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**The Effect of a Training Program on
the Expectations of Parents of Children with
Autism Spectrum Disorder**

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The Effect of a Training Program on the Expectations of Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the expectations that Saudi parents had for their children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) before and after undergoing a short intensive training program. Thirty-four mothers and twenty-eight fathers attended a seminar in Riyadh conducted by the Charitable Society of Autism Families. They were asked to complete a researcher-adopted version of Mutua's test questionnaire (1999) before and after participating in the training program. The analysis of the data utilized ANOVA and Tukey tests. The findings showed that the parents had improved expectations for their ASD children after the training, adjusting for demographics and other variables.

Keywords: autism, autism training, children with ASD, parental expectations

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أثر برنامج التدريب على توقعات الوالدين
من أبنائهم الذين لديهم اضطرابات طيف التوحد

إعداد
د/ حصة هـ سليم — ان

الفايز (*)

الملخص باللغة العربية

هدفت هذه الدراسة الى التعرف على توقعات الوالدين حول أبنائهم من ذوي اضطراب طيف التوحد وذلك قبل وبعد اخذ برنامج تدريبي قصير ومكثف. شارك في التدريب ٣٤ أم و ٢٨ أب من جمعية أسر التوحد الخيرية بمدينة الرياض.

طلب من الوالدين تعبئة استمارة -قبل البرنامج وبعده- من خلال استخدام أداة سابقة وهي اختبار مطوع (١٩٩٩)، وذلك بعد تعديلها لتناسب البيئة السعودية، وقد تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام اختبارات التباين و"توكي" والتي أظهرت أن الآباء والامهات الذين حضروا التدريب تطورت توقعاتهم عن أطفالهم وكان لبعض المتغيرات دور في ذلك التطور.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التوحد، التدريب، الأطفال ذوي اضطراب طيف التوحد، توقعات الوالدين.

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I. Introduction

Recently, in Saudi Arabia, more attention is being paid to the problem of treating children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) (Alsehemi et al., 2017). Parents naturally wish to find the best treatment options for their children. Giving this issue the utmost consideration is very important due to the high prevalence of ASD diagnoses of Saudi Arabian children (Babtain et al., 2016).

Parents are concerned with their children's education, and that includes parents of ASD children. This requires parents to be a part of the educational process (Girli, 2018; Fox & Williams, 1992); their support should be acknowledged as valuable (Faulkner & Gray's Healthcare Information Center, 1996; Simpson, 1990). Although there has not been a cure for ASD so far, there are a number of interventions which might be effective for managing children with ASD problem behavior (Bolton & Mayer, 2008). Training usually results in improving expectations, results, and behavior (Masood, 2006).

Parents of children with ASD struggle with educational choices for their children. Parents' expectations for their children may change based on their understanding of the disorder. A protracted process of diagnosis increases these difficulties. They often report higher levels of disappointment, depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues (McCabe, 2008; Howell, 2015; Weiss et al., 2014). Parents' training and the place and type of that training may result in decreasing the problem behavior of their children with ASD (Crone & Mehta, 2016).

Parents should be essential members of the educational process (Fox & Williams, 1992). Despite this (Faulkner & Gray's Healthcare Information

Center, 1996), their input is often not sought. Many factors such as family characteristics, family interactions, family functions, and lifespan affect how well parents can care for their ASD children (Turnbull, 1996). Also, "Children with ASD often have communication, interaction, and behavior difficulties...they may not be able to voice their thoughts and feelings to others. It is crucial that parents allow children with Autism to make their own choice and express their desires and interests" (Ivey, 2004: 32).

Educators of ASD children have concerns about their students' outcomes and quality of life (Ivey, 2004). There is an increasing demand for the educational system to meet the needs of children with ASD as well as a need to activate the teacher-parent partnership in order to improve services (Todd, et al., 2014). Parental intervention is effective in improving social skills and results in high social validity (Liu et al., 2015). Professionals in the field have highlighted the importance of parents' involvement in intensive behavioral intervention (Solish et al., 2015). Also, Zhang, Wehmeyer, and Chen (2005) investigated teachers' and parents' behaviors in USA and Taiwan in fostering the self-determination of students. They found that parents were not as involved in the educational process as much as they should.

Many factors and barriers hinder parental understanding and teaching of their ASD children. These include being unsure how much self-determination they can expect from their children with ASD, being unsure about the strategies they can use to promote their children's self-determination, and being afraid of risk of harm to their children. Researchers have found a strong relationship between parental expectations and future outcomes (Mutua, 1999; Solish et al., 2015; Girli, 2018).

