TRANSITION TO SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER FROM THEIR PARENTS PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

Transition to school is a new experience for children and their families as well as a challenge that involves several socioemotional and behavioural areas. It is not a one-off activity but a long-term process. Autism is a specific disorder accompanied by particular patterns of behaviour, affecting the quality of communication, social interactions, or inclusion. Research undertaken on children with ASD transition to school refer to a greater risk of poor school outcomes including emotional and behavioural problems that may result in peer rejection or school exclusion. School transition of children with autism requires the creation of specific conditions with structured environment as well as structured time schedule and activities. Parents play a key role in the transition process.



CATEGORIES

PARENTAL STRESS

Parents lack serious and reliable information as well as guidelines concerning the suitable school with regard to their child's needs. They mostly search for the information on their own and often feel insecure and unsure whether their choice is the right one. Most parents experienced <u>a higher level of</u> **anxiety and concerns** in the transition period comparing to a previous time. Mothers reported that it had been **<u>not possible</u>** to return back to work, because they were required to come to school if needed. Transition process was such a stressful situation that it had **impact on partnership and family atmosphere**. The choice of school is considerably limited by the **school's accessibility** - not only in terms of physical but also in terms of technical equipment and professional competencies of staff in mainstream schools. Most of parents had to visit several schools to find one. Likewise, some of them states that they were confronted with the child's rejection at school. While parents would prefer local schools close to their home, in some cases they have to drive their child to school in neighbouring town, even longer distance. Parents also reported stigma at school.

Slovak context – the key factors:

- □ Weak support structure
- □ Lack of Learning Support Assistants
- □ Insufficient training and preparation of teachers of mainstream schools to work with children with disability
- Engagement of parents in the process of transition is equally important as involvement of specialists.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study was to explore the parents' experience with process of their child with ASD transition to school

RESEARCH METODOLOGHY

This study utilized the qualitative method of interviewing for collecting data. Parents were asked to described their experiences during transitions as well as share their sources of help. The transcripts of interviews were subjected to content analysis. In the first step, the entire text was subjected to sequential analysis and primary coding. The discussion texts were then further analysed by creating categories, which in the third step were matched with relationships to obtain a conceptual representation of the data pertaining to the parenting experience.

PARENTAL STRESS

Lack of systemic Problems Solution **Higher level of Anxiety and** Concerns **School Accessibility Stigma at School**

FACTORS PROMOTING

FACTORS PROMOTING **TRANSITION TO SCHOOL**

Positive attitude of school management towards inclusion - The school headmaster's willingness to accept the child was a key factor in decision making process. Schools run by headmasters with positive attitude towards inclusion, quite naturally influence the entire staff as well as whole cooperation. These schools are then open to cooperate with counselling centres and kindergartens that children attended. **Competence and preparedness of teachers and learning** support assistants - Another important factor that parents consider necessary for a successful transition are the teachers and learning support assistants themselves, who have experience and are professionally prepared (trainings) to work with children with disabilities. They have a major impact on how the children adapt to the environment and how will they be received by the peers due to their direct and daily contact with the children. Accepting school environment - All parents appreciate the building of an open peer - relationship between children with autism and their classmates. Parents indicated characteristics that are important for **teamwork**:

RESEARCH SAMPLE

The research sample consisted of 17 parents of children with ASD. The participants were chosen by an intentional sampling.

Participant	Gender	The Age of the Child	The Age at which the Child was Diagnosed	Typ of School	Attempt of Inclusion
1	Girl	10	Autism at 5y	Elementary School – Special Elementary School	*1
2	Воу	8	Autism at 4y ADHD	Elementary School – Special Class in Elementary School	*
3	Воу	10	Autism бу Epilepsy	Elementary School – Elementary School for Children with Autism	*
4	Воу	7	Autism 4y ADHD	Kindergarten + assistant / Elementary School	
5	Воу	9	Autism 4y Learning Disorders	Special Kindergarten / Elementary School	
6	Воу	9	Autism 3y	Elementary School – Special Elementary School	*
7	Воу	10	Autism 4y	Kindergarten / Elementary School + Learning Support Assistants	
8	Воу	7	Autism 4,5y	Special Kindergarten / Elementary School	
9	Girl	7	Autism 5y	Kindergarten – Elementary School + Learning Support Assistants	
10	Воу	11	Autism 5y	Elementary School – Special Elementary School	*
11	Воу	8	Autism 4y	Kindergarten + assistant / Elementary School + Learning Support Assistants	
12	Girl	7	Autism 6y ADHD	Special kindergarten / Elementary School + Learning Support Assistants	
13	Воу	7	Autism 3y ADHD	Elementary School	
14	Воу	6	Autism 4y Epilepsy	Special kindergarten / Elementary School	
15	Воу	8	Autism 7y	Elementary School	
16	Воу	6	Autism 5y	Elementary School + Learning Support Assistants	
17	Girl	7	Autism 4y	MŠ špeciálna / Elementary School + Learning Support Assistants	

*pokus o inklúziu – dieťa bolo najskôr prijaté do bežnej materskej školy/ školy ale neskôr muselo byť preložené do špeciálnej školy/ triedy/ školy pre deti s AU.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

Positive Attitude of School Management towards Inclusion Competences and Preparedness of Teachers and Learning Support Assistants

Accepting School Environment

Teamwork



□ The shared goals and agreed methods to fulfil the goals □ Regular and detailed communication with stakeholders □ Stable team

The multidisciplinary team, which remained unchanged throughout the process, or with only minor changes in members, strengthened the success of the transition process. U Well-organized transition planning

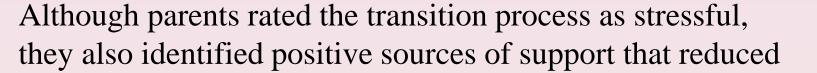
Comprehensive and individualised transition plan specifically tailored to suit child's needs. It should begin far before child is entering the educational process.

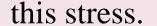
CONCLUSION

The research showed that the process of transition of a child with autism into the school environment is directly influenced by causal conditions (sources of support) and intervening conditions (parental survival). The success of the transit process is a consequence of the sources of support, parental survival and planning, influenced by the experienced stressful situations of parents and children with autism throughout the transition process. The deliberate interventions of a multidisciplinary team and the timely planning of the transition together create a coherent system of services that can minimize the stress of the child and the parent resulting from the change.

AFILIATION









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supporting the process of transition of children with disabilities into the education

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