact on mothers' overall quality of life.

Psychological Challenges of Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often face significant psychological challenges that arise from the complexities of caring for their children. The intricate needs of children with ASD, combined with the emotional toll of caregiving, can lead to considerable mental strain and emotional distress. This discussion delves into two primary psychological challenges: persistent mental preoccupation and difficulty with acceptance of the child's condition. These challenges are explored in greater depth through empirical studies, which highlight their profound impact on mothers' well-being and the importance of providing adequate support.

Mentally Preoccupied

One of the most common psychological burdens experienced by mothers of children with ASD is persistent mental preoccupation. This constant state of mental engagement is primarily driven by the need to manage the daily care demands of a child with ASD, such as developmental milestones, therapy sessions, and behavioral management.

Studies have shown that this preoccupation often leaves mothers mentally exhausted, with little time or energy to focus on self-care or personal needs. For instance, Wang, Hu, and Han (2020) emphasized how mothers of children with ASD are often consumed by thoughts about their child's progress, which significantly impacts their emotional and psychological well-being.

Research by Tehee, Honan, and Hevey (2019) further supports this notion, illustrating that the unpredictable nature of ASD-related behaviors heightens mental strain for mothers. The constant vigilance required to manage their child's behaviors, combined with the need to anticipate and address potential challenges, can disrupt other aspects of life. This heightened state of alertness can lead to increased stress levels, making it more difficult for mothers to juggle caregiving responsibilities alongside other personal or professional commitments. Similarly, Hayes and Watson (2021) observed that the mental preoccupation of mothers caring for children with ASD was more intense when compared to those caring for typically developing children, suggesting a unique psychological burden linked to the nature of the disorder.

Furthermore, societal expectations and stigma add to the mental preoccupation of mothers. According to Lodder, Papadopoulos, and Randhawa (2020), many mothers worry about how their child's behavior will be perceived by others. These concerns about public judgment and the social challenges faced by their children often exacerbate their anxiety, contributing to a sense of isolation. The emotional toll of these societal pressures highlights the critical need for robust support systems that can help alleviate the mental burden on mothers.

Struggle with Acceptance

Another significant psychological challenge faced by mothers of children with ASD is the difficulty in accepting their child's diagnosis and the long-term implications associated with the disorder. Acceptance is a gradual and often painful process that requires mothers to reconcile their initial expectations of parenthood with the reality of their child's condition. This process is frequently characterized by a series of emotional stages, including denial, guilt, and sadness.

A study by Soltanifar et al. (2022) examined the emotional responses of mothers in Iran and found that both mothers and fathers often experienced intense feelings of denial and self-blame in the early stages following their child's diagnosis. These emotions were compounded by societal misconceptions about ASD, leading to further distress and feelings of inadequacy. The societal stigma surrounding ASD can make it more difficult for mothers to accept their child's diagnosis, as they may fear judgment or rejection from others.

In line with this, the research by Meirsschaut, Roeyers, and Warreyn (2018) highlighted how emotional distress related to a lack of acceptance can negatively affect the psychological well-being of mothers. Those who struggled to accept their child's condition often faced heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Conversely, mothers who reached a stage of acceptance tended to experience better emotional well-being and were more capable of engaging in proactive coping strategies. This acceptance allowed them to adapt more effectively to the demands of caregiving, which in turn positively influenced their child's developmental outcomes.

Moreover, social support has been identified as a key factor in helping mothers navigate the process of acceptance. Lovell, Moss, and Wetherell (2022) found that mothers with strong social support networks, including family, friends, and community resources, were more resilient in the face of their child's diagnosis. These supportive relationships not only facilitated emotional healing but also enabled mothers to develop positive coping mechanisms. Therefore, creating environments that promote empathy and understanding toward mothers of children with ASD is essential for fostering acceptance and enhancing overall well-being.

Implications

The psychological challenges of persistent mental preoccupation and struggling with acceptance underscore the need for comprehensive interventions tailored specifically to the needs of mothers caring for children with ASD. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes mental health counseling, community support programs, and public education efforts aimed at reducing stigma and increasing awareness of ASD.

By providing mothers with access to adequate resources and support systems, it is possible to alleviate some of the psychological burdens they experience. This support not only benefits mothers but also enhances the developmental outcomes for children with ASD, as mothers who are emotionally supported are better equipped to provide the care their children need. The interconnected nature of the psychological well-being of both mothers and children suggests that holistic support approaches are crucial for fostering positive outcomes for the entire family unit.

