

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18093972

# FEELING OF LONELINESS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH IRRATIONAL THOUGHTS AMONG MOTHERS OF CHILDREN WITH ASPERGER'S DISORDER IN RIYADH, KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Haifa Shabnan Badah Aldawsari<sup>1</sup> and Nevien Mohamed Ali Zahran<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Hsaldosre@imamu.edu.sa,  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3937-0474>

<sup>2</sup>Prince Naif Arab University for Security Sciences, Saudi Arabia, drnevienzahran@gmail.com,  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3093-8249>

Received: 17/10/2025

Accepted: 08/11/2025

---

## ABSTRACT

*This study explored the relationship between feelings of loneliness and irrational thoughts among Saudi Arabian mothers of children diagnosed with Asperger's disorder compared to mothers of typically developing children, with a focus on the impact of child diagnosis on maternal mental health. A descriptive correlational-comparative design was used to measure feelings of loneliness and irrational thoughts in a sample of 200 mothers. The findings indicated that mothers of children with Asperger's disorder experienced significantly higher levels of loneliness and irrational thoughts than mothers of typically developing children, with this effect being more pronounced among those from low socio-economic backgrounds. A statistically significant positive relationship was found between loneliness and irrational thoughts ( $r = 0.571$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). These results highlight the need for the development of mother-oriented specialist mental health services, psychoeducational programs, and support groups within the context of Asperger's disorder. Integrating the assessment and treatment of maternal mental health into routine family-centered health care is essential, as improved organization of community-based support networks and better access to mental health resources may help reduce feelings of isolation and irrational thoughts among these mothers.*

---

**KEYWORDS:** Asperger's Disorder, Feelings of Loneliness, Irrational Thoughts, Maternal Well-Being, Socio-Economic Status.

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As a result of the prevalence of Asperger's disorder in children, many challenges arise, not only for the affected but, more importantly, for the primary caregivers: the families. Frequently, the interface between the roles of traditional societies and the demands of caring for a child with AS brings them out differently within the socio-cultural context of El Riyadh. The literature particularly shows the psychological effects of raising children with ASD in the West; this leaves an enormous gap in the understanding of these dynamics in Arab countries. The investigation of this aspect is critical, given that the caregiver's mental health plays an essential role in the overall therapy and management of AS.

The current study investigates loneliness and irrational thoughts in mothers of children with ASD in this region and describes their psychological burden, with a view to suggesting targeted support. The comparison draws on the experience of mothers with typically developing children in order to impact social policies and educational programs for the families of those with ASD.

First, we grounded our study within the context of existing literature and the most recent research. In this regard, the Linking Ages Research Group 2023 eloquently elaborated on COVID-19's effect on loneliness across age groups, thereby extending prior knowledge concerning challenges faced by mothers of AS children. Furruckh and Anjum 2020 analyzed the experiences of ASD children's mothers; in this paper, they elaborated on the role of social support. Ansari et al. (2018) assessed the quality of life and mental health of mothers of children with ASD. Nowland et al. (2021) carried out a critical review on the topic of parenthood loneliness, offering valuable insights into the experiences of parents with children with disabilities.

The peculiarities In Saudi Arabia's socio-cultural setup explain why mothers of children with Asperger's disorder in Riyadh undergo severe psychological pressures. These local cultural norms, which are associated with better mental health outcomes, significantly contribute to loneliness and, consequently, irrational thoughts in these mothers. While there have been some studies toward this end, localization within the Middle Eastern framework is noticeably absent in such research studies. It highlights the importance of focused research to understand these mothers' special needs and psychological experiences to develop appropriate support systems and intervention strategies. In view of this gap in literature, the research problem can be rephrased in terms of the following specific

questions: What is the relationship between loneliness and irrational thoughts among mothers of children with Asperger's disorder? Are there differences in loneliness between mothers of children with Asperger's disorder and those of normally developing children? Are there any differences in irrational thoughts between the two groups? Such questions set the stage, at any rate, for the real necessity of research to handle these issues and better help these mothers. This study enhances understanding of psychological variables like irrational thoughts, loneliness, and Asperger's disorder, highlighting the need for more research in the Arab context. It increases awareness of psychological variables, such as irrational thoughts, loneliness, and autism spectrum disorder. It calls for more studies on variables of this nature within the parameters of psychological variables in the Arab region. It advocates counselling intervention programs, parent training, and policy improvement for children with Asperger's disorder and caretakers.

