



Peer Victimization with Autism Spectrum Disorder Children in Bangladesh. A Study in Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) in Savar, Dhaka

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ABSTRACT: Victimization occurs more frequently for people with autistic children than for people who are properly functioning. Peer victimization is a serious social problem that can negatively affect autistic children. The purpose of this study was to investigate peer victimization experiences of children. Autistic children are subjected to more physical and emotional abuse than normal children. The study is based on qualitative research. Data were collected through in-depth interviews by semi-structured questionnaire. Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP), Savar has been selected for data collection. All the mothers having children with autism between the ages of 4 years to 14 years of age of the selected area is considered for the population of the study and each of the mothers of the study area is considered as a unit of analysis. 10 mothers having children with autism have attained for study. The study findings indicate that the majority of the autistic children were between the ages of 4 to 10, and they came from middle-class families. The study found that age, family status, the prevalence of autistic characteristics, living in the area, and social skills were factors that affected children's peer relationship difficulties and increased peer victimization. These results suggest that physically and psychologically, torment control needs to be an open, society-based program.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Autistic children are children who have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ASD is a neurological and psychiatric disorder that impairs social interaction. ASD is a developmental disorder that affects social interaction, communication, behavior, and sensory processing. No reason for this is known so far. It can occur as a result of neurological and psychological problems and genetic, environmental or unknown factors. Autistic children may exhibit a range of symptoms and behaviors, including difficulty with social interaction, delayed language development or language regression, repetitive behaviors or interests, sensory sensitivities, and difficulties with executive functioning and flexibility.

The term "autism" is very new and it has taken off in Bangladesh. It is distinguished from other disorders as a spectrum condition with a variety of behavioral and neurological traits. Asperger's Syndrome, autistic disorder, and pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified are among the current disorders included in autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), sometimes known as pervasive developmental disorders (PDDs). Deficits in verbal and nonverbal communication, social interaction, and repetitive or constrained interests and behaviors are characteristics of ASDs (National Institute of Mental Health, 2008). Autistic children are at a higher risk of victimization compared to their non-autistic peers. According to various studies, the prevalence of victimization among autistic children is estimated to be between 40% and 60%. This is a significantly higher rate than the estimated rate of victimization among non-autistic children, which is estimated to be around 10% to 20%. Victimization among autistic children can take various forms, including physical abuse, bullying, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. These experiences can have a significant impact on the well-being and development of autistic children, including increased anxiety, depression, and decreased self-esteem.

Victimization that is physical may take the form of hitting, kicking, punching, or tripping. Threats of physical danger, epithets, joking, or other forms of general verbal abuse are all examples of verbal victimization. Peer victimization refers to the experience of being targeted or mistreated by one's peers, often in a repetitive and intentional manner. It can take many forms, including physical aggression such as hitting or pushing, verbal aggression such as teasing or name-calling, social exclusion such as ignoring or spreading rumors and cyberbullying such as using the internet or social media to harass or embarrass others. It can also lead to long-term consequences, such as difficulty forming trusting relationships and continued mental health issues. According to Hawker and Bolton (2000), Peer victimization is the situation in which children experience being the target of the hostile behavior of other kids who are not their siblings and are not necessarily their age. Peer victimization is usually defined in terms of the kind of aggression that took place (Weiner & Mak, 2009). According to national studies on crime victimization and bullying conducted in the US, 10% to 40% of students in schools are the victims of peer victimization (Walker, S. 2005) In 2007, 32% of child aged 12 to 18 reported being bullied at school (Dinkes et al., 2009).

It is important to note that autistic children may be more vulnerable to victimization due to difficulties in social communication and a lack of understanding of social norms. They may also be more susceptible to victimization due to difficulties in reporting abuse or seeking help when needed. To address the issue of victimization among autistic children, it is important to implement measures that promote safety and well-being. This may include training for parents, teachers, and other professionals who work with autistic children, as well as the development of programs that teach social skills and provide support for autistic children who have experienced victimization. Additionally, it is important to raise awareness about the issue of victimization among autistic children and to encourage reporting of abuse so that those who have experienced victimization can receive the support and assistance they need.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to identify the mothers' experience of peer victimization with autism spectrum disorder children in Bangladesh. The other specific objectives of the study are the following-

- i. To know the nature of peer victimization experience by mother having autistic children.
- ii. To identify the causes of peer victimization.
- iii. To know the impact of peer victimization towards autistic children