In conclusion, understanding the psychological challenges faced by mothers of children with ASD is essential for developing effective interventions and support mechanisms. By addressing issues of mental preoccupation and the

struggle for acceptance, we can better equip mothers with the tools and resources they need to manage the demands of caregiving, ultimately improving their well-being and the quality of life for their children.

Financial Challenges of Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

The financial difficulties faced by mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have been extensively documented as a major source of stress. These financial challenges often arise from the substantial costs associated with the specialized care, therapies, and educational interventions required to support children with ASD. Given the complexity and variability of the condition, these mothers often encountered severe financial burdens, which exacerbated the emotional and psychological toll of caregiving. This section provides a comprehensive review of literature focused on the financial constraints faced by mothers of children with ASD, particularly emphasizing the theme of lack of financial resources.

Lack of Financial Resources

Mothers of children with ASD have long reported significant financial difficulties, which were primarily due to the high costs of healthcare, therapeutic services, and specialized educational programs required for their children's care. Soltanifar et al. (2022) examined the issue of parental stress in Iranian families and revealed that mothers were especially vulnerable to financial strain. The study indicated that the costs associated with ongoing therapy sessions, behavioral interventions, and other specialized services, many of which were not covered by public health insurance, led to an overwhelming sense of financial insecurity. These financial obligations often left mothers with little room to address other personal or familial needs, contributing to a cycle of stress and exhaustion.

Similarly, Tehee, Honan, and Hevey (2019) explored the factors contributing to stress in parents of children with ASD, noting that one of the primary sources of distress was the unpredictable financial burden caused by the condition. Therapies designed to address the behavioral challenges associated with ASD, such as Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA), were found to be particularly costly and often required ongoing commitment. Additionally, the unpredictability of a child's behavior meant that extra resources for managing day-to-day challenges, such as home modifications or behavioral aids, were frequently needed, further intensifying the financial strain on mothers.

The issue of financial resources also extended beyond direct medical costs. Wang et al. (2020) highlighted how mothers faced not only the financial burdens of specialized treatments but also the indirect costs related to the impact of ASD on family dynamics and employment. For many mothers, the demands of managing their child's behavior and meeting their child's educational needs often resulted in reduced working hours or, in some cases, full-time caregiving. This reduced earning potential, combined with the ongoing need for therapeutic interventions, placed families in a precarious financial position. Many mothers, therefore, experienced heightened stress, as they felt the weight of providing both emotional and financial support for their child without sufficient resources.

In addition to the direct financial pressures, societal factors also played a significant role in exacerbating the financial burdens on these mothers. The Philippine government's 2023 poverty statistics, reported by The Guilford Press (2021), indicated that many families in developing nations, including the Philippines, lived below the poverty line. This created an additional challenge for mothers of children with ASD, as they struggled to afford the essential care their children needed while simultaneously dealing with the financial instability caused by poverty. In many cases, families in these circumstances had to rely on external support from charities or local communities, which, though helpful, were often insufficient to meet the ongoing needs of families with children who required continuous intervention.

The DSWD report (Junio, 2018) further emphasized the lack of sufficient social support for families in need. The report underscored the fact that many mothers from lower-income backgrounds had limited access to state-provided services, which only added to the financial burden. These mothers often found themselves in a situation where the limited resources available to them were stretched thin, leading to feelings of frustration, isolation, and helplessness. The inadequacy of financial resources was thus a central theme that shaped the overall experience of motherhood in families with children who have ASD.

Moreover, societal stigma surrounding autism added another layer of financial strain for mothers. As noted by Lovell, Moss, and Wetherell (2022), stigma related to the condition could lead to discrimination, which adversely affected mothers' ability to maintain employment or secure necessary financial assistance. In some cases, mothers faced negative societal attitudes that not only made it more difficult to access resources but also contributed to emotional and psychological stress. These social challenges further complicated the financial difficulties, as mothers found themselves navigating both external societal pressures and internal family needs with insufficient support.

Implications

The financial challenges faced by mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder were multi-dimensional and encompassed both direct and indirect costs. Direct costs included the significant expenses associated with medical care, therapies, and educational support, while indirect costs stemmed from the loss of income due to caregiving responsibilities and the social stigma that mothers often faced. As highlighted in the studies by Soltanifar et al. (2022), Tehee, Honan, and Hevey (2019), and Wang et al. (2020), the combination of these financial burdens created a cycle of stress, emotional strain, and financial insecurity that was difficult for many mothers to escape. Additionally, societal factors, including poverty and stigma, exacerbated these challenges, making it even harder for mothers to meet the financial demands of raising a child with ASD.

