

Islamic Perspective on Autism Spectrum Disorder: Lived Experience of Muslim Families of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in a City in the UK

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Abstract : Autism is a complex disorder related to abnormalities in the development of brain structure and neurological function and a new phenomenon which is epidemically on the increase. The Muslim community, with its profound commitment to the all-encompassing Islamic precedence, views all phenomena in the light of religious imperatives. How autism is understood and treated in these communities is key to successful inclusive services. Moreover, parents mentioned their Islamic faith as a coping mechanism for the challenges they faced while caring for their child. This study utilises interpretative phenomenology analysis as a methodology that seeks to interpret the meaning the participants make of their experiences, which extends descriptive analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 family units that included fathers, mothers, grandparents, and siblings. In the preliminary stage, this study found families give high importance of accessible Islamic education for their child and questioning the accountability of the child who might not be able to follow the Islamic way of life entirely or understand the concept of Allah. Moreover, the families expressed their beliefs in traditional and religious treatment as an effective way to treat and cure autism. This poses a major barrier between families seeking support and professionals providing services. Consequentially, it can also result in a low uptake of mainstream services from the Muslim community. Exploring the lived experiences of parents from the Muslim community and how ASD is conceptualised in this community could have implications for improved and effective home, community, and service collaboration.

Keywords : autism spectrum disorder, Islamic education, religious beliefs, mainstream services

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