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study focused on the important issue of autism and was conducted through a case study approach. The areas were chosen purposefully and a sample was randomly selected from among them. Specifically, 10 parents who had children with autism were selected to participate in the case study. Given that the population of interest was unknown, a purposive sampling method was employed. Despite the limited sample size of 10, this study has the potential to provide valuable insights and shed light on the complex issue of autism. The unit of analysis is individual of children their victimized by peers. It could be narratives that they provide about share their experience. All the mothers having children between the ages of 4 years to 14 years who are suffering autism spectrum disorder between the ages of 4 to 14 years. The study used a qualitative approach to collect data, which involved designing a semi-structured questionnaire which includes open ended questionnaire. To gather the necessary data, a qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate. The nature of this study was explorative and in-depth interviews were conducted to delve deeper into the topic at hand. The interview guide utilized both open-ended and closed-ended questions, addressing a variety of topics, such as the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent and their family, the causes and nature of peer victimization, its impact and recommendations for addressing the issue. The interviews were conducted using a tape recorder and meticulous notes were taken to ensure accuracy and thoroughness. This approach has yielded a rich and diverse dataset that will be valuable in analyzing the complex issue of peer victimization. To ensure accurate analysis, all Bengali data provided by respondents were translated into English for consistency. Respondent pseudonyms were used throughout the study to protect their privacy. The coding approach was then employed, which is an essential aspect of qualitative research. The data was organized and sorted according to different codes and cases, and different themes were identified and coded accordingly. Sub-themes were also identified and organized under their respective themes. The resulting data was analyzed thematically, yielding valuable insights into the research topic. Ethical considerations were also taken into account throughout the study to ensure that the privacy and rights of the respondents were respected.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The primary goal of this study is to identify the types of victimization experienced autistic children. The entire interview is based on this objective, with another objective included. We follow the qualitative method in these studies. These objectives focused on the types, causes and impact of victimization by autistic children. We described the problem that autistic children face in our society. It is clear that childhood autism may have a significant impact on relationships within the family, such as partner relations, parent child relationships and sibling relations. Most of the mother had no knowledge of autism. Our country has little knowledge among

doctors about autism. After diagnosis, the majority of mothers reported feeling, sadness. The reaction of their husband and family members is also one of despair and sadness.

Socio Demographic information

Socio demographic information of the victim is most important. Their age level is 4–13. Most of the victims were under the 10. The number of male autistic children is 9 and the number of female autistic children is 3. Their ages were between 4-13. The maximum victim's family status was middle class. Among 6 families live in urban area another family live in rural area. Two victims' religion was Hindu. Their mother occupation was housewife. The entire mother educated. However, they have no involved job because they spend the majority of their time with their children. After the diagnosis of children, there have no knowledge of autism. They believe that this disease is from a foreign country. Parents have to come to town for better treatment of their children. A father quits his job for his child. They face the many problems for autistic children. But they adjusted this situation. Most of the guardian children were 2. Their one child had autism.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic and Economic Information of the Respondent

Age of respondent	Frequency	Percent
5	1	10
7	2	20
10	2	20
11	1	10
12	2	20
13	1	10
14	1	10
Total	10	100.0
Gender of respondent	Frequency	Percent
Male	8	80
Female	4	40
Total	10	100.0
Religion	Frequency	Percent
Islam	8	80
Hindu	2	20
Total	10	100.0
Residence	Frequency	Percent
Urban	4	40
Semi-urban	3	30
Rural	3	30
Total	10	100.0
Fathers' occupation	Frequency	Percent
Job holder	5	50
Businessman	3	30
Others	2	20
Total	10	100.0
Mothers' occupation	Frequency	Percent
Job holder	3	30
Housewife	6	60
Others	1	10
Total	10	100.0
Family type	Frequency	Percent
Nuclear	4	40
Joint	6	60

Total	10	100.0
Monthly income	Frequency	Percent
10000-30000 Taka	3	30
30000-60000 Taka	3	30
More than 60000 Taka	4	40
Total	10	100.0
Family status	Frequency	Percent
Low class	2	20
Middle class	6	60
High class	2	20
Total	10	100
Number of children	Frequency	Percent
1	2	30
2	4	40
3	1	10
4	3	30
Total	10	100.0
Diagnosis	Frequency	Percent
Aspergers Syndrome	6	60
Pervasive Development Disorder	4	40
Total	10	100.0

Nature of peer Victimization

Peer victimization refers to the experience of being targeted, mistreated or harmed by peers, such as classmates or friends and family member. It can take many different forms, including physical aggression (e.g., hitting, kicking), verbal aggression (e.g., name-calling, teasing, spreading rumors), social exclusion (e.g., deliberately leaving someone out of group activities), and cyberbullying (e.g., using technology to harass or intimidate) (Pfeffer, 2012). Peer victimization can have serious consequences for the individuals involved, including negative emotional outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, as well as behavioral problems such as aggression and substance abuse. It can also negatively impact academic performance and lead to school avoidance. Assaults and bullying were the most commonly reported types of victimization faced by Autistic children the study. Qualitative analysis reveals that incidences of assault and bullying ranged from moderate to severe forms. All the parents described many incidents.

