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BELIEFS, PREJUDICES AND EXPECTATIONS OF FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH ASD IN RELATION TO THE TEACHING PROCESS LEARNING YOUR CHILDREN FOR ACTIVE LIFE

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Abstract: The study addressed the issue of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families, focusing on prejudice, beliefs and expectations in relation to intellectual development. Three families and two professionals were interviewed, with data analysis following the mixed case study. The results highlighted that the most challenging moment for families is the diagnosis of ASD, as many are unaware of the condition, generating fear, guilt and refusal. After the diagnosis, expectations arise regarding the child's intellectual development, accompanied by fear of social prejudice. The families' reports highlight the persistence of prejudice and discrimination, indicating a path for society to understand the limitations of people with ASD and fully accept them in their social environment. To build a society that values diversity and respect for differences, multiple organizations must act together, supporting families and promoting the inclusion of people with ASD.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder. Family. School. Society.

INTRODUCTION

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) imposes considerable challenges on affected individuals, as well as their families and the wider community. This introductory study examines the battle faced by parents when facing the isolation associated with ASD and highlights the prejudices that still persist in society. Despite notable progress, there are still obstacles to full inclusion and understanding of PEA. Families often deal with an intense emotional and physical burden due to their children's condition, as well as facing hostility from the community. This research aims to investigate the impact of prejudice on families of children with ASD, exploring how they deal with stigma, isolation and social challenges in raising their children. The study will address

the relevant theory, methodology used, results achieved and conclusions drawn, contributing to current understanding and guiding future research on this crucial topic.

THEORETICAL REFERENCE

PEA: EXPLORATION OF THE CONCEPT FROM THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

PEA, identified by Eugen Bleuler in 1911, has been the subject of study since then, with significant contributions from Hans Asperger and Leo Kanner (Dias, 2015). The family plays a crucial role in the development of children with ASD, facing challenges such as stigma, isolation and social obstacles (Santos; Pereira, 2016). This study aims to analyze the impact of prejudice on families of children with ASD and contribute to future research on this important topic.

The DSM-5 defined Autism Spectrum Disorder and emphasized the symptoms of social communication and restricted and repetitive behavior (Cordioli, 2014). Understanding ASD has evolved over the years, and individual characteristics play an important role (Schwartzman, 2011).

Leboyer (1995) highlights that ASD is characterized by a failure in the development of the central nervous system and emphasizes the crucial role of the family environment. Difficulties in social interaction and communication are fundamental characteristics of autism, essential for the diagnosis of ASD (Cordioli, 2014).

The causes of ASD were initially attributed to social factors in the 1950s and 1960s, but subsequent decades saw an increase in recognition of biological factors (Ozonoff; Rogers, 2003). Significant contributions from Rimland and Rutter were fundamental to this change in focus (Fadda; Cury, 2016; Klin,

2006).

The DSM-5 provided specific criteria for defining Autism Spectrum Disorder (Cordioli, 2014). It is important to recognize that the behavior of people with ASD can vary widely and that families play a crucial role in their treatment (Coutinho, 2017).

ASD is a complex disorder with a wide range of characteristics and influencing factors (Schwartzman, 2011). Therefore, diagnosis requires careful assessment and an individualized approach to treatment is essential, making its diagnosis and treatment challenging (Cordioli, 2014).

Families of children with ASD face significant challenges and emotional impacts, and recognizing this complexity is essential to providing appropriate support (Coutinho, 2017). Understanding ASD has evolved over the years, with individual characteristics playing an important role in this evolution. This evolution in understanding ASD has significant implications for diagnosis and treatment, informing the approach of healthcare professionals and guiding future research (Schwartzman, 2011). There is still much to be done to improve the inclusion and understanding of ASD in society. It is crucial to continue research and education about ASD to promote greater inclusion and understanding.