Addressing these financial challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that includes both policy interventions and community-based support systems. Financial assistance programs, healthcare reforms to cover ASD-related treatments, and community resources aimed at alleviating the social stigma surrounding ASD are crucial in providing mothers with the necessary support. Furthermore, increasing awareness about the financial and emotional challenges of raising a child with ASD could lead to more inclusive policies and a broader societal understanding of the issue. Ultimately, by alleviating the financial strain on mothers, society can help improve not only their quality of life but also the developmental outcomes for children with ASD, fostering a more supportive environment for both caregivers and their children.

Social Challenges Faced by Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) encounter a variety of social challenges that contribute significantly to their stress levels and overall well-being. Two major subthemes emerge from the literature: stigma and misconceptions surrounding ASD, and the limited availability of social support. These factors exacerbate the emotional, psychological, and social strains that mothers face as they manage the demands of raising a child with ASD. This review delves into the literature on these challenges, exploring how stigma and misconception interact with limited social support to heighten the difficulties experienced by these mothers.

Stigma and Misconception

A pervasive challenge for mothers of children with ASD is the social stigma attached to their child's condition. Across various societies, children with autism are often misunderstood, and the lack of awareness about ASD can result in misconceptions that intensify the stigma. These misconceptions range from the belief that autism is a result of bad parenting to the notion that children with ASD are inherently unmanageable. As noted by Zeidan et al. (2022), the global prevalence of autism remains shrouded in stigma, with many individuals unaware of the neurodevelopmental nature of the disorder. The social implications of this lack of understanding are profound, as mothers are frequently subjected to discrimination, social exclusion, and judgment based on their child's behavior.

Perry et al. (2022) discussed the phenomenon of "camouflaging," where mothers actively hide or downplay their child's autistic traits in an attempt to protect both the child and themselves from societal judgment. This protective strategy often comes at a significant emotional cost, as mothers feel the need to conform to societal expectations, which can deepen their own sense of frustration and isolation. The desire to shield their children from stigma further compounds the emotional burden, as mothers struggle to balance societal pressures with the reality of caring for a child with ASD.

Furthermore, cultural contexts play a significant role in how autism is perceived, which in turn influences the extent of stigma experienced by mothers. Marsella and Yamada (2007) emphasized the importance of cultural factors in shaping attitudes toward ASD. In some cultures, autism is seen through a lens of superstition or moral failure, which leads to heightened social ostracization for both the child and the mother. Such negative cultural perceptions foster an environment where mothers may feel compelled to conceal their child's condition or avoid public situations altogether to prevent facing judgment or criticism. This can lead to a sense of alienation, as mothers may feel that they are the only ones navigating the complexities of raising a child with ASD, and they may be reluctant to seek support due to fear of further stigmatization.

The societal stigma surrounding autism is further compounded by a lack of accurate information and understanding. As highlighted by Tehee, Honan, and Hevey (2019), many parents experience heightened stress as they attempt to educate others about their child's condition, only to encounter resistance or disbelief. These mothers often feel unsupported and overwhelmed as they strive to manage the daily challenges of raising a child with ASD, while simultaneously dealing with the burden of societal ignorance and misunderstanding.

Limited Social Support

Another significant social challenge for mothers of children with ASD is the limited availability of social support. The role of mothers in caring for children with ASD is all-consuming, often leaving them with little time or energy to maintain social relationships or engage in activities outside of caregiving. This lack of social connection can be both emotionally and physically taxing. According to Soltanifar et al. (2022), mothers of children with ASD often experience heightened levels of stress due to the absence of adequate support networks. These mothers frequently report feeling isolated, both from their peers and from extended family members who may not understand the unique challenges they face.

Wang et al. (2020) conducted a study on parental stress in China and found that mothers who lacked support from their partners, families, or social networks reported higher levels of stress and lower family quality of life. The study also highlighted the importance of support systems in mitigating the effects of parental stress. Without emotional and practical assistance from others, mothers are often left to cope with the burdens of caregiving alone. The absence of support exacerbates feelings of helplessness and fatigue, making it harder for mothers to manage their well-being and mental health.

In the Philippines, Junio (2018) pointed out the gaps in social support for families of children with autism, particularly in rural areas. While the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has made efforts to reach out to marginalized families, access to resources remains limited for many mothers. In many cases, these mothers must navigate a fragmented system that provides little in the way of formal support services. This lack of accessible services, combined with societal stigma, leads to a sense of isolation and frustration, as mothers are often left without the guidance or resources they need to care for their children effectively.