Victimization of theft

Qualitative analysis showed that for the children in this study, stealing frequently happened as a result of peer manipulation that abused the obvious social impairments of autistic children. Many people are taking advantage of this opportunity to expose their children to numerous wrongdoings because good and evil are ignorant of everything. According to my respondent Swarna (Pseudonym) mother explained,

“When my child goes to play with normal children, those children ask him to bring money through various tricks. That's why my son takes whatever money he gets from his father and uncle without telling. Other friends make fun of his money”..... (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Peer relations very much impact their future. We know that, Paradise with the righteous, with the wicked with destruction. Another respondent Atif (Pseudonym) mother,

“Once in school, a boy informed my son he had no money. So, when my son got home from school, he put his own money in his backpack and brought it the next day to school without telling me. He presented the boy”..... (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Maltreatment

According to Pfeffer, (2016) ,In the past year, 60% of the study sample's participants had suffered maltreatment, while lifetime maltreatment had affected 80 of participants. Click or tap here to enter text. The most frequent kinds of assault reported in the past

year were physical abuse by a known adult and psychological or emotional abuse. A child is abused when they are mistreated by another person, whether they are adults or other kids. A child may be abused or neglected if someone causes harm to them or does nothing to stop it. The difficulties of raising a child become overpowering and can lead to abuse due to stress, exhaustion, poor parenting abilities, and a lack of family support. Isolation and lack of support, such as the absence of family members, friends, partners, or community assistance can lead to child abuse. Rifat (Pseudonym) Mother says that,

“When he tries to get along with the Children, they are insulting. They say crazy”(Narratives taken from Bengali)

Another parent said his son gets into various problems when he is not around. People make different criticisms about living. There are many times when one is subjected to physical abuse. According to Robin (Pseudonym) mother says that,

“One day, after going to the ground floor flat, my son pushed his neck out of the gate. Then he walked down the street. When I went down, the lady said your son has gone out. I always bring it from the road. A hand is found pressing on his neck.” (Narratives taken from Bengali)

According to Jui (Pseudonym) mother says that,

“Many older people ridiculed his mannerisms. Sometimes there are many parents who don't play with their kids. tells their children. Do not mix with them.” (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Sexual victimization

Studies have discovered that people with ASD have lower levels of sexual knowledge than comparison groups, whether the assessment is done by the person with the ASD themselves or by their parents (Meister et al. 1994;).In comparison to those without ASD, parents report that their children with ASD tend to know less about privacy issues relating to sexual conduct and receive less information about sexuality from their peers. For both those who have ASD and those who do not, healthy sexual development is a significant achievement. It has been observed that people with ASD display interest in sexual encounters and engage in sexual practices (Gilmour et al. 2012). Less of their sexual attraction was achieved by those with ASD had less perceived and actual knowledge and more sexual victimization than controls. They also had more sexual knowledge from non-social sources. Most of the data I took was less than 10 years old. So many parents say that they don't face any such problem. There is nothing like that in their eyes. Many parents say that their children are only taught as much as they need. Parents say they feel ashamed to teach about sex. They think that if they are given the idea of sex, they will engage in some sex-related crime. So, they did not teach the children about these things. According to Amit (Pseudonym) mother,

“My child does not have face this problem because he is children and is told as much as he needs to be.”(Narratives taken from Bengali)

Physical Victimization

Children with autism are at increased risk of physical victimization, which refers to any physical harm or violence directed toward the child. Physical victimization refers to any physical harm or violence directed toward a person, often with the intention of causing pain, injury or fear. Physical victimization can have long lasting effects on the physical and emotional health of the victim, including physical injuries, emotional trauma, and psychological distress. Physical victimization can take many forms, including:

Physical abuse

Children with autism may be more vulnerable to physical abuse by caregivers, family members, or others due to their communication difficulties and social isolation. They are subjected to physical abuse everywhere outside the house. They are more physically abused at home. They spend most of their time indoors. Parents are family members who physically abuse their autistic children for no reason when they get angry. It has become a common occurrence, when the mother does not listen to the victim of physical abuse. When the autistic child has to listen to his mother, he suffers the most abuse. The victims of these tortures are constantly increasing. They spend less time outside so the rate of physical abuse is higher at home. Some mother self-harm. They think that beating my child is of no use. Because he doesn't understand anything. The number of such mothers is very less.