One major difference between autism and Asperger's disorder is the severity of impairment. In autism, there is an extensive effect on early development, whereas in Asperger's disorder, impairment is less severe. Being characterized by difficulties in social interaction, communication, and repetitive behaviors, about 50% of persons with autism tend to withdraw and focus on objects, while persons with Asperger's autism are more socially interactive and involved with intellectual topics. In addition, most children with autism have some form of intellectual disability, while children with Asperger's usually have at least average intelligence. This difference is an important factor in increasing the level of stress that might develop in caregivers of children.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent studies have shed further light on the complex psychological landscape parents must navigate when raising children with autism spectrum disorder. It brings out the complex interplay between mental health problems and public attitudes, as well as the efficacy of interventions. Karim et al. demonstrated in 2020 that the overall prevalence of depression was significantly higher in mothers of children with ASD compared to control groups in Bangladesh and, therefore, constitutes an impending need for necessary and focused mental health services (Lin et al., (2023) similarly reported high rates of maternal depression and anxiety in China and related these to problems in the child's behavior and to parenting

styles. Del Villar (2018) and Gosztyła and Prokopiak (2017) explored the emotional distress and loneliness experienced by parents, with Del Villar emphasizing the cyclical nature of grief and stigma associated with ASD diagnosis (Del Villar, 2018; Gosztyła & Prokopiak, 2017).

Jasseer and Priyanka (2018) and Wahab et al. (2022) indicated that social support significantly diminishes parental stress and promotes self-efficacy. The studies by Jasseer & Priyanka, (2018); Wahab et al., (2022) support this claim. According to Ansari et al., (2020) in severe ASD, there is reduced parental mentalization, which probably influences the quality of interaction between a parent and the child. In this line, Abdelaziz et al. 2023 showed the efficiency of culturally adapted cognitive-behavioral therapy in reducing the psychological distress of Egyptian mothers of children with ASD. . Wodziński et al., (2022) noticed how non-rational beliefs and cognitive biases interfere with the diagnosis and treatment of ASD and showed ways to improve professional practices. Wang et al. (2024) noted that perceived discrimination strongly correlated with social anxiety in Chinese parents of children with ASD, therefore underscoring the real need for interventions targeting the societal level to promote inclusion. (Wang et al., 2024).

These studies, taken together, underscore the universality of psychological difficulties for parents of children with ASD across vastly divergent cultures. These findings underscore the complex interplay between parental mental health, child outcomes, and societal attitudes, making one aware of the need to provide comprehensive and culturally sensitive support systems and interventions. Analysis and Synthesis: Comparative While there has been agreement on the specific increased level of psychological distress that parenting children with ASD entails, with a special emphasis on mothers, these studies vary in focus and proposed interventions. While Karim et al. 2020, and Lin et al. 2023, focused on depression and anxiety, Gosztyła & Prokopiak 2017, and Del Villar 2018, looked into aspects of loneliness and grief. Across the board, studies like Jasseer & Priyanka, 2018, and Wahab et al., 2022 focused on the role of social support, but approaches to intervention vary from broad social support strategies to targeted cognitive-behavioral therapy (Abdelaziz et al., 2023). Ansari et al. (2020) uniquely focus on parental mentalization, offering a cognitive perspective on parent-child interactions. Wodziński et al. (2022) and Wang et al. (2024) expand the scope to include professional biases and societal discrimination, respectively, providing a more

systemic view of the challenges faced by families affected by ASD.