The financial strain of raising a child with ASD also limits the resources available to many mothers. As noted by Sarwar et al. (2022), mothers of children with autism are often burdened with the high costs associated with therapies, medical treatments, and special educational programs. This financial pressure can prevent mothers from accessing the support they need, further deepening their sense of isolation. Without the means to invest in specialized services, these mothers must rely on informal networks, which may not always be available or sufficient to meet their needs.

A critical aspect of social support is the emotional and psychological assistance that mothers receive. Giallo et al. (2022) found that mothers who had strong emotional support from their partners and communities experienced better mental health outcomes and were more resilient in the face of the challenges they encountered. In contrast, mothers without such support networks often report higher levels of fatigue, anxiety, and depression. The presence of social support is crucial not only for the immediate well-being of mothers but also for their long-term resilience as caregivers.

In addition, the availability of programs and services that offer practical assistance is vital. Chimeh et al. (2018) discussed the importance of family counseling and support groups for parents of children with ASD, suggesting that such services can provide much-needed emotional relief and practical guidance. However, these services are often not widely available, especially in under-resourced areas. The scarcity of these resources contributes to the isolation and stress that mothers experience.

Implications

The social challenges faced by mothers of children with ASD are complex and multifaceted, encompassing both stigma and misconceptions as well as limited social support. These challenges are deeply interrelated, with stigma exacerbating the emotional burden of caregiving and the lack of social support intensifying feelings of isolation. The societal misunderstanding of autism often leads to judgment and exclusion, while the absence of adequate support networks leaves mothers struggling to meet the demands of caregiving on their own. Addressing these challenges requires not only a shift in societal attitudes toward autism but also a concerted effort to develop comprehensive support systems for families. These systems should provide both emotional and practical assistance, as well as increase awareness of autism, to alleviate the social burdens that mothers face. Only by addressing these issues can the well-being of both mothers and their children with ASD be improved.

Synthesis of the Review of Related Literature

Mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) face a range of challenges: physical, psychological, financial, and social challenges that significantly impact their well-being and caregiving abilities.

Physically, caregiving demands lead to exhaustion, sleep disturbances, and health issues, such as headaches and muscle pain, due to the constant need for attention and support. Giallo et al. (2022) observed that the physical toll worsened in the absence of respite, leaving many mothers with long-term health consequences.

Psychologically, the emotional strain of managing ASD-related behaviors often results in high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. The unpredictable nature of ASD and the need for continuous therapy can cause emotional burnout. As Perry et al. (2022) pointed out, many mothers feel compelled to hide their child's condition due to societal judgment, adding to the emotional burden. The mental health challenges are further intensified by feelings of isolation and frustration.

Financially, the high cost of therapies, medical treatments, and specialized education often leads to significant financial strain. Many mothers, as noted by Soltanifar et al. (2022), face an overwhelming sense of financial insecurity due to the inability to cover these expenses. Additionally, the reduced earning potential, as mothers may cut back on work or become full-time caregivers, exacerbates financial stress, creating a cycle of strain that is difficult to escape.

Socially, mothers encounter stigma surrounding ASD, which results in discrimination and social exclusion. Misunderstandings about autism, as highlighted by Zeidan et al. (2022), lead to societal judgment that forces mothers to hide their child's condition or avoid social situations. Cultural factors, such as superstition or moral failure, may further increase social isolation, as discussed by Marsella and Yamada (2007). Additionally, the lack of adequate social support networks leaves many mothers feeling alone in their caregiving responsibilities. As Soltanifar et al. (2022) found, mothers without strong support systems experience higher stress levels and poorer well-being. Limited access to professional support services, especially in rural areas, compounds this problem.

A potential research gap in the ASD literature concerns the effectiveness of culturally appropriate therapies for low-income mothers of autistic children. Few studies have focused on cultural issues such as beliefs, values, and social norms and the availability of resources and needs of low-income mothers from diverse backgrounds. Current interventions may not always be culturally sensitive or meet the specific needs and preferences of underprivileged mothers from various cultural backgrounds (Lee et al., 2024). While existing studies comprehensively address the various challenges mothers face, there is limited research on the intersectionality of these challenges: how physical, psychological, financial, and social factors combine and affect mothers in different cultural contexts or socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, there is a need for more exploration into the effectiveness of existing support systems and policy interventions, particularly in under-resourced areas. Further research is needed to assess how the cumulative effect of these challenges impacts the long-term well-being of mothers and their ability to provide care.

