



# ISPCAN International Child Protection Congress Qatar 2020

Needs Assessment of Social Support  
System to Families Living with Autism in  
Qatar

Dr. Azza Abdelmoneium –Family Research Director

Mr. Ahmed Aref -Researcher

Doha International Family Institute

# Disclosure

**I do not have any relevant financial relationship  
with commercial interest to disclose**



**The findings of this presentation is based on a report done on the “The well being of families living with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Qatar” by DIFI.**

**Research team:**

**Dr. Naomi Ekas- Texas Christian University**

**Dr. Abdallah Badahdah- South Dakota University**

**Dr. Azza Abdelmoneium- Doha International Family Institute**



# Learning Objectives

**Objective 1:** To examine the effect of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder on the well being of the family in Qatar

**Objective 2:** To understand the challenges facing families in social support .

**Objective 3:** To present recommendations to increase social support for the families



# Methodology

## Qualitative Data:

A total of 20 parents of children with autism (9 fathers and 11 mothers).

## Quantitative Data

A total of 42 parents (35 mothers and seven fathers) of children with autism were surveyed. Participants were recruited through Shafallah. The majority (85%) of parents were married and reported having had at least a university education (59.6%).

All participants were Qatari nationals

# Key Findings

## THE WELL BEING OF FAMILIES LIVING WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER IN QATAR



### KEY FINDINGS:

- Families with autistic children face difficulty accessing timely and high-quality, inclusive services
- Parents lack adequate social and emotional support and respite care.
- Society lacks awareness of Autism.
- Families face financial burdens associated with the wellbeing of their autistic child.
- Marital and sibling relationships in families living with autism often suffer.
- Families have unique concerns and challenges regarding the future of their autistic child.

# Social Support

Social support is defined as "information leading the subject to believe that he is cared for and loved. .esteemed and valued ••• [and] belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligation" (Cobb 1979). Cobb offers descriptions of three additional forms of (non-social) support: instrumental support (counseling), active support ('mothering'), and material support (goods and services).



# Types of Social Support



# Physical and Emotional Challenge

- Impaired Physical functioning, exhausted and tired from the continuous care and support for the ASD individual.
- Emotional disturbance composed of denial, shock, anger, bargaining/guilt, depression, and acceptance.
- Stress induced from caring for a child with ASD



## Marital Relationship

Stress in the marital relationship and decrease in marital satisfaction sometimes leading to divorce.

*One female mother said “, I was in a conflict with my husband; He blamed me saying: “This happened because of you; you left him and focused on your job; you left my son; you haven’t done your job as a mother properly; [you left him to the] maids; you just threw him on your mother.” I used to leave my kids with my mother. Of course, he held me accountable for the whole thing. I had a break down and we were about to get a divorce”.*



# Social Support Challenge

- Parents needing respite care for their children and feeling that they couldn't visit friends or family because of their child's behavior.
- Parents also reported needing between “a little” and “a lot of” support from their community. Community services include such things as meeting with other parents who have children with autism and accessing medical and dental services for their child.



# Social Support Challenge

- Mothers and fathers need emotional support. Fathers reported higher needs with respect to having friends to talk to.
- Parents reported needing instrumental support such as finding babysitters or respite care, finding day care programs for children, and finding childcare later in the day (after most day programs have ended).
- Some parents have housemaids to help with their children but they are not well trained.



# Recommendations

- Policy for financial assistance to the families.
- Community awareness.
- Parents should have access to multifaceted social support services that include both instrumental and emotional forms of support.
- Instrumental support services in the form of respite care for families. These services could be implemented via therapy providers or community centers, or through the public education system.



# Recommendations

- Emotional support could be provided through the implementation of parent support groups facilitated by the service centers or schools that the children attend.
- The establishment of separate fathers-only groups. Men may feel more comfortable talking with other men who are sharing the same experiences.



# Recommendations

- Parents should have access to mental health services that directly address the stress they are experiencing. Services should be provided to parents by medical professionals.
- Parents need to be assured that their confidentiality will be maintained and that their family members (e.g.spouses) will not be informed about their visits.
- Parents should be taught coping skills to deal with the stress.



# Thank you