Additionally, it is important to note that ASD is a spectrum, meaning that each individual with ASD may experience unique symptoms and behaviors. This makes an individualized approach to diagnosis and treatment essential. Continued research into ASD not only helps improve diagnostic and treatment strategies, but also promotes awareness and understanding in society. This is crucial to combat the stigma associated with ASD and promote social inclusion. Collaboration between healthcare professionals, educators, families, and the broader community is

critical to creating a supportive environment for individuals with ASD. Through continued efforts in research, education, and advocacy, we can look forward to a future where PEA is fully understood and accepted.

BELIEFS, SOCIOCULTURAL PREJUDICES AND THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE OF PEOPLE WITH ASD

Diagnoses that are based on physical and behavioral conditions can generate beliefs and prejudices, representing a significant challenge in the area of mental health (Rocha; Hara; Paprocki, 2015). Lack of information can lead to questions, especially in relation to lesser-known diagnoses such as PEA, highlighting the need for education and awareness (Oliveira et al., 2014).

Acceptance of the diagnosis is a critical moment that reveals the reasons for worrying behaviors, especially in children. This is a crucial step in the treatment process. Mothers of autistic children often deal with intensive responsibilities (Almeida, 2018), highlighting the importance of family and community support.

The intra-family relationship is a challenge that requires an environment free of prejudice (Almeida, 2018). Kanner (1949) highlighted the mother-child relationship in ASD, contributing to stigmas (Biff et al., 2019). Maternal blaming leads to restriction of the child's social contact with the world (Biff et al., 2019), highlighting the harmful effects of stigma.

The diagnosis influences parental relationships and prejudice (Cardoso; Françoze, 2015), showing how the diagnosis can have a broad impact. The family has a crucial influence on living with PEA (Almeida, 2018).

It is possible to say that social inclusion faces obstacles due to prejudice and limiting beliefs. Work and school environments can

promote discrimination. The quality of life is affected by prejudice and lack of opportunities (Almeida, 2018).

Prejudice harms the social inclusion of people with ASD (Nascimento, Bitencourt; Fleig, 2021). Schools and work environments can create barriers. The diagnosis requires a professional vision free from prejudice. Health plans and the public health network can create obstacles to treatment (Almeida, 2018; Araújo; Veras; Varelas, 2019; Nascimento; Bitencourt; Fleig, 2021).

In addition to the issues that interact with the universe of PEA, Law Number:13,146, of July 6, 2015, guarantees the rights of people with disabilities, including PEA (Araújo; Veras; Varelas, 2019). This law represents an important step in protecting the rights of people with ASD.

BELIEFS, SOCIOCULTURAL PREJUDICES AND THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE OF PEOPLE WITH ASD

The family, a historical institution with social, political and religious influence, has undergone significant changes over time. The traditional image of father, mother and children is no longer the only family structure recognized in today's society. Parental influence on child development remains a central aspect, and parenting involves activities that ensure child development. (Hoghughi, 2004; Pluciennik; Lazzari; Chicaro; 2015)

The father figure has evolved from authoritarian to participative, and mothers also have careers. Furthermore, divorce and other family types have become common (Vasconcellos, 2013). However, these changes are not universally accepted (Oliveira, 2009), and the family is still seen as fundamental to children's development (Santos; Pereira, 2016).

Disorders such as ASD present challenges for families and require specialized attention

(Santos; Pereira, 2016). Social stigma persists, leading to dilemmas and bullying (Lemos; Salomão; Agripino-Ramos, 2014). Diagnosing disorders such as ASD can be difficult for parents, highlighting the importance of collaboration between the family and school in supporting children with ASD.

Finally, the relationship between family and school faces challenges, including refusals to enroll and a lack of preparation on the part of educators. This highlights the need for a partnership between family and school to guarantee quality education without prejudice.