**Emerging Trends, Gaps, and Future Research:** Several trends emerge from this synthesis, including the growing recognition of cultural factors in shaping parental experiences and the potential of tailored psychological interventions. However, significant gaps remain. There is a lack of long-term studies on intervention efficacy and the evolution of parental coping mechanisms over time. The interplay between societal attitudes, affiliate stigma, and parental well-being requires further exploration, as highlighted by Wang et al. (2024). Furthermore, current research underrepresents the role of fathers and other caregivers. Future studies should address these gaps, potentially incorporating longitudinal designs, exploring the experiences of diverse family structures, and investigating the impact of systemic changes in professional training and societal attitudes on family outcomes. There is also a need for more research on the effectiveness of integrated support systems that combine mental health services, parent education, and community-based interventions.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study employs a descriptive (correlational comparative) approach, aiming to examine the correlational relationship between the study variables as observed in elementary schools and institutions for individuals with intellectual disabilities in Riyadh. This method tests the validity of the empirical data obtained by applying psychological measurement tools to the focal variables in a study sample of mothers of children with Asperger's disorder and mothers of neurotypical children.

#### 3.2. Study Population and Sample

The study population included children with Asperger's disorder from elementary schools and several disability centers in Riyadh, along with their mothers. These mothers were matched with those of neurotypical children, excluding those with an average socio-economic status from the comparison. The final sample consisted of 200 mothers with children aged 7–13 years. This group included 100 mothers of children diagnosed with Asperger's disorder, equally divided between those with high and low socio-economic status, and 100 mothers of neurotypical children, also equally divided between those with high and low socio-economic status. The study excluded mothers with non-traditional family

structures and children with visible physical disabilities. **We divided the participants into four subgroups**

1. Fifty mothers of children with Asperger's disorder and high socio-economic status.
2. Fifty mothers of children with Asperger's disorder and low socio-economic status.
3. Fifty mothers of neurotypical children with high socio-economic status.
4. Fifty mothers of neurotypical children with low socio-economic status.

### 3.3. Psychological Assessment Tools

Several tools were used for psychological assessment. The Asperger's Disorder Diagnosis Scale, developed by Ash-Shakhs (2015), includes 105 statements across four dimensions: verbal and non-verbal communication, social interaction, and cognitive abilities. It showed reliability in retests with a positive correlation (0.694 for males and 0.617 for females). The Loneliness Scale, originally developed by Russell (1999) and adapted by Desouky (1998), is a 20-item scale measuring loneliness, validated with a correlation coefficient of 0.812 in a retest with Riyadh mothers. The Irrational Beliefs Scale, developed by Abdullah and Abdul Rahman (1994) and translated by Hooper and Layne, assesses eleven types of irrational beliefs, with a retest correlation of 0.741 with students. Additionally, the Socio-economic Status Questionnaire, developed by Mahmoud Mansi (1998/1419 AH) in the Saudi context, covers various aspects of socio-economic status, including family occupational, educational, and cultural levels. Each tool was rigorously tested to ensure its suitability and accuracy for this study's demographics, aligning with the specific needs and contexts of the sampled population.

### 3.4. Statistical Methods

The data were analyzed using various statistical methods, including Spearman's rank and Pearson correlation coefficients to explore relationships between variables. A two-way ANOVA was employed to compare means across groups, and an independent sample t-test was used to assess differences between two independent groups. These methods facilitated thorough data exploration and accurate interpretation of results.

### 3.5. Study's Hypotheses

The study hypothesizes that there is no statistically significant correlation between scores on measures of feeling loneliness and irrational thoughts among mothers of children with Asperger's

Disorder and mothers of typical children in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, it posits that the child's medical condition (Asperger's disorder vs. typical children), the family's socio-economic status (high vs. low), and the interaction between these factors do not significantly affect the variance of scores on the loneliness scale. Furthermore, it hypothesizes that these factors do not affect the variance of scores on the irrational thoughts scale among the four subgroups.