Physical Assault

Physical assault is never acceptable, regardless of the circumstances. This is especially true when it comes to vulnerable populations like children with autism, who may have difficulty communicating or understanding social cues. It is important to remember that these children deserve the same respect and protection as any other child. Physical assault is a form of violence that involves the use of physical force to harm or injure another person. It can take many different forms, including:

Hitting or punching

Physical violence, such as hitting or punching is never an acceptable way to solve problems or express emotions. It can result in serious injuries, both physical and emotional, and can have long-lasting effects on both the victim and the perpetrator. This involves using fists, hands or feet to strike another person. According to Jui (Pseudonym) mother,

*“Autistic children are subjected to physical abuse. punches for no reason when out playing with his peers”.....
(Narratives taken from Bengali)*

Kicking

This involves using feet to strike another person. Kicking is a physical act of striking an object or person with the foot or leg. It can be done intentionally or accidentally, and can be used for a variety of purposes such as self-defense, sport, or as a form of aggression. Amit (Pseudonym) mother explained,

“Kicking or not, when he has a fight with his younger brother at home, they always hit him like this”. (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Choking

This involves using pressure on the neck or throat to restrict breathing. Symptoms of choking can include coughing, gagging, wheezing, and difficulty breathing. In severe cases, the person may become unconscious. Every mother explained,

“None of them complained about choking, all the parents said that they did not know if their children ever faced such problems.” (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Slapping

This involves using an open hand to strike another person's face. Slapping is a physical act of hitting someone or something with an open hand. It can be considered a form of physical violence or abuse if it is done in a harmful or non-consensual manner. Akash (Pseudonym) mother said,

“It is most common for autistic children to suffer from such problems. Familiar strangers are more or less victimized by almost everyone.” (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Pushing or shoving

This involves using physical force to move or knock another person down. Swarna (Pseudonym) mother explained,

“If it is taken to an event, other children suddenly throw it away. If she goes somewhere first, everyone else pushes him and sends him back. Deprived of the same privileges as other normal children.” (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Physical abuse

This involves using fingers or teeth to cause pain or injury. This refers to using one's teeth to grip, tear, or otherwise inflict pain or damage on something, often another person or animal. This can be intentional (as in biting in self-defense or as a form of aggression) or accidental (as in biting down too hard while eating). Rakib (Pseudonym) mother said,

“Everyone, young and old, makes fun of them. Every ritual reproduces and satirizes its rituals. Most of these problems are faced while leaving the house.” (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Using a weapon

This involves using an object such as a knife or a gun to threaten or harm another person. Every mother explained most of the same. Every mother narrated,

“All mothers say the same, the baby is small, so there is no such problem. But I can't imagine how bad his condition will be when we are no longer there. Now we are alive, but he is still being physically abused by people around him.” (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Use of force

When he goes to play with ordinary children, he is also subjected to physical abuse from them. Punches are the most common forms of violence that come from those on the playground. Autistic children do not want to protest. They come back as victims of physical abuse. At home, they are subjected to all kinds of abuse by family members. Whatever happens when he is alone No one dares say anything in front of the family members. Shahin (Pseudonym) Mother share her experience,

“Autistic children also fight in school. When my child took another child's pen during class, that child made my child bleed with the pen. The level of physical violence among them is very high. Normal kids quit with punching. Autistic children are very cruel to physical abuse by them.” (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Domestic violence

Any form of violence or abuse within a domestic relationship, including physical violence, sexual violence, emotional abuse and economic abuse. When parents have more than one child, different types of coercion arise between them. Fighting over

toys. Parents always fear that their other child will take over the autistic child by force. Autistic children are subjected to various forms of coercion in the home. According to Robin (Pseudonym) mother,

“One day my child went to another house and the woman of that house pushed him by the neck and threw him out on the street. When my son goes to look for the house, the lady says that he has gone out of the house. I bring my child from the street. Later, I saw the pressure of the hand on his neck. But my son could not tell how this happened. This is why he does not allow her to go anywhere alone. If found alone, he is a victim of physical abuse.” (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Psychological victimization

