

Uses And Impact Social Media By Parents Having Autistic Kids: A Critical Study

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ABSTRACT

Autism is a developmental condition marked by difficulties with social contact and speech, as well as confined, repetitive behavior. This disease manifests itself at birth or the first two and a half years of existence. While the afflicted children look entirely average, they indulge in puzzling and troubling activities that are noticeably different than those of regular children. Autism is becoming more prevalent globally. Due to the fact that parents are typically the main providers, their willingness to understand the signs and effects of autism and react accordingly is critical if we are to offer the best treatment possible to autistic persons. The aim of this research was to assess parents' knowledge and understanding of autism with the help of social media.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder; Learning Ability; Autism Awareness; Asperger Syndrome

INTRODUCTION

People with autism have trouble making and maintaining social connections, have difficulty communicating verbally, and engage in restricted and repetitive behaviours. This illness appears during the first two and a half years of life or at the time of birth. In spite of the fact that the

youngsters seem to be normal, they engage in activities that are eerily different from those of their peers. No one knows what causes autism. In spite of the fact that studies have shown a substantial hereditary component, this cannot be traced to one gene mutation or a single defect in the DNA. Autism is three to four times more common in boys than in girls, and additional diseases including fragile x syndrome, tuberous sclerosis, Tourette's syndrome, and epilepsy, as well as the parents' age and family history, all increase the risk. In addition to these, prenatal drug use has been shown to be a risk factor for the disease. Case studies have revealed that mothers who use valproic acid during nursing are more likely to have autistic children. Several studies have connected congenital rubella to autism. Autism is also frequent in children with cerebral palsy, which has been linked to an increased risk of developing the illness. Medical practitioners use the term "continuum" to describe the vast range of features and indications that people with autism may display. While some autistic children avoid eye contact and grow aloof, other autistic children connect with their environment occasionally and allow for inconsistent eye contact, smiles, and even hugs. In addition, children may display a wide spectrum of language abilities, from nonverbal communication to sophisticated expressiveness. Depending on where you live, you may have intellectual abilities ranging from mental incapacity to superintelligence. It has been shown that some children with autism have normal development in certain areas, but also have a flair for things like sketching and singing. In contrast, an autistic individual prefers solitude and may typically play alone for long periods of time. The early detection of autistic children has been made easier because to the development of several evaluation tools. 16-month-old babies may be diagnosed with autism using the Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (CHAT).

Children between the ages of 15 and 32 months may be tested for autism spectrum disorder risk by filling out the Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT). Children between the ages of one and three years old are subjected to the pervasive developmental disability screening test (PDDST). According to research undertaken in Asia, Europe, and North America, individuals with an autism spectrum condition have an estimated incidence of 0.6 percent to 1 percent of the baby population. Studying the 50 states of the United States, researchers found that autism spectrum diseases are diagnosed differently. Researchers came to the conclusion that states with greater school and hospital expenses were better able to diagnose autism with accuracy. Approximately one in every 120 newborns in Pakistan is diagnosed with autism. The estimated prevalence of autism in Pakistan is substantially lower than in the West due to a lack of knowledge about the condition. Although many people are aware of the disease's severity, many don't know how to correctly identify the condition. Primary school teachers' awareness of autism will be examined in this study. Using the results of this study, schools and other organisations will be able to raise awareness of autism, enabling it to be diagnosed at an early age and proper treatment to begin.