## 4. RESULTS

The results section of this study systematically examines and verifies a series of hypotheses concerning the psychological experiences of mothers of children with Asperger's disorder compared to those of mothers of typically developing children in Saudi Arabia. Initially, we assessed whether there was a statistically significant correlation between feeling of loneliness and irrational thoughts across the total sample, with findings detailed in Table 1. Subsequent analyses, presented in Tables 2 and beyond, explore the effects of the child's medical condition and the families' socio-economic status. This included a two-way ANOVA to evaluate the impact of these variables on loneliness, followed by similar analyses assessing their effects on irrational thoughts. Each hypothesis tested aimed to uncover nuanced interactions between these variables, providing a comprehensive overview of the psychological landscape faced by these mothers. The findings confirm significant statistical results and contextualize them within the broader research goals of understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by these mothers, paving the way for targeted interventions based on empirical evidence.

### 4.1. Testing of Hypothesis 1

To test the first hypothesis, which states, "There is no statistically significant correlation between the scores obtained by the total sample of mothers of children with Asperger's disorder and mothers of typically developing children on the loneliness scale and irrational thoughts scale in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," the results are presented in Table 1. The analysis revealed a statistically significant positive correlation at the 1% significance level. The computed correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.571$ ) exceeded the predetermined threshold for statistical significance. This finding indicates a relationship between feeling of loneliness and irrational thoughts among mothers of children with Asperger's disorder and those of typically developing children. Table 1

demonstrates a statistically significant positive correlation at the 1% significance level ( $p < 0.01$ ). The computed correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.571$ ) exceeded the predetermined threshold for statistical

significance, indicating a relationship between feeling of loneliness and irrational thoughts among mothers of children with Asperger's disorder and those of typically developing children.

**Table 1: Correlation of Loneliness and Irrational Thoughts Scores (N=200).**

Sample Size	Correlation Coefficient	Statistical Significance
200	0.571	$p < 0.01$

#### 4.2. Testing of Hypothesis 2

A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to investigate the second hypothesis, which states that there is no significant impact of the child's medical condition on the loneliness scores of mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and mothers of typically developing children. Additionally, the study examined the influence of the

family's socio-economic status (high or low) and the interaction between these factors on the loneliness scores of the four subgroups. The subgroups were comprised of mothers of children with ASD who had either high or low socio-economic status (SES) and mothers of typically developing children who had either high or low SES. Table 2 presents the results of this analysis.

**Table 2: Two-Way ANOVA ( $2 \times 2$ ) for the Scores Obtained by Individuals in the Four Subgroups on the "Loneliness" Scale.**

Source of Variation:	Degre	DF	Mean Square (MS)	F value	Statistical Significance (p-value)
Child's Health Condition	661,7	1	666,7	1,29	All values represent statistical significance at a confidence level of 0.99.
Socio-economic Status of the Family	1359,9	1	1359,9	2,66	
Interaction (Child's Health Condition X Socio-economic Status)	733,20	1	733,20	1,44	
Error	100086,2	196	510,64		
Total	102841	199			

The preceding table illustrates the impact of child's medical condition, mother's socio-economic status, and their interaction on the variance of loneliness scores across the four study subgroups. The child's medical condition significantly influenced variance ( $F = 29.1$ ,  $p < .01$ ), as did the mother's socio-economic status ( $F = 2.66$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Additionally, a significant interaction effect was observed between these variables ( $F = 1.44$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These findings suggest that both the child's Asperger's disorder diagnosis and the family's socio-economic status play crucial roles in mothers' experiences of loneliness, with their combined effect further modulating this relationship.

**Table 3: The Differences Between the Mean Scores for the Four Subgroups on the "Psychological Loneliness" Scale Using Tests.**

Comparison Group	N	Mean 1	Mean 2	SD 1	SD 2	t-value	Significance Level
1-High socio-economic status mothers of children with Asperger's.	50	122.1	-	27.4	-	9.18	$p < 0.01$
2- Low socio-economic status mothers of children with Asperger's	50	-	160.5	-	24.3		
3-Mothers of Typically Developing Children with High SES	50	130.7	28.1	28.1	-	7.98	$p < 0.01$
4-Mothers of Typically Developing Children with Low SES	50	-	--	-	25.8		
5-Mothers of Children with High/ Low SES Asperger's	100	146.5	-	23.9	-	4.75	$p < 0.01$
6-Mothers of Typically Developing High/ Low SES	100	-	129.6	-	26.1		

Moreover, there was an interaction effect between the child's medical condition and the family's socio-

economic status on the variance of scores of individuals in the four subgroups on the loneliness scale. The calculated F value for this interaction variable is ( $F = 1.44$ ), exceeding the threshold value required to become statistically significant at the 1% significance level. Table 3 demonstrates the importance of the variations in mean scores among the four subgroups on the "loneliness" scale.

