

Literature Review

Sarah Evans

Lakeview College of Nursing

**Parental competence among parents with autistic children: A qualitative study**

Any parent of a child with special needs knows that taking care of a special needs child requires a lot of determination, advocacy, and skill. Using a qualitative study, one research team sought to define what skills are necessary for parents of autistic children to develop. If these skills are definable, then methods to help parents acquire these skills can be developed. Additionally, health care workers can help improve the parental competence of parents with autistic children. In this study, parents stated that keeping the family unit stable despite the given situation was the way to promote family satisfaction (Mohammadi et al., 2018). The parents also stated that becoming an excellent advocate and believing their child could make progress were necessary skills for special needs parents (Mohammadi et al., 2018). Many parents with special needs children struggle to maintain a balanced home environment. These difficulties stem from balancing various roles, managing emotions related to their child's diagnosis, managing their child's challenging behaviors, and maintaining healthy relationships between other family members (Mohammadi et al., 2018). Due to these various difficulties, many families require professional support and counseling (Mohammadi et al., 2018). Learning to be an effective advocate can be encouraged, supported, and taught by various health care team members. Occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech therapists can help prepare parents to integrate their child's needs into their individualized education plan. Physical therapists and health care providers can work together to ensure families have adaptive equipment that can improve their child's safety and quality of life. Nurses and providers can answer questions and point parents towards helpful resources like respite and assessment services. Raising children takes the support of a village, but raising special needs children requires even more support. Health care professionals can compassionately support parents as they learn to navigate necessary resources and become strong advocates for their children.

## **Behind the Scenes of Parents Nurturing a Child with Autism: A Qualitative Study in Malaysia**

Parents of children with special needs often struggle with lack of support, stigmas, misunderstandings about their child, and psychological distress related to health care. A qualitative research study found that care coordination across disciplines can help address and alleviate many of these challenges. Care coordination can enhance interdisciplinary, holistic care of the child and help bypass many barriers to health care access perceived by the parents (Wan-Yaacob et al., 2021). Many children with special needs have multiple diagnoses and require the care of multiple therapists and specialists. Additional training is necessary to teach these professionals how care coordination can improve health outcomes for children with special needs (Wan-Yaacob et al., 2021). If health care professionals learn to coordinate care, this will also help alleviate stress from the parents of special needs children. The study also found that care coordination can help families experiencing insurance problems and other financial difficulties (Wan-Yaacob et al., 2021). For example, suppose a physical therapist identifies the need for a child to have an adaptive bed to promote safety. In that case, they can consult with the primary care provider to obtain a referral. Asking other health care team members to write letters of necessity for the bed can encourage health insurance companies to approve the request. This type of care coordination can take some unnecessary stress off the parent. In the past, the parent would get a recommendation from the physical therapist, request the referral from the primary care physician, and then wait on insurance to approve or deny the claim. Without additional support from other health care team members, insurance would often work together with parents and meet these needs more effectively.



#### References:

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- Wan-Yaacob, W., Husniati-Yaacob, L., Muhamad, R., & Zulkifli, M. (2021). Behind the scenes of parents nurturing a child with autism: A qualitative study in Malaysia. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(1). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18168532>