Bullying and social isolation may be a risk for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Parents reported higher levels of psychological victimization face their children. Autistic children may experience a range of psychological problems, including anxiety, depression, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). These conditions can have significant impacts on the child's quality of life and ability to function in their daily activities. Anxiety is a common psychological problem in autistic children, and may be related to social communication difficulties, sensory sensitivities, and difficulties with change and unpredictability. Autistic children may also experience depression, which can manifest as a persistent feeling of sadness or low mood, a loss of interest in activities, and changes in appetite and sleep patterns. ADHD is another common psychological problem in autistic children, characterized by symptoms such as hyperactivity, impulsivity, and difficulty focusing on tasks. OCD, which involves intrusive thoughts and repetitive behaviors, may also be more common in autistic children than in neuron typical children. Most parents complain that no one accepts their children easily in our society. Calling them crazy, harassing them in various ways. This man imitates what he does. People think something is bad if they swallow it on any occasion. Many children do various harms when they don't get something to their liking. They have to pay what they want. If you take him out for a walk, he should pay what he likes. He does not want to come easily from that place if he is not given what he likes. Then, they started crying. If someone says something to them, they cry. They cannot easily distinguish between good and bad. He does what he likes. Some parents are of the opinion that their children are small, so there is no psychological problem. Neighboring people love their children very much. The number of children in those families is very small. According to Jui (pseudonym) mother,

“When my child goes somewhere to play, no one stays. Even though my son has all the toys, he sends them home with bad words. Wherever he goes people criticize his behavior. Even they say crazy and throws him out of the place.” (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Psychological victimization refers to intentional or unintentional harm or injury to a person's psychological well-being. Here are some types of psychological victimization:

Verbal abuse

This type of victimization involves the use of words to hurt or intimidate someone, such as name calling, yelling or belittling. Rakib (Pseudonym) mother said,

“When my child goes somewhere, he is called crazy, mocked by different names. Physically, his activities are satirical.” (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Bullying

Bullying is a repeated aggressive behavior that is intended to harm, threaten or control another person. This can include verbal or emotional bullying. Most of them are being bullied. The number of autistic children is increasing day by day. This requires his parents to be the rockers of many forms of bullying. Every now and then they are bullied. They are also being bullied by their own people. One brother is bullying another brother in different ways. If you go somewhere, there is bullying. Ritu (pseudonyms) mother explained,

“When a child is bullied because of his physical problem, he does not want to mix easily with anyone. He prefers to stay at home. He started breaking various things while sitting at home” (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Emotional abuse involves behaviors that are designed to manipulate, control or degrade a person's emotional well-being. This may include threats, intimidation or isolation. Arif (Pseudonym) mother said that,

“When my child goes somewhere, there is a lot to listen to. People laugh a lot about living. When it is taken to various events, people say that it should not be brought to any other event. Can't get along with anyone easily. Everyone stays far away and runs away.” (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Discrimination

Discrimination involves treating someone unfairly or differently based on their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion or other protected characteristics. This can cause psychological harm and distress. The Respondent poly (Pseudonym) mother said,

“When he goes out to play, no one is easily accommodated. Even if taken to a good school, the teachers and guardians there humiliated them and kicked them out. Wherever you are taken, you are discriminated against. Due to this problem, I am not able to give any tuition at home. There are no good schools nearby. There is discrimination from all sides”(Narratives taken from Bengali)

Causes of victimization

There are several factors that may contribute to why children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are at a higher risk for victimization. These can include:

Age

Victimization can occur at any age from childhood to old age. The causes of victimization can vary depending on the age group. No one can easily understand their problems when they are children. So, everyone thinks they are normal children. As long as no one knows about his physical problems. At a child's age, he is more with his parents. As much as infatuation works at a child's age, it does not work as much as it does as the child age grows up. As the age increases, the victimization increases. He does not want to stay in the house. He has more movement with people. In each case, he faces different problems. He is constantly being subjected to various threats. With age comes his responsibility towards himself. Then you have to go to different places alone. Everyone gets to know about his problem. That's why he has to be subjected to various physical and mental tortures from everyone. Rifat (pseudonyms) mother explained that,

“The prevalence of victimization increases with increasing age. No one can easily understand his physical problems when he is young. After growing up, people understand the problems, so they learn about different types of physical and mental abuse” (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Family Status

Family status can have an impact on autistic children both positively and negatively. Having a supportive and understanding family can provide a strong foundation for a child with autism to gain and reach their full potential. However, family stressors such as financial difficulties, marital conflict and parental mental health issues can create additional challenges for children with autism. Some of the ways in which family status can create problems for autistic children include. Shopna (pseudonyms) mother narrated that,

“Due to my bad financial condition, I cannot get proper treatment for my child. Wherever I go with my son, I have to listen to people's bad word and psychologically torture my family member. Sometimes different people torture us mentally, but we cannot protest because of their good social status.”(Narratives taken from Bengali)

Limited access to resources

Families who are struggling financially may have limited access to resources such as therapy, specialized education programs and support services for their child with autism. Rakib (Pseudonym) mother explained,

“I am not able to get good treatment for my child due to the poor financial condition of the family. There is no school for them in rural areas. That's why he has to go to the city school. The schools in the city have to bear a lot of expenses. We can't do anything for someone who lives off his income.”(Narratives taken from Bengali)