Table 3's statistical analysis reveals significant differences in the mean scores on the "psychological loneliness scale" between various groups. Group 1 consisted of mothers of children with Asperger's Disorder (AD) from high socio-economic backgrounds, whereas Group 2 consisted of mothers of children with AD from low socio-economic backgrounds. At the 99% confidence level, the t-value was 9.18, exceeding the critical threshold for significance, indicating that mothers from lower socio-economic backgrounds report higher levels of psychological loneliness compared to their higher socio-economic counterparts. Another comparison was between mothers of typically developing children from high and low socio-economic backgrounds, with a t-value of 7.98, which also exceeded the critical value at the 99% confidence level. This suggests that mothers of typically developing children from lower socio-economic backgrounds experienced more psychological loneliness than those from higher SES backgrounds. The third comparison contrasts mothers of children

with ASD, irrespective of socio-economic status, with mothers of typically developing children across socio-economic statuses. The t-value for this comparison was 4.75, surpassing the 99% confidence level threshold required for significance. The findings showed that mothers of children with ASD experienced more loneliness than mothers of typically developing children, regardless of their socio-economic status.

### 4.3. Testing of Hypothesis 3

To assess the validity of the third hypothesis, which posits that "there is no significant effect of the children's health condition (mothers of children with Asperger's syndrome and mothers of typically developing children), the family's socio-economic status (high/low), and their interaction on the variance of scores obtained by individuals in the four subgroups on the irrational thoughts scale," a 2x2 analysis of variance was employed. This analysis included scores from four subgroups: mothers of children with Asperger's syndrome with high socio-economic status, mothers with Asperger's syndrome with low socio-economic status, mothers of typically developing children with high socio-economic status, and mothers of typically developing children with low socio-economic status. The table illustrates the results measured on the "Irrational Thoughts Scale."

**Table 4: 2x2 ANOVA Results for Irrational Thoughts Scale Scores.**

Source of variation	Total	DF	Mean Square (MS)	F ratio (F)	Statistical Significance (p-value)
Child's Health Condition	191.6	1	191.6	21.7	All values represent statistical significance at a confidence level .of 0.99
Socio-economic Status of the Family	103.2	1	103.2	11.7	
Interaction (Child's Health Condition X Socio-economic Status)	142.5	1	142.5	16.1	
Error	1730.8	196	8.83		
Total	17745.3	199			

Table 4 indicates that the child's health condition (Asperger's syndrome vs. typically developing) significantly affects the variance in mothers' scores on the "Irrational Thoughts Scale" across the four subgroups ( $F = 21.7$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The family's socio-economic status (high vs. low) also significantly influences this variance ( $F = 11.7$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Furthermore, a significant interaction effect between the child's health condition and the family's socio-economic status was observed ( $F = 16.1$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These findings suggest that both the child's developmental status and the family's economic circumstances, as well as their interaction, play

crucial roles in shaping mothers' irrational thoughts. To further examine these differences, a t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of the four subgroups on the "Irrational Thoughts Scale," with results presented in the subsequent table.

