

The Experience of Grandparenthood among Grandparents of Children with Autism in the Arab-Bedouin Society

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Abstract : Studies have investigated grandparents' perceptions relating to their grandchildren with disabilities. Literature on grandparenthood focuses on the Western grandparents. Autism within the Arab populations has also being investigated. Moreover, the Bedouin population can also be seen in various studies related to different experiences and different perceptions about disabilities in general and among children in particular. However, as far as we know, no studies were found on grand parenting a child with autism in Bedouin society. This study combines three areas of knowledge, to create another knowledge domain. The aim of this study was to learn about the experience of grand parenting an autistic child in the Bedouin Arab society, to examine how it affects the grandparents' relationships, feelings, and functioning within the family, and as individuals, as well as to examine their coping mechanisms and their social support networks. This study is significant and as it examines autism and grandparents among the Bedouin Arab population in Israel, a population that has unique socio-demographic, cultural and traditional characteristics. The study revealed three themes concerning the meaning of grandparenthood to be associated with family continuity, how autism is perceived, and the importance of religion. It also suggests another category - the status of the elderly in the Arab-Bedouin family. It is recognized that the role of the elderly is held in high esteem, and can be affected by the grandchild's' autism.

Keywords : Arab-Bedouin family, autism, grandparents, family relationships

Conference Title : ICA 2017 : International Conference on Autism

Conference Location : Madrid, Spain

Conference Dates : March 26-27, 2017