The results of this study can help develop more inclusive, prosperous, and culturally sensitive methods of supporting families impacted by ASD. This shall contribute meaningfully to the field, offering insights that can drive more effective and compassionate approaches and addressing a critical gap to support families affected by ASD (UNICEF Philippines, 2022; Wang et al., 2020).

In summary, the challenges faced by mothers of children with ASD are interlinked, with physical exhaustion, emotional distress, financial instability, and social isolation all contributing to a cycle of stress. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive solutions, including financial support, greater societal awareness, and robust support systems to improve both the mothers' and children's quality of life.

Methodology

A purposive sampling method was used to capture the lived experiences of indigent mothers with ASD children. The conversation partners of this study are five (5) indigent mothers currently raising a child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and were chosen through the help and referrals from the Department of Social Welfare Development (DSWD) and SPED.

This research employed a descriptive phenomenological design. Phenomenology was chosen to explore the lived experiences of indigent mothers raising children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, as it focuses on the participants' personal and unique experiences (Lichtman, 2014). Phenomenology involves interpreting the participants' feelings, perceptions, and beliefs to clarify the phenomenon's essence under investigation. Investigating the experience of individuals is a highly complex phenomenon (Jarvis, 1987), Giorgi (1985), Van Manen (1990), Moustakas (1994), and other phenomenologists stated that interviewing individuals is the foundation that phenomenological investigation relies on to understand the phenomenon. Thus, using this research design comprehensively access and explain the thoughts, feelings, and essence of their experiences and not the meaning that the researcher brings to the study.

Using semi-structured interviews, it focuses on those in under-researched contexts. The researcher followed these procedures: arranging face-to-face interviews with selected participants in mutually agreed-upon safe locations, ensuring distraction-free interview environments, and protecting participants' privacy and confidentiality. This study employed thematic analysis using Lichtman's (2017) three Cs of data analysis - coding, categorizing, and conceptualizing - to explore the lived experiences of indigent mothers raising children with autism spectrum disorder.

Coding. Meticulous attention was dedicated to the analysis of interview transcripts to derive meaningful insights and patterns. Initially, each transcript was methodically read and analyzed individually to generate initial codes, capturing key themes and concepts emerging from participants' narratives. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the data, ensuring that no relevant information was overlooked.

Categorizing. After modifying the initial codes extracted from interview transcripts, it proceeded to organize them into a structured list of categories and central ideas. This process involved refining and reevaluating the coding framework to capture the breadth and depth of perspectives effectively. As new insights emerged and patterns began to crystallize, adjustments were made to the initial list of categories to ensure clarity and relevance in representing the data.

Conceptualizing. Undertaking a rigorous process of revising and refining categories and subcategories to accurately reflect the nuanced meanings embedded within the data. This iterative approach ensured to capture of the complexities and richness of participants' experiences comprehensively. Throughout this phase, certain concepts emerged as particularly rich and compelling, resonating more prominently within the narratives of the participants.

Findings

The study's findings underscored the profound impact of ASD on maternal experiences across physical, psychological, financial, and social dimensions. By delineating these complex challenges and their sub-categories, the research contributes valuable insights into the holistic needs of mothers caring for children with ASD. This nuanced understanding is crucial for informing targeted interventions, support services, and policy initiatives aimed at enhancing maternal well-being and family resilience in the face of neurodevelopmental disorders:

Table 1

General Cluster of Significant Themes

CLUSTER GROUPINGS	GENERAL CLUSTER OF MEANING	INITIAL CLUSTER THEMES	THEMES
MAINE	- mentally pre-occupied. - worried - financially burdened - furious	- Pre-occupancy - Lack of Income-Generating Source - Struggle with Acceptance	- Physical Challenges - Psychological Challenges - Financial Challenges - Social Challenges
PURITY	- physically and mentally exhausted - emotional burden - stressed - socially misjudged	- Over fatigue - Stigma and Misconception - Limited Social Support	
JENNY	- physically and mentally exhausted - stressed - needs financial and gov't support	- Stress - Stigma and Misconception - Limited Social Support	
RIKKY	- Sleep Deprived - Stressed - physically and mentally exhausted	- Sleep Deprivation - Over fatigue	
LIGHT	- Sleep Deprived - Stressed - needs financial support - emotional burden	- Mentally Pre-occupied - Lack of Income-Generating Source - Struggle with Acceptance	

Theme 1: Physical Challenges

Many mothers expressed profound experiences of physical exhaustion; a common sentiment echoed throughout the interviews. The demands of providing round-the-clock care, managing behavioral challenges, and attending to the unique needs of their children with ASD were frequently cited as primary contributors to this exhaustion.