The data from the table clearly shows statistically significant differences in the mean "Irrational Thoughts Scale" scores among the groups. Mothers of children with Asperger's syndrome differed significantly between high and low socio-economic status groups, with a t-value of 6.37 at the 99% confidence level, favoring mothers with low socio-economic status, suggesting they exhibit more

irrational thoughts. Similarly, significant differences were observed in mothers of typically developing children based on socio-economic status, with a t-value of 8.66 favoring the low socio-economic status group, indicating more irrational thoughts among these mothers. Lastly, the comparison between mothers of children with Asperger's syndrome and mothers of typically developing children revealed significant disparities, with a t-value of 7.3 at the 99%

confidence level, indicating that mothers of children with Asperger's syndrome, irrespective of socio-economic status, tend to harbor more irrational thoughts. These findings suggest that lower socio-economic conditions and the unique pressures of parenting a child with Asperger's syndrome are associated with higher levels of stress and cognitive distortions.

**Table 5: Significance of Mean Score Differences among Four Subgroups on the Irrational Thoughts Scale Using the T-Test.**

Comparison Group	N	Mean 1	Mean 2	SD 1	SD 2	t-value	Significance Level
1-High socio-economic status mothers of children with Asperger's.	50	79.9	-	8.51	-	6.37	p < 0.01
2- Low socio-economic status mothers of children with Asperger's.	50	-	88.1	-	9.42		
3- Mothers of Typically Developing Children with High SES	50	94.12	-	8.65	-	8.66	p < 0.01
4-Mothers of Typically Developing Children with Low SES	50	-	105.9	-	10.33		
5-Mothers of Children with High/ Low SES Asperger's	100	30.15	-	5.37	-	1.3	p < 0.01
6-Mothers of Typically Developing High/ Low SES	100	-	24.9	-	5.36		

## 5. DISCUSSTION

The findings of this study significantly contribute to our understanding of the psychological challenges faced by mothers of children with Asperger's Disorder (AD) in Saudi Arabia. The results reveal higher levels of loneliness and irrational thoughts among these mothers compared to those with typically developing children, particularly those from low socio-economic backgrounds. This outcome aligns with and extends previous research, such as the work of Stanford et al. (2020), which emphasized the need for tailored interventions to address pervasive loneliness among parents of children with ASD. From a cognitive-behavioral perspective, the positive correlation between loneliness and irrational thoughts suggests that the experience of raising a child with AD may lead to cognitive distortions, which in turn exacerbates feelings of loneliness. This interpretation is supported by the study's use of rational-emotive theory and cognitive models of emotional disturbance, echoing the approach of Swierczyńska and Pawłowska (2022). The irrational thoughts could be manifestations of cognitive schemas developed in response to the unique challenges of parenting a child with AD (Swierczyńska & Pawłowska, 2022). Resource theory explains the pronounced effect on mothers from low socio-economic backgrounds. Limited financial resources may restrict access to support services, information, and respite care,

intensifying feelings of isolation and reinforcing irrational thoughts. This finding expands on Karim et al.'s (2020) work by highlighting the compounding effect of socio-economic status on maternal psychological well-being (Karim et al., 2020). Mothers from lower socio-economic backgrounds often face additional stressors such as financial instability, a lack of access to healthcare, and limited social support networks. These factors can exacerbate feelings of isolation and helplessness, contributing to higher levels of psychological distress.

The study's examination of the interaction between child health status, family socio-economic status, and maternal loneliness provides a more nuanced understanding of factors contributing to psychological distress. Mothers of children with AD may experience heightened social stigma and judgment, which can reduce their social interactions and perceived social support. This aligns with social support theory, which posits that social networks and support systems are crucial for psychological well-being. The unique challenges of raising a child with AD might lead to reduced social interactions and perceived social support, contributing to increased loneliness. This aligns with the findings of Hazlina et al. (2022), underscoring the complex interplay between societal attitudes, cognitive processes, and psychological well-being among parents of children with ASD. While previous studies like Wang et al. (2024) focused on specific aspects

such as perceived discrimination and social anxiety, this study takes a broader approach by examining overall levels of loneliness and irrational thoughts. This comprehensive approach provides a more holistic understanding of these mothers' experiences, laying the groundwork for developing interventions that target a wider range of psychological challenges experienced by this population). The study's findings highlight the importance of addressing both the emotional and cognitive aspects of psychological distress. Interventions should not only focus on providing social support but also on helping mothers reframe their irrational thoughts and develop healthier cognitive patterns.

