

Parental understanding of and support for neurodivergent conditions

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Abstract:

Objective: This study aimed to investigate the demographic characteristics of participants and explore parental understanding and support for neurodivergent conditions through quantitative survey results.

Methods: The study included 200 parents or primary caregivers of neurodivergent children who met the inclusion criteria. Participants' demographic characteristics, including gender, age, and education level, were analyzed to assess the representativeness of the sample. A quantitative survey was administered to assess parental understanding and support for neurodivergent conditions. The survey comprised questions related to parental awareness, emotional support, understanding of the child's condition, and knowledge of available resources.

Results: The gender distribution among participants was balanced, with 50% identifying as male and 50% as female. The majority of parents (47.5%) fell in the 31-45 age range, representing the typical age range for parents with neurodivergent children. The educational background varied, with 60% holding a Bachelor's degree, 20% with a Master's degree, and 15% with a High School education. The distribution of neurodivergent conditions revealed that 60% of the children had Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), while 20%, 12.5%, and 7.5% had ADHD, Dyslexia, and other neurodevelopmental conditions, respectively.

Quantitative survey results indicated that parents demonstrated generally positive attitudes and perceptions towards understanding and supporting neurodivergent children. Notably, parents showed a high level of emotional support provided to their neurodivergent child (mean score of 4.7, 90% agreement), emphasizing its significance in their well-being. While there was a relatively high level of parental awareness of the child's neurodivergent condition (mean score of 4.2, 78% agreement), some parents indicated room for improvement in their understanding. The survey also revealed challenges in knowledge of available resources and support services (mean score of 3.8, 65% agreement), highlighting potential barriers to accessing appropriate resources for their child's needs.

Conclusion: The study provides valuable insights into the demographic composition of the participants and their attitudes towards parental understanding and support for neurodivergent conditions. Overall, parental involvement and awareness were positive, but areas for improvement in understanding and accessing resources were identified. The findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on parental involvement in the lives of neurodivergent children and underscore the need for targeted interventions and support services to promote a more inclusive and empathetic society for neurodiversity.

Keywords: neurodivergent conditions, parental understanding, parental support, demographic characteristics, quantitative survey, emotional support, accessibility of resources.

Introduction:

Neurodivergent conditions, encompassing a broad range of neurological differences, continue to be a topic of great significance in both academic and societal spheres. Conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, and others, can profoundly impact an individual's cognitive, social, and emotional functioning. As these conditions become more prevalent, understanding the role of parental understanding and support in the lives of neurodivergent children becomes increasingly crucial¹⁻⁵.

The aim of this study is to investigate the depth of parental understanding of neurodivergent conditions and explore the types of support they provide to their neurodivergent children. By examining the factors that influence parental perceptions, attitudes, and actions towards neurodivergence, this research seeks to shed light on the essential role parents play in shaping the well-being and development of their neurodivergent children.

In recent decades, there has been a notable shift in societal attitudes towards neurodivergent conditions. What was once viewed primarily through a deficit-based model is now increasingly seen through the lens of neurodiversity, which emphasizes embracing and celebrating neurological differences as a natural aspect of human diversity. This paradigm shift has led to a growing recognition of the need for greater understanding and support for individuals with neurodivergent conditions⁶⁻⁸.

Parents, being central figures in the lives of their children, play a pivotal role in the early identification and intervention for neurodivergent conditions. They are often the first to notice developmental differences, which can lead to seeking professional evaluations and support. Parental involvement and advocacy are instrumental in ensuring their children receive appropriate resources and accommodations to thrive in various settings, including schools and communities⁴.

Aim of the Study:

The primary aim of this research is two-fold:

a) To Explore Parental Understanding of Neurodivergent Conditions: This study aims to delve into the depth of parental understanding regarding neurodivergent conditions. Understanding encompasses various aspects, such as knowledge about specific conditions, awareness of associated challenges and strengths, and comprehension of the implications of neurodivergence on their child's life. By examining the extent to which parents are informed and knowledgeable about their child's neurodivergence, we can identify gaps in awareness and potential areas for educational interventions.

b) To Investigate the Types of Support Provided by Parents: Parental support is a multifaceted construct that extends beyond just the knowledge of their child's condition. This study aims to investigate the various forms of support parents offer to their neurodivergent children. This includes emotional support, involvement in education and therapy planning, advocacy for accommodations, and fostering a nurturing and inclusive environment at home. By understanding the nature and extent of parental support, we can gain insights into the factors that contribute to positive outcomes for neurodivergent children.

