



COME UPON COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS OF CAREGIVERS WITH CHILDREN OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

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(Abstract)

Physical activities, health issues, mental illness, Communication problems are challenges of Caregivers of Children of Autism Spectrum Disorder. Delayed speech and problems of social communication of ASD children is disturbing the mind of Caregivers. For the purpose of developing communicative skills of the Children of ASD, support of caregivers is mandatory for satisfying their communication demands. In this juncture, Caregivers are indispensable to care the children of ASD in communication. The role of Caregivers and their continuous support is inevitable and this paper is need of emergency for making ASD children's caregivers have to learn about strategies to improve Communication and Social communication skills. This paper deals with communication problems, different strategies, Hence this paper illuminates communication challenges of Caregivers with ASD children, communication problems, Communication Strategies in Autism Care adopted by caregivers, Important tips to develop communicative skills, Teaching social communication to children with autism spectrum Disorder and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC),

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INTRODUCTION

Caregivers of Autism Spectrum Disorder children faced many problems in fostering the children. Communication is also a problem of ASD children and it is also affected the Caregivers of ASD children. Communication of each and every student is differed so the caregivers cannot consider the same position of all

students. Autism spectrum disorder causes mild to severe communication challenges for the individuals. Challenges of Caregivers are understanding the nonverbal cues, failure of sensory focus but strong memory and more attractions in visual learning and understanding. Caregivers have to use simple language with appropriate way to make understanding of the ASD children. They should know some strategies to improve the communication and social skills among the ASD children. Some visual aids have to be used by the Caregivers to strengthen the communication and social communication of ASD Children. Communication enhancing methods are to be adopted by Caregivers to create easy and better understanding of the children. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) includes a wide range of nonverbal communication methods from picture boards to (to high-end) device applications. The purpose of AAC is to help individuals that have communication deficits and challenges communicate through certain tools and strategies. Children spend most of their time at home. They learn basic social skills when they are home. It is important for caregivers and parents to have the information necessary to manage communication with their children with autism.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Coleman, Heather; Layden, Selena J.; Horner, Lynda Gayle(2023) discusses the use of evidence-based practices (EBPs) in the child's natural setting is critical for young children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to improve communication skills and promote generalization. Yet, to implement EBPs effectively, caregivers often require training. The purpose of this study is to explore the efficacy of behavior skills training (BST) to teach a caregiver to implement a parent-implemented discrete trial training (DTT) intervention in their home. Using a multiple baseline design, one caregiver was taught to implement the intervention focused on three verbal behavior operant. Results demonstrated a functional relation between the BST and caregiver implementation. This study provides a model for therapists and educators working with caregivers to implement communication interventions in the home.

Nouf M. Alzrayer(2024) Discussed on Several communication interventions have been used with nonverbal individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) for a long time. One of these methods that are effective in enhancing the communication skills of these individuals is tablet-based devices (e.g., iPads). Special education teachers have a significant role in successfully implementing the augmentative alternative communication (AAC) intervention. Therefore, this study used a qualitative approach to determine special education teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of iPads as an AAC system and the barriers they face when using such devices. The researcher interviewed two special education teachers who had experience using iPads for communication in their classrooms. In addition to the semi-structured interviews, the researcher observed group/individualized instructions and noted the teachers' reactions to using iPads to communicate with their students. The findings indicated that practitioners had positive attitudes toward using iPads for communication. As for the difficulties, teachers stated that one of the significant barriers was having students whose perspective of the iPad as an entertainment tool only.

COMMON COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH AUTISM

The followings are common difficulties and challenges to Caregivers

- **Difficult to understand nonverbal cues:** Autistic individuals may face to interpret facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice, making it harder to grasp the nuances of social interactions.
- **Sensory sensitivities:** Sensory overload from loud noises, bright lights, or certain textures can make it difficult to focus and communicate effectively.
- **Literal interpretations:** Figurative language, idioms, and sarcasm can be confusing, as autistic individuals often take things literally.

But they have remarkable communication strengths are:

- **Visual learning:** Many autistic individuals are visual learners and flourish with visual aids like pictures, diagrams, and written instructions.
- **Strong memory:** Autistic individuals often have unique memories for details, facts, and figures.
- **Intense focus:** When interested in a topic, autistic individuals can demonstrate unbelievable focus and concentration.

ASD CHILDRENS' COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS

While some children with autism spectrum disorder are very skilled communicators, others can experience challenges that will vary depending on the individual. A few examples are:

- Mimicking or repeating other people's words and phrases
- Avoiding eye contact in social situations
- Failing to read social cues
- Talking obsessively about a single subject
- Speaking in a flat or monotone voice
- Repeating words without meaning in an unusual tone (echolalia)
- Using made-up words
- Confusing pronouns (i.e., referring to themselves as "you")

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN AUTISM CARE ADOPTED BY CAREGIVERS

When interacting with autistic children and helping them to improve their own communication skills, parents, teachers, and caregivers have to use clear and simple language. Figurative speech and complex sentences can be confusing for children with ASD, and so talking in short phrases and only providing one piece of information at a time are the best methods for ensuring their understanding of Caregiver's information.