1. Statement of the Problem

According to Alsehemi et al., (2017), Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a moderately common neurodevelopmental disorder that 10 per 1,000 children around the world are diagnosed with it. Despite worldwide improvements in care and treatment of children with ASD and steps taken to develop special education services for such children, there are still major challenges regarding the expansion of those programs and services (Hadidi & Al-Khateeb, 2015). In fact, in Saudi Arabia, parents of children with ASD often feel that neither they nor their children receive enough care from public agencies; consequently, they are concerned about their children's future development (Babtain et al., 2016). Girli (2018) state that parents of children with ASD face many challenges when raising their children. The lack of proper training programs and education for parents of ASD children could make their experience difficult as they are overwhelmed with daily tasks and responsibilities. Parents might expect less of their ASD children and if this misconception is left untreated, major consequences may occur for the families and ultimately the society.

2. Research Questions

This is a quasi-experimental study that explored the effect of training programs on parents of children with ASD. In order to assess such impact, these two research questions were developed:

- 1- What are the expectations of the parents of children with ASD regarding their children's future *before* attending a short training program?

- 2- Are there statistically significant differences in the parents' expectations *before* training with respect to gender, place of living, school type, autism type and level, and education level?
- 3- What are the expectations of the parents of children with ASD regarding their children's future *after* attending a short training program?
- 4- Are there statistically significant differences in the parents' expectations *after* training with respect to gender, place of living, school type, autism type and level, and education level?

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore Saudi parents' expectations for the future of their ASD children before and after undergoing a short training program in order to understand the effect of training on parents' expectations. The study also aimed to understand the variation of expectations that parents might have with respect to gender, place of living, school type that children attend (private, public), autism type and level (mild autism, moderate autism, Sever Autism, Asperger Syndrome, Rett Ayndrome), and the parents' education level (high school or lower, BA, or graduate).

4. Significance of the Study

There are theoretical and empirical significance for this study. First, the theoretical importance of this study is to bridge the literature gap regarding the impact of training programs on parents of ASD children expectations. Very limited research had been conducted regarding the impact of training programs on parents of ASD children expectations. The

results of this study shed light on the expectations of parents of ASD children regarding their treatment and the importance of such expectations. Second, the study is significantly important for empirical reasons. The study provided practitioners and decision makers in Saudi Arabia with information regarding the impact of training on parents' expectations. The results could help in shaping the future of healthcare policy in the treatment of ASD children. It also could help parents understand and improve the way they deal with their children in both short and long terms.

5. Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this study included:

- 1- A single study location: Saudi Arabia.
- 2- A limited timeframe: Fall 2017.
- 3- A limited sample size (n=62).

6. Definition of Terms

- 1- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**: is a diagnosis characterized by delays in the development of socialization and communication skills (Dombrowski, 2018). There are many types for ASD. In this study, ASD is categorized as follows: 1- mild autism, 2- moderate autism, 3- severe autism, 4- Asperger's syndrome, and 5- Rett's syndrome.
- 2- **Expectation**: Based on Mutua's test, expectations are defined as those anticipations that parents have regarding their ASD children (Papay and Bambara, 2013) with respect to adapting to typical Saudi Arabian social norms, including marriage, pursuit of knowledge, and ability to work. Operationally, expectations are measured via questionnaire (Appendix 1).

- 3- **Effects:** Linguistically, the word effect means the impact of something on something else (Doren et al., 2012; Giallo and Jellett, 2013). Operationally, the effect of a short training program is measured by conducting a pretest and a posttest in which means and standard deviation scores are compared.
- 4- **The Training Program:** After collecting the parents' expectations for the future of their children with ASD, the researcher informed the parents about the training program. The program was for one week, five hours a day. The training program was developed and carried out by specialists in ASD. The program aimed at:
- a) Familiarizing parents with their and their children's rights according to Saudi law.
 - b) Familiarizing parents with the different procedures which overcome and follow up to deal with ASD children.
 - c) Training parents in how to deal with their ASD children.
 - d) Training parents in the ways of helping their ASD children to be involved in society.
 - e) Training parents in how to discover that their children have ASD.
 - f) Training parents in how to help their children with ASD deal with themselves.
 - g) Presenting to parents special cases of children with ASD and how they succeeded in their life and how they manage their life.
 - h) The training program was administered via simulations, lectures, workshops and discussions.

