

School Adjustment of Children with Autism in Regular Early Childhood Schools: Perspectives of Nigerian Teachers

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Abstract: The early inclusion of children with autism into the regular school has become prevalent in recent times. Evidence suggests that transiting from the home to a new school environment poses adjustment difficulties for these children especially as they manifest impairment in communication, social and emotional functioning. A qualitative approach was adopted to gather data on strategies teachers employ as well as teacher characteristics that facilitate the adjustment of the children with autism in regular schools. Data were collected using an in-depth interview on 28 teachers who teach early childhood classes. The results were analyzed and three broad themes were identified. The findings indicated the importance of active and positive teacher pupil interaction in ensuring school adjustment of autistic children. Major educational implications of this finding, include the need for teachers and care givers to be flexible, creative and patient with the child.

Key words: Autism, school adjustment, inclusion, early childhood, teachers

INTRODUCTION

Autism has been described as a pervasive neurobiological disorder that affects three major areas of human development such as communication, social interaction and behaviour. Traditionally, autism was used to describe children who demonstrate deficits in social development, verbal and non-verbal communication and a range of repetitive behaviours (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Clancy *et al.* (2001) observe that children with autism may experience difficulty in school adjustment especially when the personal skills, attitudes and knowledge they come to school with contradict the expectations of the school. Studies by Bauminger and Kasari (2000) indicate that children with high functioning autism manifest greater loneliness than their normal peer. This usually results in serious academic, social and psychological consequences (Cowen *et al.*, 1979).

In recent years, there has been a great drive for early inclusion of children with autism into regular classrooms (Kavale and Forness, 2000; Hollingworth and Buysse, 2009). Proponents of early inclusion believe that it provides autistic children with rich educational experiences and opportunities to interact with normal peers to improve social relationships. Kirk *et al.* (2003) posit that early intervention is crucial for children with autism as it provides them with quality physical and emotional care as well as lifelong skills that will enable them to cope later in life. However, despite the importance

of early inclusion, transiting from the home to the school poses some adjustment challenges to the child (Clancy *et al.*, 2001; Margetts, 2005). Sansosti and Smith (2010) observed that when children with autism find themselves in novel environments, they easily get upset and exhibit tantrums, aggression and some other inappropriate behaviour.

Characteristics of children with autism in preschool years: Autism is characterized by deficits in understanding, social skills; limited communication; restricted interests and repetitive behaviours (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Preschool children with autism find it difficult to initiate, engage in and maintain reciprocal peer social relationships with other children and when they do, the relationship is casual (Church *et al.*, 2000). They avoid social engagement with peers; get engrossed in their own world and watch others. Most times, they seem to be oblivious of other people around them and get fully absorbed in their own activities. Their actions are sometimes misunderstood and/or misinterpreted by others and this frequently results in greater risk of peer rejection and loneliness. They commit what Sansosti and Smith (2010) refers to as social errors due to their inability to engage in social intercourse.

Autistic children engage in repetitive activities and cannot sustain attention on relevant stimuli. They concentrate on familiar activities over a long period and resist attempt to change. Their rigidity and perseverance

to obsessive behaviour make them experience social isolation (Verri *et al.*, 2000). These challenging behaviours interfere with academic instructions, inhibit social interactions and pose greater adjustment difficulties in the regular classrooms (Sigafos *et al.*, 2003). Hardman *et al.* (2002) note that there is a significant difference in the way children with autism learn and the way their normal peers do. Children with autism resist change in the sequence of learning activities and find it difficult to apply learnt skill to a new area (Watanbe *et al.*, 1999). However, some children with autism demonstrate qualities which teachers can exploit in improving learning. Some of them have relatively strong specific long term memory skills for factual information such as names and numbers.

Children with autism experience difficulty in understanding the perspective of others. This implies that they find it difficult to understand the feelings and thinking of other people and are hypersensitive to stimuli such as noise and touch (Kirk *et al.*, 2003). Evidence shows that children with autism engage in behaviours which are aggressive or impulsive and these invariably affect peer relationships (Kaminsky and Dewey, 2002). Problems relating to peer interaction persist into some internalized problems like loneliness, depression, anxiety, physical ill-health and these contribute to maladjustment in school (McDougall *et al.*, 2001).