Lack of support

Family members who do not understand or accept the child's autism diagnosis may not provide the necessary support and accommodations needed for the child to thrive. Poly (pseudonym) mother said,

“People do not want to accept them easily. Wherever you go, you are discriminated against. They don't understand many things. In that case, there is no one who will explain. Instead, they are blamed.” (Narratives taken from Bengali)

High stress levels

Family stressors such as marital conflict, caregiver burnout and parental mental health issues can create a high-stress environment for the child with autism, which can exacerbate their symptoms and make it more difficult for them to cope. Rakib (Pseudonyms) mother said that,

"Sometimes a child's physical problems cause a lot of family trouble. For this, they have to be subjected to physical torture." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Social isolation

Families who do not have access to supportive social networks may have limited opportunities for their child with autism to interact with peers and participate in social activities, which can impact their social development and overall well-being. Swarna (pseudonyms) mother said,

"It is important for families of children with autism to seek out support and resources to help them navigate the challenges they may face. This can include support groups, therapy for both the child and family members, and education programs to help family members better understand and support their child's needs." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Living the Area

Victimization of autistic children can significantly influence the way of life for those people and their families that reside there. Victimization in autistic children can result in feelings of loneliness, anxiety, sadness and low self-esteem all of which might limit their capacity to fully participate into their community. The results of our research show that children with autism in rural areas are more likely to be victims of physical and mental abuse. Family members also have to listen to different words from neighbors. This is because the village area is better known. Especially children spend more time outside. Because of that, he is subjected to more abuse by his peers. On the other hand, children in urban areas hardly ever leave their homes. The people of one flat do not know the people of another flat. When the child goes out, he goes out with someone from the family. Children are more abused inside the home than outside. Jui (pseudonym) mother narratives that,

"In rural areas, people are familiar with each other. It is absolutely impossible to keep the child at home, so when he goes out, other children his age abuse him physically and mentally. There is no such problem in urban areas. When something goes inside the house or when a relative visits the house, he has to listen to different things." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Societal Cause

Children with ASD may have different interests or behaviors that make them stand out from their peers, which can lead to social isolation and exclusion. There are several social causes that can contribute to victimization of children with autism.

Lack of awareness and understanding

Many people may not have a good understanding of autism and its characteristics, which can lead to misunderstandings, stigma and discrimination. This can create a social environment that is less accepting of children with autism, and may make them more vulnerable to victimization. Ritu mother explained,

"When the mind does what it wants. Can't understand good and bad. That's why you have to be a victim of bullying." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Social isolation

Children with autism may struggle with social skills and have difficulty making friends, which can lead to social isolation. When children are isolated, they may be more vulnerable to bullying and victimization. Social isolation can be a common experience for autistic children who have been victimized by their peers. Bullying and harassment can lead to social withdrawal and avoidance, as the child may feel unsafe or uncomfortable in social situations. However, social isolation can also have negative effects on the child's mental health and well-being. It can exacerbate feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety, and can make it more difficult for the child to develop social skills and relationships. Shapla (pseudonym) mother said,

"If you go to a function, no one accepts you easily. Most of the time, they spend time alone. That's why they can't become mentally normal like other children." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Akash (pseudonym) mother explained,

"When he wants to go somewhere, my son can't go because people criticize him a lot. No one can get along with him easily. Because of this he is suffering a lot mentally." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Communication difficulties

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects communication, social interaction, and behavior. One of the core features of ASD is communication difficulties, which can manifest in various ways. Some individuals with ASD may have delayed language development or struggle with expressive language, which makes it difficult for them to convey their thoughts, feelings, and needs to others. They may also have difficulty understanding nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language, which can make it hard for them to interpret social situations accurately. Communication barriers can

arise when people from different cultures have different ways of communicating. This can include differences in language, body language, tone of voice, and other cultural norms. Children with autism may have difficulty expressing themselves verbally or understanding nonverbal cues, which can make it harder for them to communicate with others. This can lead to misunderstandings and conflict, which may increase the risk of victimization. Swarna (pseudonym) mother narratives that,

"He can't even say what he needs. He tries to communicate their problems with gestures. He is victimized through no fault of his own. No one easily accepts people for not being able to understand their feelings. He can't even tell if someone is physically torturing him. That's why many guilty people get acquitted because of it.".....