II. Review of Related Literature

1. Theatrical Framework

Developed by Canadian professor Victor Vroom (1964) Expectancy theory provides an explanation of a person's expectations of certain outcomes. It explains why an individual chooses to engage in a specific behavior as opposed to another. The roots of the theory of expectancy of motivation go back to 1957 when at the University of Michigan, Georgopoulos, Mahoney, and Jones conducted a research program in organizational behavior. The study focused on the conscious and rational aspects of employee motivation and the factors which affected the levels of high or low productivity. They dealt with three variables:

- a) Individual needs.
- b) Individual perceptions of the usefulness of productivity behavior (high or low).
- c) The level of freedom of the factors which people have in following the desired path.

2. Previous Literature

Zhang, Wehmeyer, and Chen (2005) investigated parents' and teachers' engagement in fostering the self-determination of students with disabilities in the United States and Taiwan. They found that teachers and parents of such children in secondary schools were more engaged than those of such children in elementary school. Those teachers emphasized the role of parents' and teachers' engagement in the students' self-determination.

Thomas, Ellis, McLaurin, Daniels, and Morrissey (2007) identified family characteristics associated with use of autism-related services. The researchers used a telephone or in-person survey. The participants were 301 North Carolina families with a child 8 years old or younger with ASD. The results revealed that their service use was more likely when they had higher stress. Participants indicated the need to develop policy, practice, and family-level interventions that could address barriers to services for children with ASD.

Lee Li-Ching, Harrington, Louie, and Newschaffer (2008) conducted a study to examine parental concerns in children with autism during early childhood, childhood, and adolescence in the US. The results showed that children with autism were significantly less likely to attend religious services and more likely to miss school. They were also less likely to participate in organized activities.

Barclift (2010) claimed that children with autism might benefit from their parents' involvement in the procedures of their schools and this might improve their learning situation. The study examined experiences and perceptions of the parents who had children with autism in USA. In fact, the study was based on Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development theory, which deals with the significant role that parents play in the development of a child. The researcher used in-depth interviews in his collection of the data to understand the parents' lived experiences and perceptions. The results revealed that parents believe that teachers have to be aware of the language used in individualized education plan meetings. The results also showed that educators should be sensitive to the language difficulties that parents might have when discussing issues relating to

services of special education and autism. Moreover, the results showed that teachers and parents should be more educated about autism.

In Saudi Arabia, Alquraini (2011) revealed that services provided by special agencies are more likely to be used when parents have higher stress levels. The study recommended that policymakers should evaluate existing laws and regulations related to students with disabilities and that the ministry of education should engage in an expert team annually to assess and evaluate the quality of special education services.

Giallo and Jellett (2013) conducted a study to investigate the effect of maternal fatigue and coping on the relationship between children's problematic behaviors and maternal stress. The sample consisted of 65 mothers of children (aged 2–5 years) with ASD. The results revealed that maternal fatigue affected the relationship between problematic child behaviors and maternal stress. The finding of the study was that child behavior difficulties might contribute to parental fatigue, which might affect the use of coping strategies and might increase stress.

Al-Khalaf, Dempsey, and Dally (2013) claimed that there were few support services for parents of children with a disability in Jordan, so they conducted a study to investigate the effect of an education program on mothers of children with ASD's understanding of their children's behavior. After the education program, the mothers showed a statistically significant reduction in stress levels, an increase in coping skills, and an improvement in mother-child interaction. The results also showed that those mothers had higher stress levels than their spouses.

Hsiao Yun-Ju (2013) conducted a study to find out the relationship between family quality of life, parental stress, and family-professional

partnerships for families with at least one child with ASD. Participants were 236 parents who completed an online questionnaire. The results indicated that age of the first child with ASD and type of school services contributed significantly to the professional partnership. The relationship status of the parent(s) contributed significantly to parental stress. The total household income and the age of the first child with ASD contributed significantly to family quality of life.

Brotherson, Cook, Erwin, and Weigel (2014) conducted a study to understand family and home characteristics and how they influence the way in which families can support the development of self-determination for their children with learning disabilities or ASD. They found that families and their characteristics may affect the children's self-determination positively or negatively. They recommended that parents and families should be involved in the educational process.

Girli (2018) found that, generally, many studies investigating the effects of ASD children on their parents' marital and family relationships as well as psychological conditions such as mourning, stress, anxiety, and depression are descriptive. She added that need for other research designs are necessary to understand the issues that parents of ASD children face while raising their kids and ways to improve expectations.

