

VERBAL

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Introduction

Caregivers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) play a great role in the development of their children's communication skills and language (Levy RS, 2023). Most of the time, therapists give caregivers home exercise programs to aid in attaining speech and language. Communication challenges are associated with the common signs and symptoms of ASD which include, sensitivity, behavioral challenges, poor attention and concentration, and limited verbal and social skills. These are the core challenges for children with ASD. Caregivers report many communication related challenges such as needing to use visual aids, clear and simple language with gestures, consistent routines, and having to be active listeners with a lot of patience and empathy.

Problem Statement

Using the PICO question: What are the common communication challenges that caregivers of children with ASD who are nonverbal face? The researcher found very limited information on challenges caregivers face while communicating with their children with Autism who are non verbal.

However, nine articles were found that talked about the important role caregivers play, and were reviewed in the following 3 categories: caregivers intervention, language learning, and behavior.

Caregiver Intervention

The caregivers faced challenges understanding their children's various vocalizations and nonverbal communication (Talker et al., 2024).

Caregivers have to adjust their behavior to the level of attention and type of play that their children are involved in (Siller & Sigman, 2002).

Language Learning

According to a study done in Arabic language, children with ASD face difficulties in comprehending and answering complex language structures. (Zibin et al., 2023). Children with ASD produce few independently initiated gestures, but they were able to imitate caregivers gestures (Ramos-Cabo et al., 2021).

Behavior

In a study done by Soorya et al. (2015), visual supports, didactic instructions, targeted activities, weekly skills practice, and a token economy system, all helped reinforce target skills. According to principal components analysis, improvements were noted in nonverbal communication.

PACT (Pediatric Autism Communication Therapy) interventions increased children's communication initiation with their caregivers and had a positive effect on adaptive behavior outcomes (Carruthers et al., 2024).

Objectives

1. To identify and analyze the communication challenges experienced by caregivers of children with ASD.
2. To explore the role of assistive technology in facilitating communication between caregivers and their children with ASD.
3. To examine behaviour focused strategies that caregivers can use to aid in communication between them and their children with ASD.
4. To evaluate caregiver interventions for fostering and improving communication skills in children with ASD.



Best day, 2023

Sources of Funding

The source of funding is BethanyKid's Kijabe through the POTOT program.

Methods

Qualitative, descriptive research design (Doyle, 2020) will be used to determine the challenges that caregivers of children with ASD face in communicating to their children. The study will use structured and semi structured interviews that will be done before therapy sessions to gather information from a minimum of nine caregivers (In order to obtain saturation of data). The interview will not have a time limit. Interview will be recorded and later on transcribed, and along with themed data be stored in an encrypted file.

Inclusion criteria: caregivers of children who are non verbal and between the ages of 2 and 15 years old.

Exclusion criteria: caregivers who won't give consent, children who do not have ASD or have ASD with other conditions, if the caregiver does not live with their child, if the caregiver does not understand english or swahili, or the child is above 15 years old.

How they will be recruited: Using purposive sampling of those who will be attending therapy sessions at Kijabe hospital or who may be found as participants of ASD support groups.

Ethical approval will be obtained from the institutional scientific and ethical review committee of Kijabe hospital prior to commencement of the study along with NACOSTI licensing. Consent will also be obtained from the legal caregivers of the child with ASD.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis will be done based on the transcription of the interviews of the caregivers. The themes will be analysed in an excel sheet which will be saved in an encrypted file along with the transcriptions of the interviews.

Dissemination of Findings

Research findings will be presented at the annual KOTA scientific conference and other seminars, workshops, webinars, social media and blogs that pertain to ASD. The main findings will be presented, focusing on the communication challenges that caregivers face while communicating with their children with ASD. Implications for occupational therapy will be discussed, emphasizing how these findings can inform interventions and support caregivers and their children. This dissemination is extremely important as there is little research pertaining to the challenges caregivers face in regards to communication with their children with ASD.

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