(Narratives taken from Bengali)

Robin (pseudonym) mother explain that,

He can't talk to anyone properly when he goes out of the house. Because of this, most of the time they have to be harassed. If you are in danger, there is no one to rescue you."..... (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Differences in behavior and interests

Children with autism may have unique interests or behaviors that may be different from those of their peers. This can make them stand out and potentially make them more vulnerable to teasing or bullying. It's important to remember that each child with autism is an individual with their own strengths and challenges. Some may have exceptional abilities in areas such as music, art, or math, while others may struggle with sensory sensitivities or communication difficulties. Rakib (pseudonym) mother stated,

"They get into trouble in various places due to their behavioral problems. Suddenly she started crying loudly on the road. Due to their limited interaction with people, strange desires are revealed. Sometimes they can't express their problems easily, so they end up in more trouble."..... (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Arif (Pseudonym) mother explained,

"It does whatever it feels like when it is taken somewhere. People are most annoyed by this. In any case, there is no ability to understand good and evil. Because of this, the people of the society are called crazy."..... (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Lack of support

Children with autism may not have access to the support they need to navigate social situations and defend themselves against victimization. This can include support from parents, teachers, and other professionals who can provide guidance and resources to help them develop social skills and cope with bullying. The lack of support for autistic children is a serious issue that needs to be addressed. Autistic children require specialized care and attention to help them thrive and reach their full potential, but unfortunately, many families struggle to find the resources they need. One of the biggest challenges for families of autistic children is accessing appropriate education and therapies. Many schools are not equipped to handle the needs of autistic children, and families may have to fight for individualized education plans and accommodations. Additionally, therapies such as speech and occupational therapy may be costly and difficult to access, especially for families without insurance or who live in rural areas. Another challenge is social isolation. Autistic children may struggle to make friends or engage in social activities, and parents may feel isolated and unsupported. This can have a negative impact on the mental health and well-being of both the child and their family. Arif (pseudonym) mother,

"No one can easily accept them except family members. Therefore, if strangers see them, they indicate bad health. There is no one around to support them. Wherever you go, different kinds of problems arise."..... (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Impact of victimization

Research suggests that autistic children are at a higher risk of being bullied than their non-autistic peers, with rates estimated to be as high as 63%. This bullying can take many forms, including physical, verbal, and social exclusion. Autistic children may also be at a higher risk of abuse, with some studies indicating that they are three times more likely to experience abuse than non-autistic children. The impact of victimization on autistic children can be severe and long-lasting. It can lead to anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, and low self-esteem. It can also exacerbate the symptoms of autism, including communication difficulties, sensory sensitivities, and repetitive behaviors. In some cases, victimization can even lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Individual

Victimization can have a significant impact on any child, including those with autism. Peer victimization can cause a range of emotional and psychological effects, such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and poor social adjustment. Peer victimization can also impact an individual's social life, leading to social isolation, difficulty making friends, and a lack of social skills. Peer victimization can also have long-term effects, including increased risk for mental health problems, substance abuse, and difficulties

with relationships and employment in adulthood. Some possible changes that may be observed in autistic children after victimization include:

Increased anxiety or fearfulness

Children with autism may become more anxious or fearful after experiencing victimization, particularly if the victimization involved physical violence or aggression. Swarna (pseudonym) mother explained,

"She gets anxious when someone bullies or physically abuses her. Does not speak properly to anyone. She sits in a corner of the room, upset." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Changes in behavior

Children with autism may exhibit changes in their behavior after victimization. It is possible for victimization to affect an individual's behavior, including those with autism. However, the specific ways in which victimization can impact an individual's behavior will depend on various factors, such as the severity of the victimization, the individual's age and developmental stage, and their individual coping mechanisms. Some individuals with autism may become more withdrawn or exhibit avoidant behaviors following victimization, while others may become more aggressive or display self-injurious behaviors. Additionally, some individuals may experience increased anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms. For example, they may become more withdrawn, avoidant, or aggressive. They may also exhibit new or worsened behavioral issues, such as self-injury or meltdowns. Akash (pseudonym) mother explained that,

"It smashes everything in front of it. He tries to harm his own body. Bleeding his body. Sometimes the ill treatment he gets backfires." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Changes in communication

Children with autism may struggle even more with communication after experiencing victimization. They may become more reluctant to speak, or they may struggle with expressing themselves effectively. Children with ASD may withdraw from social situations after experiencing peer victimization, as they may fear being bullied again. This can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, which can further impact their mental health. Children with ASD may be at higher risk for depression, and experiencing peer victimization can exacerbate these feelings. They may feel hopeless and helpless, and may struggle to find joy in activities they once enjoyed. Robin (pseudonym) mother narratives,

"Victimization is followed by silence. doesn't talk to anyone. He started crying at home. Just tell your mother about your complaints. Does not want to mix with anyone else. It's fine when I'm with him but can't take him anywhere when his father is there. When he goes somewhere with his father, he cries on the road. The reason for this is that his father physically abused me one day for not getting along with his father." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Difficulty trusting others