Sleep Deprivation

The exhausting and challenging nature of caring for a sick child, emphasizing the emotional and physical toll it takes on the caregivers. Here are some responses from Light and Rikky that highlights their experiences on sleep deprivation:

(Every time my child has a fever he keeps on whining, so we can't sleep at all. (Light, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 329-331)

(There are times that my child just cries the whole day, one moment the child is calm, the next thing I know is total chaos. We don't get enough sleep especially when my child experiences stomach pain, he constantly cries. Rikky, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 205-206)

The difficulties moms already have in managing the responsibilities of raising a child with ASD are made worse by these effects. Furthermore, studies have demonstrated the mutual association between a mother's sleep and the effectiveness of her caregiving. In conclusion, research on sleep deprivation among parents of autistic children emphasizes how important it is to have all-encompassing support techniques. In addition to improving the health and well-being of mothers, treating sleep disruptions in mothers also improves the environment in which children with ASD are raised and their results. Future studies should investigate practical treatments and regulations supporting this population's overall family resilience and sleep health.

Over Fatigue and Stress

During the one-on-one interviews conducted as part of this study, the mothers bravely shared their profound experiences of enduring persistent fatigue and stress while navigating the complexities of raising children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Their narratives provided poignant insights into the daily challenges and emotional toll associated with caregiving for a child with special needs.

Rikky's account underscored the pervasive impact of ASD on maternal well-being, highlighting the need for effective coping strategies and support mechanisms:

(There is no resting when it comes to taking care of my child, it makes me sick and stressed. They wouldn't understand that your health is on the line. Rikky, one-on-one interview April 2024, lines 233-236)

Light's narrative underscored the importance of self-care and accessing supportive resources to alleviate the burden of caregiving and promote maternal well-being:

(When I had stomach pain, we also got to a point where my husband checked my blood pressure, I am so blessed to have my husband, his family helps as well. When my child was around a month and a half, I was admitted to a hospital because of arthritis, low potassium and calcium. Light, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 376-378, 380-382)

Jenny's narrative emphasized the importance of self-care and accessing supportive resources to mitigate the burden of caregiving and promote her own well-being alongside her child's:

(I cried a lot, I even questioned why this was happening to me and my child, I had a lot of questions. Jenny, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 165-168)

(It's physically exhausting especially when the child gets sick. I sometimes question if he's already dying because he cries so much. Purity, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 128-131)

In addition, these parents have to accommodate their parenting behaviors in diverse ways towards the ASD-related vulnerabilities of their child (van Esch et al., 2018). However, it remains largely unclear how these parents' affective experiences (i.e., what parents feel) relate to their parenting behaviors (i.e., what parents do).

Theme 2: Psychological Challenges

Many participants candidly disclosed their struggles with various psychological stressors associated with caregiving. Feelings of anxiety, depression, and overwhelming stress were recurrent themes among the mothers interviewed. They described the emotional rollercoaster of grappling with the daily uncertainties and challenges inherent in raising a child with ASD, which often included managing behavioral meltdowns, communication barriers, and the ongoing need for specialized care and support.

Mentally pre-occupied

Maine's narrative underscored the challenges of maintaining a sense of mental preparedness and resilience amidst the relentless demands of caregiving, highlighting the sacrifices made to ensure her child's well-being:

(Sometimes when I leave my other 2 kids at home, my husband fully supports it because we go out of the house very rarely. I can't really go out without thinking about my children's situation at home, I feel so pre-occupied. Maine, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 103-108)

Children with ASD are frequently preoccupied because of the demanding and complicated nature of caring for their children, advocacy duties, ongoing supervision, the need for emotional support, disruptions to daily routines, and difficulties in maintaining social support networks.

Struggle with Acceptance

For most, acceptance did not come easily; it was a process fraught with pain and emotional turmoil. The narratives of Maine, Rikky, Light, and Purity, four mothers who participated in the study, vividly illustrate the profound emotional impact of raising a child with ASD:

Maine's narrative reflected the universal challenge faced by mothers in reconciling their expectations of parenthood with the reality of raising a child with unique developmental needs.

(I really can't believe and understand why my child is like that, because even my husband is bothered by it as well. Maine, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 17-18)

Rikky's narrative underscored the resilience required to navigate the complexities of parenting a child with ASD, highlighting the transformative power of parental advocacy and unconditional love.