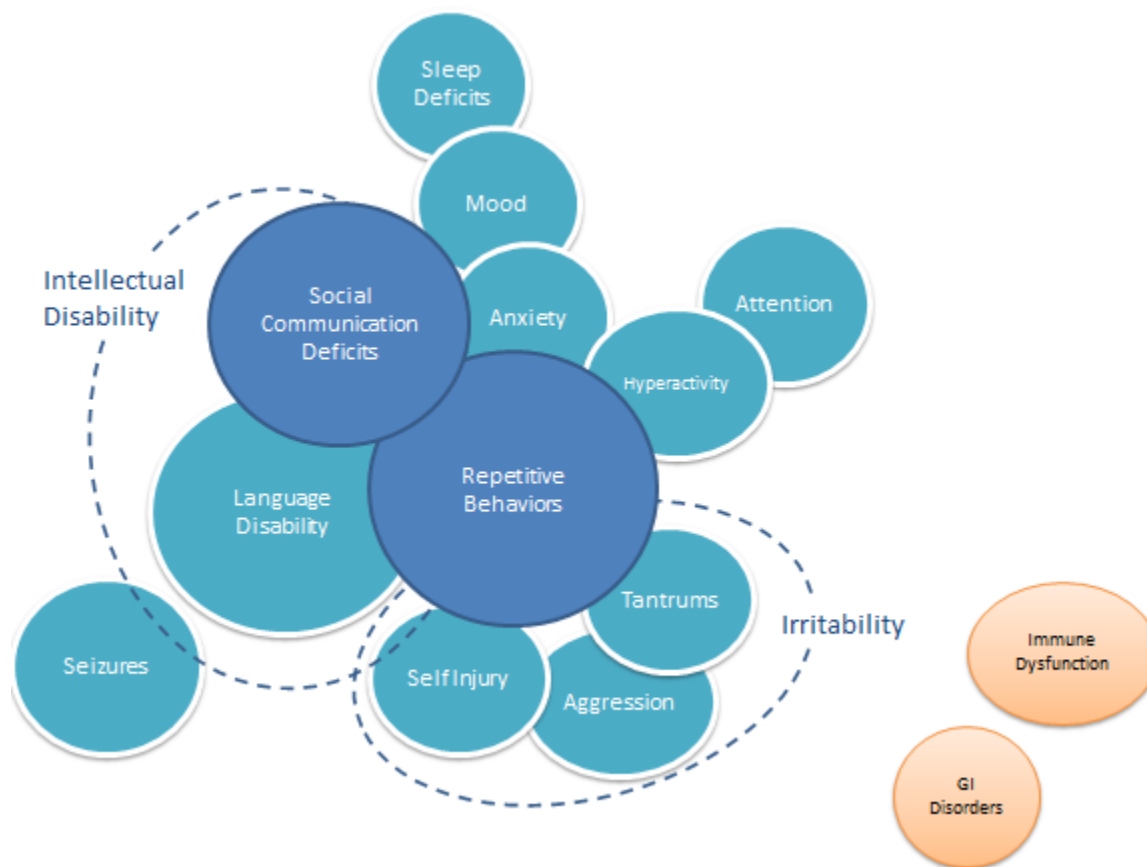


Figure: 01 DOI https://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/mph-modules/ph/autism/autism_print.html

OBJECTIVE

A wide range of medical professionals must work together to effectively treat autistic teenagers. These youngsters and their families might be adversely affected by their understanding level. Unfortunately, officials in Pakistan have paid little attention to autism and other developmental disorders in infants. Autistic people have many misunderstandings about their basic traits, according to current authorities. As a result, Pakistani children with autism are unable to achieve their full potential. It's critical to identify and address any knowledge gaps. Curriculums in the behavioural and allied health sciences, on-going educational training, public awareness campaigns, and the development of social services for these children and families should all involve a greater emphasis on autism spectrum disorder in the future. As a consequence of these methods, autism may be diagnosed earlier and treated more effectively, leading to a better prognosis.

METHOD

Study participants were randomly selected from a convenience sample in Karachi, Pakistan. Families with autistic children and those whose English or Urdu is a second language were left out. A sample of 200 parents was selected. The demographic data, awareness, and views

concerning autism and its indications and symptoms were collected from participants using a validated and pre-tested questionnaire. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. As part of the study, each participant was given a general awareness score based on their understanding of autism. Teachers from both sectors were surveyed and a mean value was determined for the number of correct answers. The Chi-square test and the Fisher exact test were used to compare the data.

RESULT

Autism is something that 70% of our sample group has heard of, with many who have met someone with the disease showing a better degree of comprehension of the condition. A mean score of 4.68 for correct perspectives on autism and 6.76 for the knowledge of signs and symptoms were recorded by participants in our study. Still, 94.5% of respondents said they would seek treatment for their children if they were found to have autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

DISCUSSION

In the American Psychiatric Association's definition of autism, it is a neurodevelopmental illness that affects a child's ability to cope and adapt to transitions. However, it is a treatable but not reversible condition. While most participants correctly identified these characteristics, they incorrectly believed that people with autism have normal dietary habits. This is in spite of the fact that recent research shows that feeding difficulties can be caused by compulsive behaviours, motor and sensory issues, or gastrointestinal disorders in some cases. We shouldn't be surprised if a large majority of people in the United States believe that people with autism have savant or extraordinary abilities like the ability to paint or compose music or memorise long passages of text by rote. However, Howlin et al. determined that one-third of autistic people had these talents. There are still many questions regarding whether or not autism may be hereditary or preventive, and there is a high amount of uncertainty about this in the existing literature despite the fact that parental neglect has been linked to the disorder. Even while the majority of autism cases may be attributed to no known cause, there have been reports of the disease German measles being an indirect cause.