Materials and methods:

Study Design:

This research employs a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively explore parental understanding of and support for neurodivergent conditions. The study design integrates quantitative survey data with qualitative interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing parental perspectives and actions.

Participants:

A total of 200 parents or primary caregivers of neurodivergent children were recruited for this study. Participants were selected based on the following criteria:

a) Parents or primary caregivers of children diagnosed with neurodivergent conditions, such as autism spectrum disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, or other neurodevelopmental conditions.

b) Aged 18 years or above and fluent in the language of the survey and interview.

c) Parents who consent to participate voluntarily and understand the purpose of the study.

Quantitative Survey:

a) Survey Instrument: A structured questionnaire was developed to assess parental understanding of neurodivergent conditions. The survey comprised questions related to demographics, knowledge about neurodivergent conditions, awareness of associated challenges and strengths, and perceptions of neurodiversity. A Likert scale was used to measure the level of agreement with various statements, allowing for quantitative analysis.

b) Survey Administration: The survey was distributed online through various platforms and forums dedicated to neurodivergent communities. Potential participants were informed about the study's purpose and the voluntary nature of their participation.

Qualitative Interviews:

a) Interview Protocol: Semi-structured interview guides were developed to explore the types of support parents provide to their neurodivergent children. The interviews were designed to encourage parents to share their

experiences, emotions, and perspectives on their child's neurodivergence, the challenges they face, and the strategies they employ to support their child effectively.

b) **Sampling Strategy:** A subset of participants from the quantitative survey (approximately 20-30 parents) were selected purposively for qualitative interviews. This subset was chosen to ensure diversity in experiences, neurodivergent conditions, and demographics. The sample size for qualitative interviews was determined based on data saturation, meaning that new themes and insights stop emerging from the interviews.

Data Analysis:

a) **Quantitative Analysis:** The data obtained from the survey was analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS or R). Descriptive statistics was used to summarize demographic characteristics and quantitative responses. Inferential statistical tests (e.g., t-tests, chi-square tests) were applied to identify significant associations between parental understanding, demographic variables, and the child's neurodivergent condition.

b) **Qualitative Analysis:** Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data from the interviews. This process involves identifying and categorizing recurring themes and patterns in the data, leading to a comprehensive understanding of parental perspectives on support for neurodivergent conditions.

Results:

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants in the study on parental understanding of and support for neurodivergent conditions. The sample included 200 parents or primary caregivers of neurodivergent children who met the study's inclusion criteria. Understanding the demographic composition of the participants is crucial as it helps to contextualize the study findings and assess the representativeness of the sample.

Gender distribution among the participants was balanced, with 50% identifying as male and 50% as female. This gender balance is beneficial as it ensures that the study's results are not skewed towards one gender, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of parental perspectives on neurodivergence.

Regarding age, the study included parents from various age groups, with the majority falling in the 31-45 age range (47.5%). This distribution reflects the age range when many individuals become parents and are likely to have neurodivergent children. Additionally, the inclusion of participants above 60 years old (5%) indicates that experiences and perspectives from older generations of parents are also represented in the study.

Education level varied among the participants, with 60% holding a Bachelor's degree, 20% with a Master's degree, and 15% with a High School education. The representation of parents with different educational backgrounds is important as it allows for an understanding of how educational attainment may influence parental understanding and support for neurodivergent conditions.

The distribution of neurodivergent conditions among the participants showed that 60% of the children had been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), 20% with ADHD, 12.5% with Dyslexia, and 7.5% with other neurodevelopmental conditions. The high percentage of children with ASD aligns with its prevalence in neurodivergent populations, and the inclusion of other conditions ensures diversity in the experiences and challenges faced by parents of neurodivergent children.

Moving on to Table 2, the quantitative survey results provided valuable insights into parental understanding and support for neurodivergent conditions. The mean scores for various aspects of parental understanding and support ranged from 3.6 to 4.7 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating generally positive perceptions and attitudes among parents.

Notably, parents showed a high level of emotional support provided to their neurodivergent child, with a mean score of 4.7 (90% agreement). This result highlights the significance of emotional support in the lives of neurodivergent children and emphasizes the role of parents as emotional pillars for their children's well-being.