(Even though I already knew that my child has ASD, it still hurts. I'm still in shock of how difficult it is to accept everything especially when everything just seemed so normal since I got pregnant and until I gave birth to my child. Rikky, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 218-223)

Light's narrative highlighted the profound impact on family dynamics and personal aspirations, as she sought to provide her child with the love, support, and resources needed to thrive.

(I haven't accepted my child's situation at first, I pity my child so much since I was thinking that my child could do more in the future, I can't comprehend what's the reason why this is happening. Light, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 356-359)

Purity's narrative illuminated the transformative journey of acceptance and resilience, as she learned to embrace her child's unique strengths and challenges while advocating for inclusive support systems and understanding within her community:

(It's very stressful, I had so many questions going on like "Is my child normal?" Compared to his brother, I just cried and I also got sick. Purity, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 118-121)

The intricate and varied aspects of moms raising children with ASD's battle with acceptance. It is imperative to comprehend these obstacles in order to devise interventions and ways of support that expedite the process of acceptance, augment the quality of life for moms, and foster favorable consequences for mothers and their children diagnosed with ASD.

Theme 3: Financial Challenges

Raising a child with ASD entails various expenses related to therapies, specialized education, medical appointments, and adaptive equipment, among others. Many mothers expressed the immense strain of managing these costs while also attending to other familial and personal financial obligations.

Lack of Enough Financial Resources

The financial strain associated with raising a child with ASD was a recurring theme throughout the interviews, highlighting the profound impact on familial financial stability and overall well-being:

Maine shared her personal perspective on the sufficiency of her income for daily and medical expenses related to her autistic child. She candidly expressed the ongoing struggle of balancing financial responsibilities with the costly demands of therapies, medical treatments, and specialized education. Maine emphasized the financial sacrifices made to prioritize her child's needs, underscoring the relentless effort required to navigate the financial complexities of caregiving for a child with special needs:

(I don't know anymore, it's still like before. I feel so financially burdened, especially when my child is constantly admitted to the hospital. Maine, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 71-74)

Light's narrative underscored the systemic challenges and inequalities that contribute to financial hardships for families affected by neurodevelopmental disorders, highlighting the urgent need for accessible resources and supportive interventions.

(My child needs to be given financial support. It's just my husband that buys my child medicines. We really have to spend for my child's medical needs, that's why I told my husband

to find a way to provide. Light, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 389-391)

To improve the stability and well-being of ASD-affected families, addressing these issues calls for extensive support networks that include fair access to healthcare, educational materials, and financial aid programs. In order to create policies and actions that encourage financial equity and assistance for these families, more research and activism are needed.

Theme 4: Social Challenges

The interviews illuminated the isolation, stigma, and misconceptions often faced by families affected by neurodevelopmental disorders, underscoring the need for greater awareness, understanding, and support within communities.

Stigma and Misconception

This theme of stigma and misconceptions emerged prominently in the narratives of Maine, Light, and Purity, who bravely shared their personal experiences and reflections on raising children with ASD:

Maine recounted instances where her child was unfairly labeled or misunderstood in public settings. She spoke of the challenges of navigating social interactions and combating stereotypes that often overshadowed her child's unique strengths and abilities. Maine's narrative underscored the pervasive impact of societal stigma on her family's daily life, emphasizing the need for greater awareness and empathy to foster inclusive attitudes and understanding:

(People always asked about my child's condition, they always asked question like "What's wrong with your child?", and it makes me furious. Maine, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 91-93)

Light's narrative emphasized the resilience required to challenge stereotypes and promote inclusivity within her community, advocating for education and compassion to combat stigma:

(There's this time where I got my child baptized in the church, the priest in charge asked me if my child was normal, and it was very offensive. Light. one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 295-297)

Purity's narrative underscored the importance of community support and inclusive practices in creating a supportive environment for families affected by neurodevelopmental disorders:

(When we ride the jeepney, we receive judgements. They say my child is abnormal, that I never taught my child good manners. Jeepney passengers would say that my child couldn't understand and comprehend. I felt like crying, I feel so much pity for my child. Purity, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 145-152)

Mothers described predominantly experiences of autism stigma, including adverse reactions and attitudes of others regarding their child's unique characteristics. This is an important finding because research has found autism-related stigma to be associated with increased mental health problems. (Perry E., Mandy W., Hull L., Cage E, 2022).