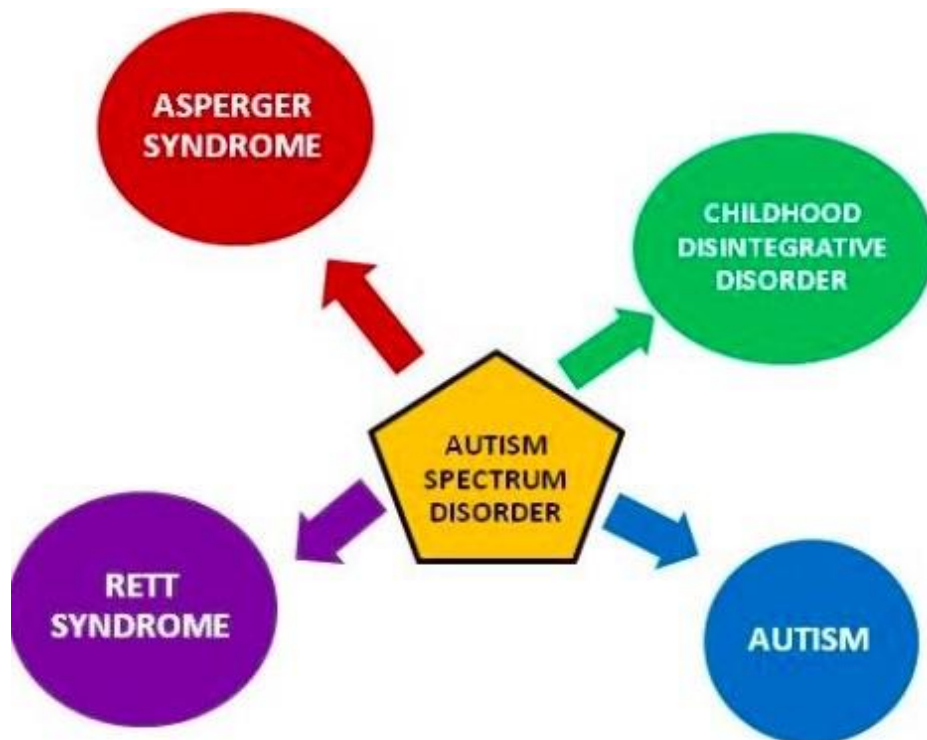


Figure: 02 Autism Spectrum Disorder

Our participants correctly identified a wide range of well-known and well-documented autism symptoms, including a lack of ability to interact with other children, difficulties adapting to change, and emotional dysregulation, many of which are well-established and well-documented by many sources. Children with autism are unable to sustain eye contact or engage in physical activity, which were formerly commonplace in our culture. When it came to understanding the emotional and risk aversion deficits common among autistic people, experts were completely blind to it. This is due to their inability to discern subtle changes in a speaker's voice and tone from their own. Therapy for ASD relies heavily on mental treatments and the significance of starting treatment as soon as feasible has been repeatedly stressed. It is generally known that teaching parents in recovery tactics has an advantage since parents are the primary caregivers in the majority of cases, and substantial research has been undertaken over the years to enhance particular training approaches. Parental counselling was seen as a crucial part of treatment by the vast majority of parents who spoke with us, but many also felt that food had no effect on the disease, even though studies had shown the opposite to be true. Although a minority believed that autism could be scientifically detected, only particular measures like the children autism categorization scale (CARS) and the autistic behaviour checklist (ABC) can be evaluated. More encouragingly, parents in Karachi elected to have their children evaluated for autism and treated if required, a result that has been mirrored in studies such as those in China.