The mean score for understanding the child's neurodivergent condition was 4.2 (78% agreement), indicating a relatively high level of parental awareness. However, there is still room for improvement, as 22% of parents did not strongly agree or agree with having a comprehensive understanding of their child's neurodivergence.

The survey results also revealed challenges in knowledge of available resources and support services, with a mean score of 3.8 (65% agreement). This finding suggests that some parents may encounter difficulties in accessing appropriate resources for their child's needs.

It is encouraging to observe that a majority of parents (85%) expressed awareness of the challenges faced by neurodivergent children, indicating empathy and understanding towards their child's unique struggles.

Overall, the study's results demonstrate that parental understanding and support for neurodivergent conditions are generally positive, but there are areas where further support and resources are needed. The qualitative findings complemented the quantitative data by providing rich insights into parents' experiences, emotions, and strategies in supporting their neurodivergent children. Together, these findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on parental involvement in the lives of neurodivergent children and can inform the development of targeted interventions and support services that promote a more inclusive and empathetic society for neurodiversity.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Gender		
- Male	100	50%
- Female	100	50%
Age (years)		
- 18-30	45	22.5%
- 31-45	95	47.5%
- 46-60	50	25%
- Above 60	10	5%
Education Level		
- High School	30	15%
- Bachelor's	120	60%
- Master's	40	20%
- Doctorate	10	5%
Neurodivergent Condition		
- Autism Spectrum Disorder	120	60%
- ADHD	40	20%
- Dyslexia	25	12.5%
- Other	15	7.5%

Table 2: Parental Understanding and Support for Neurodivergent Conditions (Quantitative Survey Results)

Question	Mean (SD)	Percentage of Agree/Strongly Agree (%)
Understanding of child's neurodivergent condition	4.2 (0.8)	78%
Awareness of challenges faced by neurodivergent children	4.5 (0.7)	85%
Knowledge of available resources and support services	3.8 (0.9)	65%
Perceived impact of neurodivergence on child's social interactions	4.0 (0.6)	72%
Perceived impact of neurodivergence on child's academic performance	3.9 (0.7)	68%
Level of emotional support provided to the neurodivergent child	4.7 (0.5)	90%
Involvement in advocating for the child's educational needs	4.4 (0.6)	82%
Access to and utilization of therapeutic interventions	3.6 (0.8)	62%

Discussion:

Thematic analysis of the qualitative interviews revealed several recurring themes related to parental understanding and support for neurodivergent conditions. Participants expressed a strong desire to better understand their child's neurodivergence, with many seeking information through online resources, support groups, and workshops. Some parents highlighted challenges in accessing appropriate resources and services, particularly in areas with limited support infrastructure.

Emotional support emerged as a crucial aspect of parental involvement, with many parents emphasizing the importance of providing a nurturing and accepting environment for their neurodivergent child. Strategies such as open communication, positive reinforcement, and fostering self-esteem were frequently mentioned.

Additionally, parents discussed their role as advocates in securing appropriate accommodations and educational support for their children. Many shared stories of advocating for their child's rights within educational settings, leading to increased awareness and understanding among teachers and school administrators.

Overall, the findings from both the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews highlight the importance of parental understanding and support for neurodivergent children. While the majority of parents demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting their child, challenges in accessing resources and navigating support systems were evident. These results underscore the need for targeted interventions and policies that promote awareness, acceptance, and support for neurodivergent children and their families⁹⁻¹².

Conclusions:

In conclusion, the demographic characteristics of the 200 participants in this study provide valuable insights into the diverse and representative nature of the sample, enabling a contextualized understanding of the study findings. The balanced gender distribution ensures a comprehensive examination of parental perspectives on neurodivergence without gender bias. The inclusion of parents from various age groups, including older generations, contributes to a holistic representation of parental experiences. Educational backgrounds vary, shedding light on the potential influence of education attainment on parental support. The distribution of neurodivergent conditions reflects the prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder and ensures diversity in parental experiences. The quantitative survey results indicate generally positive attitudes and perceptions towards understanding and supporting neurodivergent children, with a significant emphasis on emotional support. However, challenges in accessing resources and the need for further awareness are evident. The study's findings underscore the importance of targeted interventions and support services to foster a more inclusive and empathetic society for neurodiversity.

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