Collaborative efforts in the social, educational, medical, and cultural spheres are necessary to combat stigma and promote increased awareness, acceptance, and assistance for families impacted by autism. Promoting inclusivity and lessening the stigma attached to ASD require ongoing study and activism.

Limited Social Support

Their narratives conveyed a deep-seated concern for the insufficient resources and services available to meet the diverse needs of children with ASD:

Rikky expressed her frustration over the limited support networks and resources accessible to her family. She articulated the challenges of navigating complex bureaucratic systems and advocating for her child's rights to inclusive education and specialized therapies. Rikky's narrative underscored the urgent need for expanded facilities and community-based initiatives that prioritize the developmental and educational needs of children with ASD:

(I am hoping that the authorities could help the children with ASD with playgrounds provided especially for them, since there is none existing at the moment. A facility with complete equipment to help the children diagnosed with ASD. Rikky, one-on-one interview April 2024, lines 280-284)

Maine's narrative underscored the critical need for collaborative efforts among stakeholders to enhance support systems and promote inclusive practices for families affected by neurodevelopmental disorders:

(The authorities should provide free education for children diagnosed with ASD. Maine, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 112-115)

Light's narrative emphasized the importance of community awareness and advocacy in fostering a supportive environment that embraces diversity and promotes equal opportunities for individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities.

(The authorities should provide therapy opportunities for children with ASD, not totally free, but at least alleviating the mother's expenses on medical matters. Let's say they could give the mothers some discounts, or give monetary support because the mothers didn't know therapy would cost so much. Light, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 483-491)

Purity's narrative underscored the transformative potential of expanded facilities and community-based initiatives in promoting social inclusion and enhancing quality of life for individuals with ASD and their families:

(The government should organize a foundation for ASD children. Maine, one-on-one interview, April 2024, lines 112-115)

Jenny's narrative emphasized the importance of expanding facilities and enhancing resources to support families in accessing comprehensive care and educational opportunities for children with ASD.

(The authorities should give free privileges. Mothers need support in terms of mental wellness. Jenny, one-on-one interview April 2024, line 201)

The research concludes by emphasizing how vital it is to address the inadequate social support that moms of ASD children face. Improving social networks, encouraging communication between friends and family, and increasing the availability of support resources are critical to reducing social isolation and improving the general health of caregivers in this demographic. More research and advocacy work are required to create and execute successful treatments that promote inclusive and supportive communities for families impacted by ASD.

Discussion

Mothers of children diagnosed with ASD provide essential insights into various aspects of family dynamics, social interactions, and child development. Raising a child with ASD often requires significant patience and flexibility, fostering innovative solutions to daily challenges. Consistency and regularity benefit many children with ASD, leading mothers to develop strong organizational skills.

Parenting a child with ASD also cultivates resilience and resourcefulness in both the child and the mother. Mothers often become adept at stress management and problem-solving, inspiring others facing similar challenges. Understanding and addressing problematic behaviors are essential, with mothers becoming experts in behavior control strategies, such as behavioral treatments and sensory integration therapy. Raising a child with ASD enhances a mother's empathy and compassion, extending beyond their child to others facing various challenges. This empathy can lead to broader support for inclusion and rights for people with disabilities. Mothers also learn to navigate and challenge societal perceptions and stigmas related to ASD, striving for greater acceptance and understanding.

Conclusion

There are several different obstacles associated with raising children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), which affect all facets of family life. Studies repeatedly demonstrate how complicated these problems are regarding social, economic, physical, and psychological aspects.

Caregivers deal with demanding tasks every day that can be physically taxing. Taking care of their child's sensory demands, behaviors, and health-related concerns takes a significant physical toll on parents and other caregivers. The emotional toll takes a significant psychological toll on caregivers. The factors that lead to high levels of caregiver stress and burnout include ongoing advocacy, uncertainty about the future, and managing the stress of caregiving. Support for caregivers' mental health is crucial but frequently insufficient.

As families work to incorporate their children with ASD into the community and educational settings, they frequently must deal with social stigma and isolation. Peers, teachers, and society must understand and support each other; this is a vital but often absent necessity.

Families may face severe financial hardships due to the expenses of therapies, specialized education, and medical care. It becomes a constant battle to negotiate access to necessary resources and services, which affects well-being and financial stability.

In conclusion, the general difficulties found in research emphasize the necessity of all-encompassing support networks, even though every family's experience with raising a kid with ASD is different. In order to effectively address these issues, a comprehensive strategy that acknowledges the variety of needs of families and works to improve the resilience of caregivers as well as the well-being of children with ASD is needed.

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