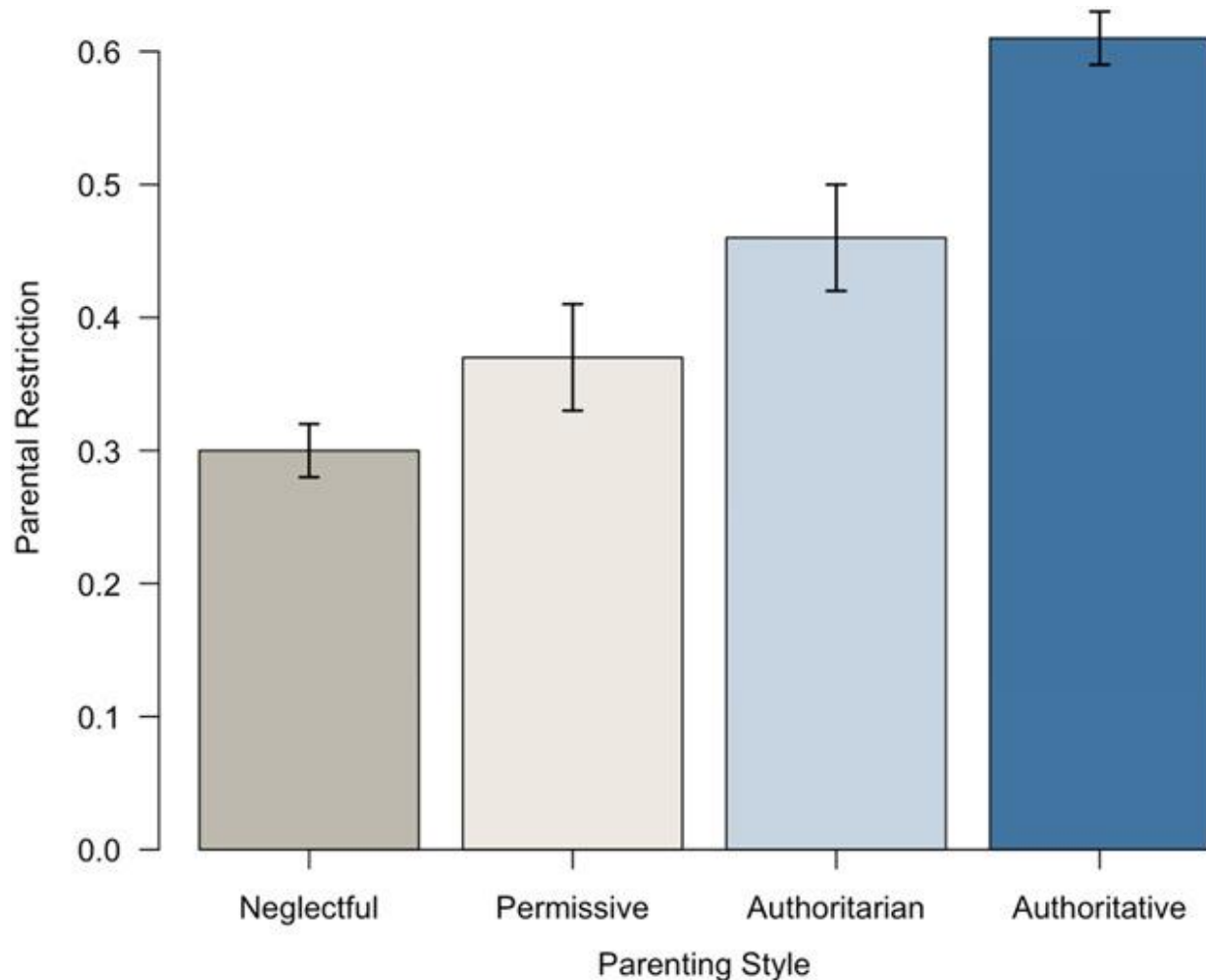


Figure: 03 Parenting Style with Kids

Some criteria were satisfied because of the ease with which we were able to sample. Because the majority of our participants came from a middle-class background, we were unable to assess the influence of socioeconomic status on parental knowledge in this study. Aside from that, we had a higher percentage of girls in our sample than men. Many Pakistanis were completely unaware of autism and were unable to answer any inquiries about it since it is still a relatively unknown ailment in the country. Because this study was carried only in Karachi, it is impossible to obtain an exact assessment of autism knowledge among the overall Pakistani population. Although our study is unique in Pakistan since it is conducted on parents, the results may be utilised to assist parents notice warning signals and follow suitable counselling, thereby overcoming the present knowledge gap among parents.