This study differs from previous studies in the sense that it deals with Saudi parents expectations of their children whom are diagnosed with ASD, which has not been studied before using the methods and sample provided.

III. Methods and Design

This study used a quasi-experiment design in which one group had to take a pretest and a posttest in order to assess the impact of training on

parents' expectations. This design is most appropriate for empirical interventional studies that sought to estimate the impact of intervention on a target population without random assignment.

The study started with investigation of parents' expectations of their children with ASD by supplementing Mutua's test to participants before training. Then, a short training program was carried out for one week to those parents who volunteered to participate. After that, the same Mutua's test was given to the same participants to determine the variations of parents' expectations.

1. Sampling Method

The study utilized a non-probability sampling method. In particular, the study used convenience-sampling technique because participants are selected based on availability and willingness to take part of the study. Study participants are parents of ASD children who are affiliated with the Charitable Society of Autism Families in Saudi Arabia. This is the only charitable society in Saudi Arabia that is concerned with providing services to families of children with ASD. A total of 2500 parents were invited more than once to participate in the study and only 93 accepted the invitation. However, 62 participants actually participated in study.

The 62 parents who had participated in the study were 28 male and 34 female parents of whom there were 48 living in Riyadh city (20 females and 28 males) and 14 were living in villages near Riyadh city (8 males and 6 females). Out of the 62 parents, there were 28 males and 34 females send their children with ASD to public schools and there were two males who send their children to private schools (Table 1).

2. Instrument Utilized in the Study

In order to achieve the objectives of the program, the researcher adapted Mutua's test (1999), with some modifications, to suit the Saudi culture. In its final version, it consisted of 20 items. The researcher re-established the validity and reliability of the test's questionnaire. First, the test's questionnaire was given to a jury of six professors and experts on ASD for their recommendations and suggestions regarding its suitability for Saudi parents, Saudi culture, and the clarity of its items. Their recommendations were taken into consideration when the final version of the test's questionnaire was established. In order to establish its reliability, the test's questionnaire was applied on a pilot study of 20 parents out of the participants in the study with the duration of three weeks between them. Then, a Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. It was found to be 0.873, which is a suitable value for such a study.

3. Data Collection Procedures

First, a letter was written from the Dean of the College of Education at King Saud University to the President of the Charitable Society of Autism Families in Saudi Arabia. Then, 2500 parents of the children with ASD were contacted to persuade them to attend a seminar about ASD and how to deal with the children with ASD. Sixty-two parents (34 mothers and 28 fathers) out of 93, who were initially contacted, agreed to attend the seminar. At the beginning of the seminar, the participants were asked to complete a test's questionnaire about their expectations and important issues for their children with ASD. Then, the researcher collected the copies of the test's questionnaire and analyzed the data quantitatively.

IV. Data Analysis, Results, and Discussion

1. Description of the Sample

As shown in Table1, the total number of the participants was 62 (45% Male, 55 Female). It also showed whether these families lived in urban or rural areas as well as whether their children went to private or public schools. Table 2 shows the type of ASD among the participants' children.

Table 1: Parent Demographics

Gender	Frequency	Urban	Rural	Send Children to Public School	Send Children to Private School
Male	28	20	8	24	4
Female	34	28	6	34	0
Total	62	48	14	58	4

Table 2: Child ASD Type

Mild Autism	Moderate Autism	Severe Autism	Asperger's Syndrome	Rett's Syndrome	Total
20	16	14	8	4	62

2. Results Analysis

1. What are the expectations of the parents of children with ASD regarding their children's future *before* attending a short training program?

In Table3, the results show that the overall mean score was 2.89, with a standard deviation of 0.97. If the scores are divided into three categories: Low = $1 \geq 2.33$; Moderate = ≥ 3.66 ; and High = ≥ 5 , then it can be said that the parents' expectations of the future of their children with

autism were moderate. Moreover, the parents' standard deviation 0.97 is high, which means that there was a high variance in their responses. The results also show that the highest mean score was 3.03 for the items 10 (possibility of attaining highest education) and 12 (be socially responsible/law-abiding), which is also moderate. The lowest mean score is 2.71, for item 20 (use community services), and it is also within the moderate category.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations of the Participants' Responses to all of the Items before Training