RESEARCH METHODS

OBJECT OF STUDY

The main objective of this research is to investigate the perceptions of families/caregivers of children with Autism Spectrum, more precisely what these families' expectations are in relation to their children's learning and development. To this end, a qualitative investigative approach will be applied, in a multiple case study. The choice of methods is in line with the approaches defended by Meirinhos and Osório (2010) who treat qualitative research and case studies as effective research strategies in the field of education.

CONTEXTUALIZATION AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE TOPIC UNDER STUDY

The problems faced by families in relation to the diagnosis and living with children with ASD require scientific investigation. Family, individuals with ASD and the school share a broad field of discussion. In this universe, the family plays a central role in the child's development. However, in relationships with children with ASD, other agents, such as the school, are also important (Polonia; Dessen,

2005). Therefore, it is crucial to examine the interrelationships between family, individuals with ASD, and school.

THE PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

RESEARCH PROBLEM

What is the influence of beliefs, stereotypes and prejudices on families of children with ASD regarding their children's teaching-learning process?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Understand whether beliefs, stereotypes and social prejudice can bring some type of suffering to families of children with ASD;
- Understand how families of children with ASD see themselves within the Teaching-Learning process of their children;
- Describe what expectations families of children with ASD have in relation to the Teaching and Learning process for their children?
- Point out the importance of the "school" institution in the development of their children's learning, for families of children with ASD;
- Analyze the influences of BELIEFS, STEREOTYPES and SOCIAL PREJUDICE on the EXPECTATIONS of families of children with ASD, in relation to the Teaching Learning process.

KIND OF STUDY

Based on scientific findings and systematic content analysis, the research was characterized in a methodological field for comprehensive analysis, involving qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews (Poirier;

Valladon; Raybant, 1983).

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

According to Gil (1999), the case study involves four phases: delimitation of the case unit, data collection, selection and analysis, and data interpretation (preparation of the report). Yin (2001) divides the case study into four categories: single/holistic case, single/embedded case and multiple cases with the same focus. The choice of method depends on the investigative purpose, with analysis of two or more cases seeking answers beyond the case itself. The investigation will follow the "How" question to explore the contemporary phenomena of the study.

CHARACTERIZATION OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

While quantitative research follows a rigorous plan, qualitative research is flexible and does not seek to quantify. According to Meirinhos and Osório (2010), in qualitative research, the researcher is involved in the field, makes observations, makes value judgments and analyzes the data, maintaining contact with the development of the event. The qualitative study requires a temporal-spatial framework that defines the territory to be mapped (Manning, 1979). There are three approaches to qualitative research: documentary, case study and ethnographic (Godoy, 1995). In this study, a qualitative approach with multiple cases will be used.

RESEARCH CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

To address the points relating to the expectations of families of children with ASD, with respect to the teaching-learning process, this research considered as a study design the analytical sphere of scientific publications in accordance with the critical study of the

responses gathered in the case study applied with a group of 3 families that have a child with ASD as a member and technical professionals specialized in caring for children with ASD.

Interview	Designation
E1	Father, man, 40 years old, bank employee; mother, woman, 42 years old, mathematics teacher; two male children, 7 years old, student in the 1st year of elementary school and, 6 years old, student in kindergarten 3, with ASD. Father and mother participated in the study.
E2	Mother, woman, 39 years old, homemaker; Father, male, 46 years old, civil servant; a male child, 9 years old, student in the 3rd year of elementary school, with ASD. Only the mother participated in the study.
E3	Mother, woman, 51 years old, pedagogue; Father, man, 58 years old, pedagogue; a male son, 23 years old, profession unknown, with ASD. Only the father participated in the study.
E4	Psychopedagogue, woman, 36 years old, with specialized training in Special Inclusive Education ASD - Autism Spectrum Disorder, working in an institution that supports and welcomes people with ASD for 9 years.
E5	Occupational therapist, male, 36 years old, with specialized training in Special Inclusive Education ASD - Autism Spectrum Disorder, working in the care and attention of individuals with ASD for 3 years.