Four key strategies for helping children with autism improve their communication skills:

- **FIRST STRATEGY:** Visual Communication Aids

Visual communication aids like picture cards, communications boards, and Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS) can be powerful tools in aiding communication and helping autistic children (particularly those who are nonverbal) better express their needs, wants, and emotions.

Communication boards, for instance, can allow children to communicate more fully by pointing to images such as photographs, illustrations, or symbols that have been placed on a bulletin board. PECS, on the other hand, uses images to represent thoughts and requests, enabling children to quickly and efficiently communicate specific needs.

- **SECOND STRATEGY :** Consume Technology to Facilitate Communication

There are a number of communication apps and devices which are made to support nonverbal of autistic children. One of the more advanced options is a speech-generating device (SGD), a piece of equipment which utilizes alphabet keys or visual symbols to produce speech for the Caregivers. This allows children to create speech instead of just choosing from pre-selected images.

- **THIRD STRATEGY:** Integrate Visual Social Stories

For some children with autism, understanding social situations, behaviors, and expectations can be challenging. Creating short social narratives explaining various social scenarios like greetings and

goodbyes, turn-taking, sharing, and quiet time can be beneficial in helping the ASD children for better grasp social cues and norms.

- **FOURTH STRATEGY: Modeling Appropriate Communication**

One of the less discussed autism communication strategies is modeling the right communication behaviors. Demonstrate to the child various communication methods, and then encourage imitation. Provide positive reinforcement when they attempt to use the modeling techniques towards ASD children.

- **FIFTH STRATEGY: Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Therapy**

As helpful as things like social stories and communication boards can be, in many children with autism spectrum disorder, ABA therapy, either at home or in a clinical setting, can help children modify certain behaviours and make it easier to overcome social challenges, challenges of communications, and avoid disruptive learning, both of which hinder effective communication.

IMPORTANT TIPS TO DEVELOP COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS

Using Clear and Concise Language

- **Use simple, direct language:** Avoid idioms, sarcasm, and complex sentence structures.
- **Break down instructions:** Divide tasks into smaller, manageable steps and provide clear, concise instructions for each step. For instance, instead of saying "Clean your room," break it down: "First, put your toys in the bin. Then, make your bed. Finally, put your books on the shelf."
- **Give one instruction at a time:** Avoid overwhelming the individual with multiple instructions at once. Focus on one task or direction at a time. Give instructions one by one.
- **Repeat key information:** Repetition can aid in comprehension. Don't hesitate to repeat important information or instructions to ensure understanding.

Encouraging Nonverbal Communication

- **Pay attention to body language:** While autistic individuals may have difficulty understanding nonverbal cues, they still use them. Pay close attention to their body language and facial expressions to gain insights into their feelings and needs.
- **Use gestures and visual aids:** Supplement verbal communication with gestures, pictures, and objects to enhance understanding.
- **Explore alternative communication methods:** For individuals who struggle with verbal communication, consider alternative methods such as augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, sign language, or picture exchange systems.

Encouraging Social Communication skill

The followings are opportunities to promote Social communication skills of ASD children by Caregivers

- **Practicing social skills:** Create opportunities to practice social skills in a safe and supportive environment. Role-playing, social stories, and video modeling can be helpful tools.
- **Provide opportunities for interaction:** Encourage interaction with peers through playdates, social groups, or community activities.
- **Teach conversation strategies:** Explicitly teach strategies for initiating and maintaining conversations, such as asking questions, taking turns, and making eye contact.

TEACHING SOCIAL COMMUNICATION TO CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Some of the methods used are as follows:

Peer monitoring

In this type of social skills intervention, typically developing peers are trained to interact with autistic children. This is done to enhance positive development of social skills in regular social communication environments like classrooms.

Social skills group

In this type, around 4 or 5 students with autism take lessons about social skills topics. This can be done at school or clinic facilities. Within this group there may also be typical peers to be role models.

Video modelling

Through this practice, autistic children watch videos that show peers demonstrating certain social skills. Autistic children are then encouraged to practice the skills themselves.

Social stories

Social stories can help children with autism to learn appropriate social skills by reading short stories written in first person. Caregivers can create social stories together with their children. Also, mobile device applications provide social stories with visuals and social situations that can help the child. Caregivers can check out Otsimo Special Education app for fun, comprehensive, and effective social stories.

Picture books

Children with autism learn better and quicker with visuals. By looking at photographic sequences of social skills, they may learn how to perform a skill as well as the purpose of such. Not being able to fit in socially can create a lot of social anxiety for children with autism. Through therapies, the child can be equipped with social skills and this anxiety can be alleviated.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS AT SCHOOL FOR ASD CHILDREN WITH CAREGIVERS

Good communication between caregivers and the school is really important. Building a positive relationship with the child's school will help to advocate the child more easily. In terms of children with autism at school, using visually aided communication could be a really helpful approach. This will help developing appropriate communication skills, and social interaction skills. Also, positive behavior and participation of students with autism will also increase. These are all the things that should be discussed beforehand with the school.

AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION (AAC)

What is AAC? - Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) includes a wide range of nonverbal communication methods from picture boards to (to high-end) device applications. Communication systems, strategies and tools that support natural speech are known as AAC. It includes all methods that help a person with communication challenges.

There are two techniques in Augmentative and Alternative Communication

1. Unaided AAC - This type of AAC does not use any tool other than the body. No tech AAC. Here the person uses facial expressions, body language, sign language, and gestures.

2. Aided AAC - Here some sort of tools or devices are used. These are categorized into two subcategories: basic and high-tech. Picture board or a pen and a paper are basic aided AACs. This is where the child points to letters,

words, or pictures on the board. In high-tech AACs, the child can touch the letters or pictures on a computer or a smart device screen. These devices then speak for the individual. These are called speech generating devices and can be found in many languages. Otsimo that will help the children in their communication challenges.

HELP OF AAC IN SOCIAL COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES OF ASD CHILDREN

The purpose of AAC is to help individuals that have communication deficits and challenges communicate through certain tools and strategies.

Autism spectrum disorder causes mild to severe communication challenges for the individuals. AAC can be a communication tool for individuals with autism. The child can use simple or high-tech AAC tools to tell how they are feeling or what they want, establishing social communication. Some use it for everything, while others use AAC for complicated sentences or when they are in a new environment. It can be helpful in school, at work, and at home.

Useful Strategies for Parents to Encourage Social Communication in ASD

Social communication and interaction are important part in daily life. Students with autism generally want to interact with others but can't due to not having the social communication skills to engage with them. There are some strategies that can be used in teaching social skills to students with autism to increase peer interactions:

- Reinforce positive behavior
- Model social communication actions
- Show both motor and verbal imitation
- Teach context clues
- Praise the strengths and use them in favor
- Determine peers to model social skills
- Focus on social learning
- Teach reciprocity and empathy

Social stories, can also help in encouraging social communication.

They are one of the most effective ways to support children with autism. Social story is a short narrative. It is written in first person and describes one problem issue.

- Caregivers can use photos, drawings, comic strips.
- It would be really helpful to include the child into creation process of social scripts. They can select the photos, or illustrate.
- Social stories should be positive.
- Check to see if the child understands the script, and use it a couple of times to reinforce learning.

There are also certain strategies for developing social interaction skills. They can be learned like writing skills. Some learn it through imitating others, others learning at a pace, one skill at a time, by practicing.

COMMON SOCIAL INTERACTION SKILLS

Common social interaction skills are the following:

- Play skills

- Conversation skills
- Emotional skills
- Problem-solving skills

The following are the practices and strategies that can be tried to develop such skills:

- Play games with teddy bears and imitate everyday activities such as driving a car
- Provide information to your child about the activities you are about to do so that they can know what to expect
- Role-play or modelling could help your child see how to manage social situations in different ways
- Visual supports can be used to help develop problem solving skills

OTHER USEFUL STRATEGIES FOR CAREGIVERS TO MANAGE COMMUNICATION IN ASD

Children spend most of their time at home. They learn basic social skills when they are home. It is important for caregivers and parents to have the information necessary to manage communication with their children with autism. At home, the child has the chance to practice social skills they learned at school. It would be beneficial to talk to their teachers and therapists to see where they are and what they need to improve. ASD children can play games and use visual aids to help them learn social interactions. They can learn everyday practices such as communication, and understand social rules. Reading books, playing turn-taking games, creating stories, and modelling appropriate behaviors help them acquire these vital skills.

GETTING PROFESSIONAL HELP FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES IN AUTISM

Since it is a relatively new diagnosis, there are no specific treatments for social communication difficulties. However, there are many ways that professionals can help ASD children with social communication difficulties. Speech therapy pathologists can work with the child. They show them and practice with them certain skills like turn-taking, and conversational skills. Through games and visual aids, they teach children strategies to manage social situations and interactions. The therapists will also provide to caregivers with information showing how caregivers can reinforce these skills at home. In addition, at school, an Individualized Education Program will be developed with caregivers and specialists. This way, the child will have the support they need in terms of in-class social skills. There are also various applications developed by specialists and experts in the field that can provide professional help to develop social interaction skills for the child.

Conclusion

This study reflects how to overcome the communication problems of ASD children by Caregivers. It illuminates some communication challenges of ASD children and how to face the problems of ASD children by the support of Caregivers. Essential of this paper discusses on Communication problems, communication strategies, important tips to solve the problems of communication skills and developing communication skills, encouraging social communication, Teaching social communication, Communication skills at school, Augmentative and Alternative Communication, Social interaction skills and Professional help for social communication. This paper ensure Caregivers of ASD children to learn about the problems of Communication skills and ways and means to solve the problems of ASD children.

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