Item	Number of Responses	Mean*	Standard Deviation
1	62	3.00	0.92
2	62	3.00	1.02
3	62	2.94	0.92
4	62	2.94	1.02
5	62	3.00	0.93
6	62	2.94	1.02
7	62	2.97	0.94
8	62	2.97	1.04
9	62	2.97	0.94
10	62	3.03	1.01
11	62	3.00	0.92
12	62	3.03	1.01
13	62	2.74	1.09
14	62	2.81	1.13
15	62	2.81	1.04
16	62	2.84	1.12
17	62	2.77	1.05
18	62	2.74	1.17
19	62	2.74	1.05
20	62	2.77	1.14
Total	62	2.89	0.97

*Scores are out of 5 points

2. Are there statistically significant differences in the parents' expectations *before* training with respect to gender, place of living, school type, autism type and level, and education level?

Table 4 and 5 show that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the male parents and the female parents ($F = 7.66$, $Pr = 0.0084$) in favor of the female parents at $\alpha = 0.05$, since the mean score of the female parents was higher than the male parents, which means that the female parents' expectations of their children with ASD were significantly higher than the expectations of the male parents. The results also show that there were no statistically significant differences in the parents' responses due to the school type they sent their children to, where they lived, or their education level. However, the results show that there were statistically significant differences in the parents' mean scores due to the type of ASD. In order to check for which type(s) the difference was significant, a Tukey test of multiple comparisons was run (table 6).

Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations of the Participants' Scores over the Variables of the Study before Training

Variable	Frequency	Mean*	Standard Deviation
Male	28	2.755	0.765
Female	34	3.003	1.112
Urban	48	2.756	0.979
Rural	14	3.354	0.814
Public	58	2.895	1.002
Private	4	2.833	0.3024
Mild Autism	20	2.509	0.976
Moderate Autism	16	2.619	1.278
Severe Autism	14	3.224	1.098
Asperger's Syndrome	8	3.5	0.535
Rett's Syndrome	4	3.5	0.577
High school or lower	26	2.439	0.875
BA	20	3.143	1.032
Higher degree	16	3.309	0.767

*Scores are out of 5

Table 5: Results of ANOVA Test of the Participants'**Responses before Training**

Source	DF	Type III SS	Mean Square	F-value	Pr.
Gender	1	5.290	5.290	7.66	0.008*
Place of living	1	0.274	0.274	0.40	0.53
School Type	1	0.496	0.496	0.72	0.4007
Autism Type	4	10.384	2.596	3.75	0.0028*
Education Level	2	1.312	0.656	0.96	0.3936
Error	52	35.957	0.6917		
Corrected Total	61	57.5618			

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

Table 6: Results of Tukey Test of Multiple Comparisons of the Parents' Responses According to their Children's Type of Autism before Training

Comparisons	Difference between Means	95% Confidence Level	
Rett's Synd – Mild	0.991	-0.296	2.278
Rett's Synd – Moderate	0.881	- 0.433	2.195
Rett's Synd - Severe	0.275	- 1.057	1.608
Rett's Synd – Asper Synd	0.001	- 1.439	1.438
Asperger's - Severe	0.991	0.008	1.976**
Asperger's - Moderate	0.881	- 0.137	1.897
Asperger's - Mild	0.276	- 0.766	1.317
Severe – Mild	0.715	- 0.104	1.534
Severe – Moderate	0.605	- 0.255	1.465
Moderate - Mild	0.12	- 0.679	0.898

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

3. What are the expectations of the parents of children with ASD regarding their children’s future *after* attending a short training program?

Table 7: Means and Standard Deviations of the Participants' Responses on all of the Items after Attending the Short Training

Item	Number of Responses	Mean*	Standard Deviation
1	62	3.90	0.59
2	62	4.03	0.75
3	62	3.77	0.611
4	62	4.03	0.701
5	62	3.84	0.631
6	62	4.00	0.724
7	62	3.84	0.578
8	62	4.03	0.701
9	62	3.77	0.556
10	62	4.03	0.746
11	62	3.81	0.648
12	62	3.97	0.789
13	62	3.84	0.632
14	62	4.01	0.724
15	62	3.78	0.556
16	62	3.87	0.713
17	62	3.74	0.571
18	62	3.87	0.713
19	62	3.71	0.649
20	62	3.90	0.626
Total	62	3.88	.660

*Mean scores are out of 5 points

In table 7, the results show that there were improvements in parents' expectations after they had received a short training. The overall mean score became 3.88, a high score, while it was a moderate one before training with an overall standard deviation of .66 (lower variance compared to pretest results). The highest mean score was 4.03 for items 2, 4, 8, and 10. The lowest mean score was 3.71, for item 19. This means that all the

mean scores for all the items were within the high category, which means a good improvement of the parents' expectations of their children with ADS after attending the short training.