Table 1 – Characteristics of interviewees and their respective family contexts.

Source: Research data (2021).

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

To address different perspectives on the central theme, semi-structured interviews were used via email and messaging applications, respecting the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic. Under normal circumstances, interviews could be carried out in person.

The interview, as a data collection method, aims to understand participants' perceptions about a phenomenon, including their personal experiences (Fontanella; Campos; Turato, 2006). The choice of this method is due to its ability to promote reflections on subjects and their relationship with events, using a smaller

set of semi-structured questions (Gil, 2008).

The information obtained from families and professionals specialized in children with special learning needs was used to reflect on the challenges faced by families in the teaching-learning process of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The use of the semi-structured interview guide allowed the collection of information, organization, flexibility and expansion of questions based on dialogues with interviewees.

EMPIRICAL PROCEDURES

The study addresses the interaction between families, children, technical professionals and educational institutions. The choice of participants was based on the researcher's personal experiences. The focuses included families, children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, technical professionals and educational institutions. Three families/children/institutions participated in the study. A total of 10 open questions were asked for families and 15 questions for technical professionals.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

THE GENERAL PROCEDURE

Regarding the data analysis process, with regard to this study, the data were analyzed based on thematic categories, based on classifications extracted from each interview, also comprising the conceptual theoretical framework (Bardin, 2011).

Congruently, in the case of a semantic analysis of the categorical thematic type (Bardin, 2011), we operated with the following system of categories (already operationalized and applied in each of the research processes developed), corresponding to the process of "unitarization or transformation of content

into units” (Moraes, 1999, p. 10). Therefore, the following description of the respective context units will be given:

Thematic categories	Units of analysis
CT1 - beliefs, stereotypes and social prejudice	UA1 – Family focus and diagnosis.
	UA2 – Pre-diagnosis family knowledge and beliefs.
	UA3 – Evolution of family knowledge post diagnosis.
	UA4 – Focus on family and social prejudice.
	UA5 – Current view of society in relation to families with members and individuals with ASD.
CT2 – teaching-learning processes	UA6 – Family expectations.
	UA7 – Focus on family and school.
	UA8 – Support and acceptance in the school environment.
	UA9 – Public policy.

Table 2 - Coding and categorization framework for empirical data

Fonte: Dados da pesquisa (2021).

The research involved interviews with families of different demographic, socioeconomic and cultural profiles. The results were categorized based on the interviews and available theoretical references. The interviews took place online from November 15th to 19th, 2021 with family members, caregivers and professionals specializing in ASD. The data were analyzed considering the relationships between thematic categories, units of analysis and context, without including the researcher’s personal opinions.

The research was carried out with the consent of the participants, as regulated by CNS Resolution 466/2012. Three families participated, one with a father and mother responding, another with just the mother and the third with the father as the main respondent. A psychopedagogue and an occupational therapist also participated, both responding to five common surveys, as well as additional surveys directed at them.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

THE PERCEPTION OF FAMILIES

When conceiving the idea of family, especially in the comprehensive care of individuals with ASD, the figure that stands out is the mother. This is explained by different points that place women as the center of the relationship between family and child. The mother often takes the lead in the daily challenges of behavior manifested by ASD, becoming the main source of information about the child’s daily life.

However, with changes in the relationship between parents and their children, the figure of the father also gains prominence, coming closer to what was seen in ancient times. In this topic, reports from both fathers and mothers will be observed about their experience with children with ASD, maintaining the anonymity of participants with code names such as “Family 1”, “Family 2” and “Family 3”.

Dialogues with families addressed various topics, such as the reaction to the diagnosis of ASD, the level of prior knowledge about ASD, expectations regarding the child’s development, concerns about acceptance at school, expectations in the teaching-learning process, impressions about the school and teachers, reactions to prejudice and discrimination, perception about inclusive education policies and analysis of changes in society and school to support the development of children with ASD.