About one in 150 newborns are diagnosed with autism. As the prevalence of this condition rises, it is imperative that the general public have a better grasp of the symptoms and begin treatment as soon as possible. In a study of 503 preschool instructors in Singapore, it was shown that teachers were unaware of the prevalence of cognitive and behavioural impairments in children. According

to our study, just 47% of the responses given to questions concerning information were correct. There can be no doubt that the majority of the general population was ignorant of critical facts concerning autism, as shown by this. The academic development of a kid with autism is dependent on early identification. As a result of early discovery of sickness, newborns are able to get more effective therapy, which helps them develop. In the formative years of a person's life, teachers have a crucial role. In the long term, their ability to spot autistic students in the classroom will be a huge asset. Medication, behavioural therapy, and social skills training are all used to treat autism. In a clinical trial, researchers Ghanizadeh and Moghimi-Sarani found that risperidone and acetylcysteine decreased irritability in autistic youngsters, but had no effect on the condition's core symptoms. Similarly, a comprehensive review of pharmaceuticals often used to treat autism found that, despite their widespread usage, there is no evidence that they are effective in treating autism.

Based on our survey of relevant psychiatric literature, this study is the first to examine Pakistani healthcare practitioners' comprehension of formal diagnostic criteria for Autistic Disability and their views on the disease. There is a widespread consensus among physicians that social delays, communication difficulties, and restricted aspirations among teenagers with Autism are all symptoms of the disorder. When it comes to diagnosing autism, it's important to remember that it's a developmental issue that occurs before the age of 36 months, which is a diagnostic feature of Autism. Between the ages of fifteen and nineteen months, parents of children with autism were watched and asked questions by health care experts. Despite this, healthcare providers are not always able to recognise the disease at an early stage as a consequence of this knowledge. There are many children diagnosed with autism in Pakistan once they are 36 months old because of a lack of recognition of speech delay as a symptom of the disorder. Lack of understanding of typical presenting complaints, apprehension about labelling a newborn at an early age, and/or overlap between autistic symptoms and those associated with other comorbid disorders such as developmental delay may explain this lack of attention to early presentation. Changes in the attitudes and opinions of the HCW regarding autism should encourage parents to seek proper treatment, which is crucial for a favourable prognosis.

Despite the study's flaws, the results provide a useful review of screening processes and autism awareness in a low-income developed world without a programme for newborn behavioural well-being. In light of the predominance of misconceptions about autism's developmental, perceptual, and emotional aspects, the results imply that current specialists in this field have an unbalanced picture of the illness. Therapeutic implications and the significance of continued education for Pakistani healthcare professionals on autism are highlighted in the thesis. Throughout the future, larger samples should be collected from a wider range of locations in Pakistan, including both urban and rural areas. Pakistan's healthcare system for children with autism and other behavioural problems would be aided by the findings of this study.

