

Parental Interaction in Siblings with Communication Disorder: A Case Study

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Abstract

The present case study emphasizes the significance of parental interactions in siblings with communication disorders. It underscores the importance of parental involvement in the lives of children diagnosed with communication disorders and how it impacts the quality of life for both parents and children. The study involves a 3.8-year-old Male and 1.9-year-old female siblings were diagnosed with moderate autism spectrum disorder and developmental language disorders respectively. The parent-child and sibling interactions were assessed using the parent-child interactions scale by Brigance III which revealed insufficient parental stimulation. A questionnaire regarding the parent's perception of communication difficulties and their quality of life was administered. This study concluded that the children's language disorders were attributed to inadequate parental interaction, highlighting the vital role of parent-child interaction in early language development.

Keywords: Parent child interaction, Language disorder, parents' quality of life.

Introduction:

Parent-child interaction is crucial for language acquisition. Children communicate their interests through gaze, object exploration, gestures, and vocalizations; parents respond to these gestures with words and actions. This responsiveness helps infants learn words for the objects and activities around them. (Benassi et al., 2018). Parental behaviours during interactions with the child appear as a determining factor for the early development of language (Golinkoff et al., 2019). Parents who have children with disabilities are often reported to have physical and psychological distress which affects their quality of life (Leung & Li-Tsang 2003). A variety of psychosocial factors have been shown to affect the quality of life of families with a child suffering from autism spectrum disorders (Vasilopoulou and Nisbet 2016). This case study focuses on parent-child interaction and quality of life in a parent with two children with communication disorders.

Case Report

Older Child: A 3.8-year-old male child with severe autism spectrum disorder, in whom the language evaluation was carried out using the Communication DEALL Developmental Checklist, which revealed

severe language impairment. To detect the comorbid condition Childhood Autism Rating Scale was administered. The child got a score of 31 which indicates mild to moderate symptoms of autism spectrum disorder. A questionnaire about communication difficulties perceived by parents was administered. All 24 questions were scored as Completely agree. This depicts that the parent has severe levels of difficulties in communicating with the child in day-to-day life.

Younger child: A 1.9-year-old female child with developmental language disorder, Rosetti Infant Toddler Language Scale was used to analyse the language skills, the language comprehension basal age was 3-6 months and the Ceiling age was 12-15 months; the language expression basal age was 3-6 months and the Ceiling age was 9-12 months, which concluded severe language delay. The modified checklist for autism in toddlers resulted there is no risk for autism.

Parent-Child Interaction

The video recordings capturing parent-child interactions (PCI) involving the first child, who has been diagnosed with autism, and the second child, who has been diagnosed with developmental language disorder, were separately collected for analysis. Parent-Child Interactions Scale – by Infant and toddler (Briance III) was used to analyse the sample of the PCI with First child; A Score of 5 was obtained which reveals, that the parent needs training to improve the interaction skills. This scale also suggests whether the parent would benefit from the additional nurturing and child-rearing skills based on the observation of the few specified circumstances. During the observation, the parental interaction was found to be inadequate in terms of proximity, vocal inflection, reinforcement and register, stimulation level, and reduced interaction with the child. The PCI with the second child revealed a score of 6, indicating inadequacy and suggesting a need for parent training that emphasizes knowledge of child development and nurturing skills. During the investigation, the mother mentioned that her focus was primarily directed to the first child leading to decreased interaction with the second child. This may impact the second child's development and relationship with the mother.

Quality of life of parent

To address the parental concerns and the quality of life, a questionnaire was administered through the interview method. A questionnaire about communication difficulties perceived by parents of children with ASD was administered to the mother of the first child. Four domains, Parents' and caregivers' concerns about the child; Parents' perception about other people's acceptance of their child; Parents' attitudes regarding the child; Parents' impression about their child. Communication and social abilities were focused on each domain. The responses revealed that parent has a severe level of difficulties in communicating with their child in day-to-day life. Perceived stress scale (PSS) by Sheldon Cohen was used to measure the stress level of the parent. PSS contains 10 questions, the parent answered all the negative questions as very often, and all the positive questions as never or rarely. This revealed a severe level of stress for the mother.

Sibling Interaction

A sibling interaction video sample of 10 minutes was collected. The consent form was obtained from the parents. Based on the observation, no interaction was observed between the siblings. The elder child was not cooperative and started to show tantrums. While the younger was playing with the bubbles and rattle. Solitary Play was observed. Inadequate interaction between the children was observed. The parent also

reported that they don't allow the children to stay together, as the other child might learn the negative behaviors.

Discussion

The communicative interactions that take place between the newborns and caregivers lay the foundation for the child's ability to function as an effective communicator in a social setting. In this study, it is clear that the parent spent less time interacting with the younger child, as the mother's attention was completely devoted to the rehabilitation of the older child. The contribution of the parent-child interaction on children's early language development is also supported by intervention studies, which teach parents of children with language impairments, behaviors and strategies to improve the children's language. A representative example of these interventions is proposed by Moore et al. (2014) for parents and their toddlers aged between 22 and 36 months.

The level of parental stress is related to the level of severity and disability of the children's diagnoses and to coexisting behavioral problems. The mother's severe stress and poor quality of life significantly influenced her interaction with the children. The challenges faced by the parents are more during the developmental period. Ginieri-Coccosis et al. in 2013 concluded that parents often experience significant practical problems with daily care activities and financial difficulties, resulting in poorer quality of life. The Quality of life is likely to change across life, as the age of the child increases with the two children with communication disorders. Reed and Osborne in 2023 suggest that various factors affect parental well-being, including impaired mental and physical health, social isolation, and lack of family cohesion.

When a family has two children with a communication disorder, it significantly impacts parent-child interaction. This results in reduced stimulation levels, increased concern, limited interaction, and the development of negative behaviors. Additionally, siblings with communication disorders play similar roles and functions, exerting a considerable influence on a child's social and communicative development.

Conclusion

Thus, the parent-child Interaction is one of the most influential, important, and meaningful relationships in an individual's life for an early development of language. When working with siblings who have communication disorders, speech-language pathologists must emphasize the importance of fostering high-quality interactions between the siblings and their parents. Research has shown that by promoting positive sibling interactions, we can observe a significant improvement in the child's language development. Clinician should also suggest goals and activities for each child to parent on considering the ease of performing activities to both the children at the same time to facilitate their interaction.

Counselling to be facilitated on importance of parental interactions and sibling interactions and their impact on rehabilitating the children. The clinician should work with the parents to establish specific, achievable goals and activities for each child. It's important to consider activities that can be easily performed with both children simultaneously to encourage interaction between them. Multidisciplinary intervention should include psychoeducational and supportive programmes for parents, designed to improve the emotional well-being of children with ASD and their parents and to reinforce the family's quality of life.

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