After being victimized, children with autism may have difficulty trusting others or forming new relationships. It is common for victims of trauma to experience difficulties trusting others. This can be due to the fear of being hurt or betrayed again, as well as feelings of vulnerability and a sense of loss of control. They may become more withdrawn or avoidant of social situations. Jui (pseudonym) mother said,

"She gets very scared when any kind of physical abuse happens in front of her. There are many types of quarrels in the family. When she sees them, she does not want to associate with anyone who is involved in such quarrels. Her father used to abuse her physically one day, but she doesn't talk to her. she is very scared now." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Bad sensory issues

Some children with autism may experience bad sensory issues. After victimization, particularly if the victimization involved loud noises, bright lights or other violent sensory stimuli. Arif (pseudonym) mother explained,

"When someone says something, he does not protest against it, instead, he harms himself. No issue can be seen with the bad sensor." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Remember, everyone's sensory issues are different, so it may take some time and experimentation to find the right strategies that work for you. But with time and effort, it is possible to manage and cope with sensory issues.

Family Create the problem

The exact causes of autism are not fully understood, but it is believed to be a complex combination of genetic and environmental factors. While the causes of autism are still being studied, the impact of autism on families can be significant. Some of the challenges that families of autistic children may face include:

Emotional stress

Raising a child with autism can be emotionally stressful for parents and siblings. Families may experience. Robin (pseudonym) mother narratives,

"When we go out somewhere, people are very annoyed to be held accountable. Why is the child like this? Is there any problem in your married life due to this problem? Relatives have said that when we go to their house, we should leave the child at home." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Financial burden

Raising a child with autism can be expensive, particularly if the child requires specialized therapies, medications, or educational programs. Families may struggle to afford these expenses, which can cause financial strain. Akash (pseudonym) mother narratives,

"Their treatment costs are very expensive. I can't get admission to a good school. Because of them, the schools are toward the city. Most of our income goes toward it. That's why our family's condition is getting worse day by day." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Social isolation

Families of autistic children may feel socially isolated, particularly if they live in areas where there are few resources or support groups for families of children with autism. Social isolation can exacerbate feelings of stress and anxiety. Bilal (pseudonym) mother narratives,

"I can't go to any event or outing because everyone tells me to leave it at home before giving the invitation. That's why he doesn't go anywhere. When he goes out of the house, people avoid him." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Increased caregiving demands

Raising a child with autism can be demanding, particularly if the child requires a high level of care or supervision. Parents may struggle to balance the demands of caregiving with work and other responsibilities. Jui (pseudonym) mother narratives,

"Apart from the treatment of the child, we also struggle to meet his other needs. I can't take it to a good school. As the number of autistic children increases, it becomes difficult to keep them under supervision." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

Stigma and discrimination

Unfortunately, there is still a lot of stigma and misinformation surrounding autism. Families of autistic children may face discrimination, prejudice, or insensitive comments from others. Shahin (pseudonym) father narratives,

"If I go anywhere, people avoid seeing my child. Many relatives broke up with us due to such problems of my child. My healthy children are not easily accepted by anyone." (Narratives taken from Bengali)

CONCLUSION

This research suggests that children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are at a higher risk of peer victimization compared to typically developing children. Peer victimization can have significant negative impacts on the social, emotional, and behavioral development of children with ASD, including increased anxiety and depression, decreased self-esteem, and social withdrawal. It is important for parents, educators, and clinicians to be aware of the risk factors for peer victimization in children with ASD and to implement strategies to prevent and address this issue. These strategies may include social skills training, peer mediation, and individualized support plans.

Autistics are suffering from various forms of neglect day by day. He is subjected to various forms of victimization by the people around him. Peer victimization of autistic children is that they are at a higher risk of being bullied and victimized by their peers compared to their typically developing peers. Different studies have found that children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) experience more peer victimization, including physical, verbal and relational aggression, as well as social exclusion. This increased risk of victimization may be due to a range of factors, such as difficulties in social communication and understanding social cues, repetitive behaviors that may be viewed as odd or unusual by peers, and a lack of social support and protective factors. The consequences of peer victimization for autistic children can be severe, including increased anxiety, depression and social withdrawal, as well as negative impacts on academic performance and long term psychosocial outcomes.

It is essential to raise awareness about the issue of peer victimization among autistic children and to implement effective interventions to prevent it. Parents, teachers, and peers can play a vital role in creating a supportive and inclusive environment for autistic children, where they feel accepted and valued. Educating peers about autism and encouraging positive social interactions can also help reduce victimization and promote social inclusion.

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