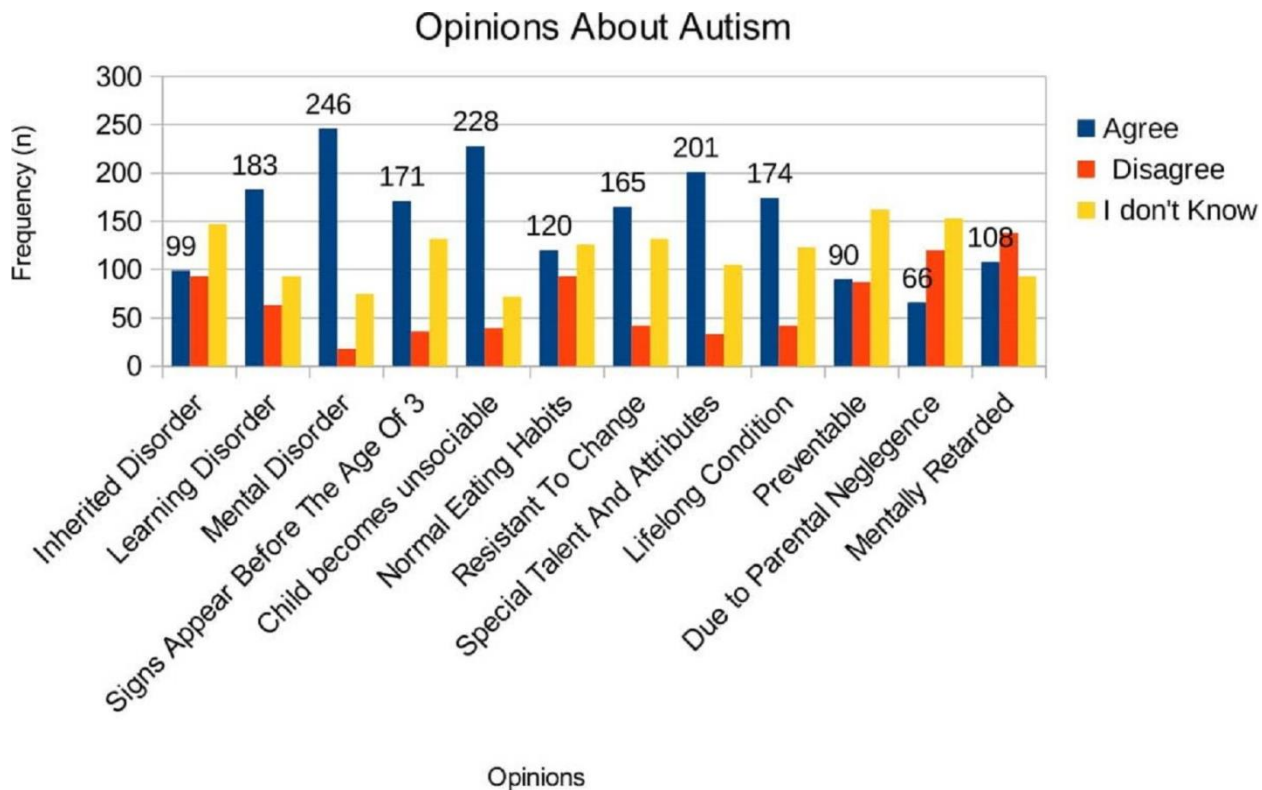


Figure: 04 DOI <https://www.cureus.com/articles/12986-knowledge-awareness-and-perceptions-regarding-autism-among-parents-in-karachi-pakistan>

Social networking sites specifically for individuals with Autism:

- We Are Autism. or: Allows individuals to share, talk, and communicate in a user-led social network for individuals, family members, and members of the community.
- WrongPlanet.ne: A web community designed for individuals and parents, professionals of those with Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, and other neurological differences. A discussion forum is available for members to communicate with one another. There is also a blogging feature and a chat room for real-time communication.
- AutismSpeaks.ning.org: An online support forum for individuals on the spectrum.

Helping Your Child to Use Technology In A Social Way:

A recent study published in the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders found that although individuals with ASD are often preoccupied with television, computers, and video gamers (screen based media), the majority (64.2%) spent most of their free time using non-social media (television, video games), while only 13.2% spent time on social media (email, internet chatting)

The Future of Social Media and ASD

- Social skill groups for ASD children and adolescents need to reflect the changing nature of interactions (i.e., exchanging Instagram name or Snapchat code first instead of phone numbers)
- Social media and computer based communication technologies are making it possible for many people with ASD to enter the workforce more productively Several large tech companies are intentionally tapping into the Autism community to access valuable skills that are in demand Software company SAP launched “Autism at Work” in 2013, with the goal of employing 650 colleagues on the Autism Spectrum by 2020
- Utilizing computer based communication can help alleviate some of the challenges people with Autism may have in the workplace and allow them to better share their knowledge and skills

CONCLUSION

Teachers' lack of knowledge regarding autism is clearly shown by our research. In order to properly diagnose and educate autistic children, we advise that schools equip instructors with sufficient preparatory plans. Unfortunately, we had a dearth of knowledge and awareness about autism in our society. To remedy this situation, educational efforts aimed at raising awareness of autism among parents might be implemented in order to facilitate early detection and the creation of an efficient treatment strategy. When it comes to a diagnosis, the vast majority of parents are open to having their children evaluated and monitored. Few individuals, however, were aware that Karachi had autism treatment institutions. The role of general physicians in educating parents and caregivers about autism cannot be overstated. Autism has yet to be permanently treated. It is possible, however, to control or inhibit it with the use of medications or certain treatments. These early childhood programmes are designed to help youngsters between the ages of one and three acquire important abilities.

Counseling is given to infants with autism to help them learn to communicate and interact with others. As a result, if you suspect that your kid is having difficulties or has a developmental issue, you should seek the advice of a doctor. To prevent disabilities in children between one and three years old, whether or not they have been diagnosed with autism, you should enrol them in early intervention programmes. Medication for side effects such as speech therapy may not involve an ASD diagnosis at all, though.

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