Question 1 addressed the family’s reaction to the diagnosis of ASD, highlighting feelings of fear, insecurity and despair on the part of the parents.

The conflict of feelings was highlighted as the first obstacle reported by families, leading parents to try to understand the situation and act as they thought was right. There was also the emotional impact on the family’s future

expectations. At this point, the conflict of feelings can be described as the first obstacle reported by families, and it is up to each father and mother to understand the scenario and seek to act as they believe to be right. Along with this, there is dealing with the family amidst the emotional upheaval regarding the family's future expectations (Biffi et al, 2019).

On the other hand, some families had a more contemplative reaction and understood the steps to be taken to understand the child's needs, seeing the diagnosis as an opportunity to explore different treatment possibilities.

Question 2 addressed families' prior knowledge about ASD before diagnosis and how they sought to develop this knowledge. Families admitted to having little knowledge before the diagnosis and highlighted the importance of public health bodies, such as the Public Health Network, in providing accessible information to parents. In Brazil, the Public Health Network, managed by the SUS, will become the executor of reception measures for families with children diagnosed with ASD, thus, it will be up to public health bodies to resolve the parents' doubts, using language accessible to the population (Araujo; Veras; Varella, 2019).

Furthermore, access to spaces that promote social interaction between families and the development of people with disabilities, such as the Association of Parents and Friends of the Exceptional (APAE), was cited as a valuable opportunity to obtain information and support.

Question 3 explored families' expectations regarding their children's intellectual development in the first months after diagnosis. Families shared their expectations, which ranged from pessimism to optimism, depending on individual perceptions about PEA. The stigmas linked to mental illnesses mark patients as weak individuals, leading to discrimination and development-related

losses, purely due to the negative image that these people carry with them (Araujo, Veras & Varella, 2019). This way, statements like the one outlined in the answer to Question 2 sound natural, considering that future expectations for children with ASD are linked to the family's acceptance of the diagnosis.

Question 4 focused on families' fear of including their children in the school environment. Some families admitted to having fears related to their children's acceptance by peers and the children's physical well-being at school. The transition to school life is a significant factor for children on the spectrum, requiring discussions at various levels (Polonia; Dessen, 2005; Santos; Pereira, 2008; Minatel; Matsukura, 2015). A child's experience at home must inform their behavior at school, and the school must encourage parental participation in the school environment. Furthermore, schools have a responsibility to ensure students' physical well-being and prevent violence and bullying (Barros, 2018).

Question 5 addressed how families perceived themselves in the teaching-learning process and what their expectations were in relation to school. Families highlighted the importance of a partnership between family and school, emphasizing the need to adapt to the individual needs of children with ASD.

The relationship between family and school is crucial to the teaching-learning process, especially for children on the spectrum, who have unique characteristics. The individual condition of each person with ASD requires that family and school agree on learning methods, as each child will present different learning levels (Oliveira, 2018).

Question 6 explored families' relationships with their children's school, teachers, coaches, and classmates. Experiences varied, with some families reporting support and acceptance, while others faced bullying and discrimination

among peers. The Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB), established by Law Number:9,394/1996, is the main standard that regulates access to education in Brazil. Furthermore, Law Number:13,146/2015, also known as the Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, defends the access of people with physical or intellectual disabilities to the rights common to all citizens (Brazil, 2015).

Question 7 investigated whether families had ever faced prejudice or social discrimination due to the condition of their children with ASD. All families reported situations of prejudice in different everyday contexts. Social prejudice remains a significant challenge affecting families and individuals with ASD. Despite advances, societies still need to develop more empathy and respect for everyone. Prejudice and social exclusion will continue to be a challenge for people with ASD until people become more humanitarian and empathetic (Menezes, 2021).