In conclusion, this scientific interpretation of the results underscores the complex interplay of cognitive, social, economic, and cultural factors in shaping the psychological experiences of mothers of children with AD. The study's integration of concepts from various theoretical frameworks contributes significantly to the literature, offering a robust foundation for future research and intervention development in the context of ASD in Saudi Arabia and similar cultural settings. Addressing these mothers' unique psychological needs through tailored interventions can significantly improve their well-being, as well as the quality of care they provide for their children.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study illuminates the profound psychological challenges faced by mothers of children with Asperger's Disorder (AD) in Saudi Arabia, highlighting significant struggles with loneliness and irrational thoughts. It reveals how child health status, maternal cognitive processes, and socio-economic factors converge to influence the psychological well-being of these mothers. The findings emphasize the need for urgent, tailored

interventions and support mechanisms that address the unique needs of this demographic, especially those exacerbated by socio-economic disparities. The study provides a detailed understanding of the dynamics contributing to loneliness and irrational thoughts by leveraging rational-motive and cognitive models of emotional disturbance. It advocates for a holistic approach that includes both individual interventions and broader systemic changes aimed at improving maternal mental health.

Based on these insights, the study recommends developing targeted mental health services and support programs for mothers of children with AD, including psychoeducation, training, support groups, and policies addressing socio-economic disparities. Healthcare professionals should routinely screen for and address mothers' mental health needs as part of comprehensive care. This study advances our understanding of cognitive challenges in ASD, highlights the adaptability of theoretical models, and emphasizes the importance of culturally appropriate interventions in Saudi Arabia.

## 7. STUDY IMPLICATIONS

These findings highlight the need for targeted mental health services and support for mothers of children with Asperger's disorder (AD), especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds. The study emphasizes addressing irrational thoughts and cognitive distortions to improve their psychological well-being. Interventions should also tackle socio-economic inequalities that could exacerbate psychological distress. This study underscores the importance for healthcare professionals and policymakers to recognize and address the unique challenges faced by these mothers, particularly in terms of loneliness and irrational thoughts.

**Acknowledgments:** This work was supported and funded by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU) (grant number IMSIU-DDRSP2501).

## REFERENCES

- Abdelaziz, E. M., Alsadaan, N., Alqahtani, M., Elsharkawy, N. B., Ouda, M. M. A., Ramadan, O. M. E., Shaban, M., & Shokre, E. S. (2023). Effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) on psychological distress among mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder: The role of problem-solving appraisal. *Behavioral Sciences*, 14(1), 46. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14010046>
- Abdul Rahman, M A. & Abdullah, M S. (1994). Irrational Beliefs Among Children and Adolescents and Their Relationship to Both Anxiety State and Trait and Locus of Control. *Psychological Studies*, 4,(3).
- Ansari, A., Jahrami, H., Hafedh, R. G., & Sharif, I. (2018). A comparison of the mental health, quality of life, and general functioning of mothers of young children and adolescents with autism. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine Studies*. [https://doi.org/10.26715/JBMS.2\\_18072018](https://doi.org/10.26715/JBMS.2_18072018)