4. Are there statistically significant differences in the parents' expectations *after* training with respect to gender, place of living, school type, autism type and level, and education level?

The results in table 8 show that the mean scores of all the different variables were higher than 3.66, which mean that the score of all the variables were within the high category. The results also reveal that the mean scores of all the different levels of all of the variables were within the high category. Moreover, the results show that there were observed differences among the different variables and in order to check if the differences were significant, an ANOVA test was used.

Table 8: Means and Standard Deviations of the Participants' Scores According to the Variables of the Study after Attending the Training

Variable	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation
Male	28	3.897	0.462
Female	34	3.865	0.63
Urban	48	3.782	0.582
Rural	14	4.218	261
Public	58	3.891	0.573
Private	4	3.714	0.165
Mild Autism	20	3.77	0.452
Moderate Autism	16	3.809	0.677
Severe Autism	14	3.829	0.66
Asperger's Syndrome	8	4.357	0.163
Rett's Syndrome	4	4	0.1
High school or lower	26	3.656	0.527
BA	20	3.933	0.668
Graduate	16	4.178	0.215

* Scores are out of 5

Table 9: Results of ANOVA Test of the Participants' Responses after Attending the Short Training

Source	DF	Type III SS	Mean Square	F-value	Pr.
Gender	1	0.601	0.601	2.40	0128
Place of living	1	0.152	0.152	0.60	0.442
School Type	1	0.014	0.014	0.05	0.818
Autism Type	4	2.702	0.676	2.64	0.042**
Education Level	2	0.293	0.146	0.58	0.564
Error	52	13.14	0.243		

** Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

The results in table 9 show that after undergoing a short training, there were no significant differences in the parents' expectations of their children with ASD due to parents' gender, place of living, school type in which their children with ASD go to, and parents' level of education. On the other hand, the results show that there were statistically significant differences among the parents' expectations due to the autism level or type. In order to reveal the significance among the types of autism, a Tukey test of multiple comparisons was used.

Table 10: Results of Tukey Test of Multiple Comparisons of the Parents' Responses According to their Children's Type of Autism after Training

Comparisons	Difference between Means	95% Confidence Level	
Rett's Synd – Mild	0.243	-0.535	- 1.021
Rett's Synd – Moderate	0.190	-0.604	- 0.985
Rett's Synd - Severe	0.170	-0.635	- 0.976
Rett's Synd – Asper Synd	- 0.357	-1.227	- 0.513
Asperger's - Sever	0.600	0.006	- 1.194**
Asperger's - Moderate	0.548	-0.068	-1.163
Asperger's - Mild	0.527	-0.102	-1.157
Severe – Mild	0.073	-0.423	- 0.568
Severe – Moderate	0.020	-0.499	- 0.541
Moderate - Mild	0.052	-0.42	- 0.529

** Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

The results of multiple comparisons reveal that there was only one significant difference: between Severe Autism and Asperger's Syndrome, in favor of Severe Autism, since the mean score was 4.357 while the mean score of Asperger's Syndrome was 4.00. This significant difference could be because the sample of the parents of children with Severe Autism and Asperger's Syndrome was a small one and thus not entirely representative.

In general, the parents' expectations were improved after attending the short training program holding all variables of the study constant. This result indicate that training programs are very important element in the education process that parents need in order to cope with the overwhelming tasks and responsibilities that they ought to do in a daily basis. This study provides supporting evidence to Thomas et al. (2007) that intervention is an essential element that could help both children and parents better understand the situation they are in. Also, 10 years after Li-Ching et al, (2008) published their article, parents expectations of their children is still not as needed. Findings of this study show that parents will have better expectations of their ASD children once they are educated about their children conditions and ways to deal with it.

V. Recommendations

The parents' expectations for their ASD children were moderate before attending the short training program but became high after attending the program, which means that such short training is effective in improving parents' expectations for their children with ASD. Regardless of the different variables of the study, the parents' expectations were improved after being trained.

Based on the results of the study, it is recommended to carry out training programs for parents of children with ASD. It is also recommended to activate the partnership between parents of children with ASD and their teachers. Parents should be highly involved in all of the activities related to children of ASD. Further studies should focus on the type of training provided by autism centers in Saudi and compare it to international practices worldwide.

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