Question 8 asked whether families considered society prepared to live in a healthy and equal way with children and families of children with ASD. Families expressed the need for more respect, knowledge and empathy from society. Research by Rocha and Paprocki (2015) highlights that individuals with serious mental disorders are often stigmatized and discriminated against. Although ASD is not considered a mental illness but rather a condition of the brain, people and families with this condition can face prejudice and a lack of understanding due to common sense.

Question 9 addressed assistance from public inclusive education policies. Families saw improvements compared to the past, but still felt the need for more support and investment in the area of inclusive education.

The absence of effective educational policies and incentives can be an obstacle to the development of actions that improve

the experience of individuals with ASD in society. Currently, the Statute of Persons with Disabilities is the main legal instrument that defends the rights of people with disabilities, including those with ASD. Furthermore, the Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB) guides the creation and application of public education policies, and Law Number:12,764/2012 establishes the National Policy for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder, which defends education for people on the spectrum in common school environments (Brazil, 2012).

Finally, question 10 analyzed how families perceived changes in society and school to support the development of children with ASD. Families highlighted the importance of awareness and public education to promote inclusion and equality. Furthermore, they emphasized the need for flexibility and adaptation of schools to meet the needs of children with ASD.

In summary, interviews with families highlighted the importance of support, education, awareness and empathy from society and schools to promote the healthy and inclusive development of children with ASD. Families also emphasized the need for a partnership between family and school to meet the individual needs of children with ASD and overcome the challenges associated with this condition.

A PERCEPTION OF PROFESSIONALS IN (DIS)ARTICULATION WITH FAMILY NARRATIVES

The first question asked to the educational psychologist addresses the expectations of families of children with ASD in relation to the teaching-learning process, highlighting the importance of school support for the child's development and collaboration between family and school (Oliveira, 2018;

Souza, 2016). Continuing with the surveys, questions similar to those applied to families were presented, however, focusing on the perspective of professionals in the area of care for children with ASD.

After reading and analyzing the professionals' responses, it was understood that families' expectations regarding the intellectual development of children with ASD are influenced by the diagnosis of the spectrum's incidence level. Families with milder diagnoses tend to believe in faster intellectual development, but even in more severe cases, progress is possible with appropriate treatments (Santos, Araújo & Lima, 2019).

According to professionals' reports, families' reactions to the diagnosis of ASD are generally fear and insecurity, often due to a lack of knowledge and beliefs and stereotypes rooted in society. The search for knowledge is the next step to accepting the diagnosis (Pinto et al., 2016).

After accepting the diagnosis, families often seek knowledge to better understand ASD and how to support their children. This learning process is crucial to demystifying ASD and combating existing stereotypes and prejudices. Education and awareness are powerful tools that can promote inclusion and respect for differences.

However, it is important to note that each family and individual with ASD has their own unique experiences and challenges. Therefore, it is essential that healthcare professionals, educators and the community at large adopt an individualized and empathetic approach.

Furthermore, public policies play a crucial role in promoting inclusion and guaranteeing the rights of people with ASD. Laws such as the Statute of Persons with Disabilities and the Education Guidelines and Bases Law are important legal instruments that defend access to education and other rights for people with disabilities, including those with ASD.

Ultimately, the journey of a family with a member with ASD can be full of challenges, but also growth and learning. With the right support, children with ASD can thrive and live full, meaningful lives.

CONCLUSIONS

The study scenario generates reflections on families after a diagnosis of ASD in their children. In this sense, it considers multiple contexts, including challenges with beliefs and prejudices. Likewise, the research reveals a lack of information, prejudice and limited public support. Furthermore, it can be said that historical myths generate social exclusion.

Regarding family behavior, three critical moments stand out: diagnosis, school and social interaction. With this, it is highlighted that knowledge is key to overcoming prejudices.

Similarly, expectations vary with the degree of PEA. Therefore, early diagnosis is essential. Added to this is society's duty to evolve intellectually to accept differences. Support for families is vital, including adequate public education. The relationship between family and school is crucial. A more inclusive society is expected in the future.

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