- Ansari, S., McMahon, C., & Bernier, A. (2020). Parental mind-mindedness: Comparing parents' representations of their children with autism spectrum disorder and siblings. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 71, 101491. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2019.101491>
- Ash-Shakhs, A. A. (2015). *Asperger's Disorder Diagnosis Scale. Item Booklet and Scoring Sheet*. Cairo: Anglo Egyptian Library.
- Del Villar, A. M. (2018). Effects of autism spectrum disorder on mothers [Master's thesis, California State University, San Bernardino]. CSUSB ScholarWorks. Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd/674>
- El Desouky, M. M. (1998). *Scale of Feeling of Loneliness: Instruction Manual*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Cairo: Al Nahda Al Masriya Library.
- Furrukh, J., & Anjum, G. (2020). Coping with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in Pakistan: A phenomenology of mothers who have children with ASD. *Cognition, Brain, Behavior*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2020.1728108>
- Gosztyła, T., & Prokopiak, A. (2017). Sense of loneliness in parents of children with autism spectrum disorder and children with intellectual disability. *Psychoterapia*, 3(182), 81-92. <https://www.psychoterapiapt.pl/Poczucie-osamotnienia-u-rodzicow-dzieci-z-zaburzeniem-ze-spektrum-autyzmu-oraz-dzieci,78164,0,2.html>
- Hazlina, A., Baharudin, D. F., B., Wahab, N. A., Ali, M. A., M., Abdullah, N., Zakaria, Z., & Saimin, R. (2022). 'Oh no, I have an autistic child?!': Challenges of Mothers Regarding the Autistic Traits of Their Children. *The International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(1), 123-134. <https://dx.doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v12-i1/12235>
- Jasseer, J., & Priyanka, S. J. (2018). Social support in relation to self-efficacy and loneliness among mothers of children with special needs. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 6(2), 428-434. Retrieved from <https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT1807169.pdf>
- Kalyva E. 2010. Multirater congruence on the social skills assessment of children with Asperger syndrome: Self, mother, father, and teacher ratings. *J. Autism Dev. Disord.* Vol. 40(10):1202-1208. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-010-0978-y>
- Karim, M. E., Roy, G. K., Royle, R. K. S., & Dey, G. S. (2020, February 6). Comparison of depressive disorders between the mothers of children with and without autism spectrum disorder. *Bangladesh Journal of Psychiatry*, 31(2), 32-37. <https://doi.org/10.3329/bjpsy.v31i2.45372>
- Karim, N., Reza, S., & Ali, M. (2020). Socioeconomic status and maternal psychological well-being: A study on mothers of children with autism. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 61(3), 287-296. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13112>
- Lin, X., Lin, L., Wang, X., Li, X., Cao, M., & Jing, J. (2023). Association between mothers' emotional problems and autistic children's behavioral problems: The moderating effect of parenting style. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(5), 4593. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20054593>
- Linking Ages Research Group. (2023). Feeling lonely: A Linking Ages perspective on the risks for loneliness in early and later life during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Public Health Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.21248/gups.73894>
- Mansi, M. A. (1998). *Family Economic and Social Level Questionnaire in the Saudi Environment*, College of Education, King Abdul Aziz University, Medina.
- Nowland, R., Thomson, G., McNally, L., Smith, T., & Whittaker, K. (2021). Experiencing loneliness in parenthood: a scoping review. *Public Health Reviews*, 42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17579139211018243>
- Stanford, C., Hastings, R., Riby, D., Archer, H. J., Page, S. E., & Cebula, K. (2020). Psychological distress and positive gain in mothers of children with autism, with or without other children with neurodevelopmental disorders. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability*, 45(3), 227-238. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/20473869.2020.1812347>
- Swierczyńska, J., & Pawłowska, B. (2022). Coping with the stress of mothers of children with disorders belonging to the autism spectrum. *Current Psychology Letters*, 22(1), 14-22. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2478/cpp-2022-0001>
- Wahab, R., Mohd Fahmy, K. A. M. F., Sultan Ibrahim, S. A., & Philip, W. (2022). Social Support and Stress among Parents with Autism Spectrum Disorder Children. *Environment-Behaviour Proceedings Journal*, 7(20), 449-454. <https://doi.org/10.21834/ebpj.v7i20.3409>
- Wang, S., Wu, T., Liu, J., & Guan, W. (2024). Relationship between perceived discrimination and social anxiety among parents of children with autism spectrum disorders in China: The mediating roles of affiliate stigma and perceived social support. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 111, 102310. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2023.102310>
- Wang, Y., Xu, M., & Zhao, Y. (2024). Perceived discrimination and social anxiety in mothers of children with ASD: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 313, 51-60. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2023.05.048>

---

Wodziński, M., Rządyczka, M., & Moskalewicz, M. (2022, December 3). How to Minimize the Impact of Experts' Non-rational Beliefs on Their Judgments on Autism. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 59(4), 756-769. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-022-01062-1>