Cultural beliefs about autism in Nigeria: Among the Igbos of Nigeria, autism is seen as a disorder caused by factors which are ascribed to circumstances surrounding the child and family. In a family with history of autism genetic factors could be implicated as responsible for the condition. For them, it runs in the family and the only solution is to consult and pacify the ancestors. In the Nigerian traditional setting, belief in the supernatural is so strong that every event in the life of the people is linked to it. For some, autism may have resulted from the wrong doing of the parents whom the gods are not happy with and the solution usually involves ritual sacrifice to appease the gods (Jegatheesan *et al.*, 2010).

It is also believed that autism could be caused by an ancestral spirit called "Agwu" which was commonly worshipped before the advent of Christianity. A priest was usually attached to the "Agwu" to offer sacrifices on behalf of the family. The belief is that at death of the priest, the spirit that inhabits the "Agwu" chooses one of the children of the priest to continue the worship and sustain the ancestral link. The chosen accepts the responsibility or face the consequence which could be manifestations of autism. With the spread of Christianity, many families have abandoned ancestral worship and any evidence of autism especially among the less educated

ones is traced to the ancestral spirits that are angry because of neglect. Such families often resort to Christian priests/pastors for deliverance from the ancestral spirit.

School adjustment of children with autism: The school is an important social agent that plays a critical role in the overall development of the child. It influences the academic, emotional and social life of the child. In school, children engage in academic work and complex set of social interaction through which they learn social skills, control their emotions and feelings. The children learn to be attentive, perform their assignments, be punctual, respect others and obey school rules and regulations. Thus, when children find themselves in a new school they have to learn to adjust to new environment, new teachers, peers, school programmes, rules and regulations, time table and other activities. Ladd (1990) sees school adjustment as the degree to which a child becomes interested, engaged, comfortable and successful in the school environment. A well adjusted child in school will love well, play well, socialize well and relate well (Garmezy, 1973).

Fabian (2000) and Margetts (2002) identified social and academic competence, problem solving skills and behaviour control as prerequisite for adjustment. Unfortunately, children with autism lack these social, emotional and academic competencies. These place them at risk of isolation and rejection by peers in school. Chamberlain *et al.* (2007) attempted improving the social relationship among children with autism in typical classrooms using social network and their findings indicate that despite the use of social networks, children with autism still experienced low acceptance and companionship among peers. The isolation and rejection by peers at times result in aggression or depression (Whitaker *et al.*, 1998). In spite of the problem behaviours exhibited by children with autism, they sometimes actively seek friendship with their peers (Bauminger *et al.*, 2003; Matson *et al.*, 2008).

Studies show that achieving inclusive education requires significant restructuring of the school as well as provision of adequate support by the teacher so that the child with autism will be prepared for proper adjustment in school and the wider society. Barnard *et al.* (2000) posit that the child with autism may not 'survive' in school if s/he does not adjust early and move up the academic ladder. There is need in Nigeria to identify appropriate intervention to help them achieve adequate psychosocial and academic adjustment early in life so that it does not affect their later development.

Classroom interventions for children with autism: Early interventions for children with autism are crucial for their adjustment in regular school. Koegel *et al.* (2012) noted that there is no singular intervention strategy that would be effective for all children with autism. Available research suggests that to manage the challenging behaviours of children with autism, there is need to understand the environmental conditions that prompt the behaviour and how to modify the environment to reduce undesirable behaviour (Machalick *et al.*, 2007).

Appropriate management of behaviours of children with autism demands the application of positive behavioural interventions. This must begin with a functional behaviour assessment. Functional behaviour assessment requires a systematic development of a behaviour plan which would be implemented to achieve an appropriate behaviour. Functional behaviour assessment enables the teacher to identify a behaviour that needs to be changed, what causes the behaviour, what sustains it and an alternative behaviour the child can learn. With these one can develop an intervention plan for changing the undesirable behaviour (Matson and Minshawi, 2007; Matson and Schwalm, 2007). Another intervention strategy is the applied behaviour analysis that has shown to be effective. It is used in teaching new skills and generalizing behaviour to new environments and situations (Myers and Johnson, 2007). Applied behaviour analysis uses careful observation and positive reinforcements to teach each step of behaviour.

Other interventions used to decrease problem behaviours include changing schedules, modifying curriculum, rearranging the school setting and changing social groupings (Koegel *et al.*, 2003). Behavioural self management techniques have been shown to be effective in working with children with autism (Kirk *et al.*, 2003; Myers and Johnson, 2007). Self-management can be taught to students with autism to enable them regulate their behaviour. Often, self-management involves a combination of goal setting, self instruction, self-monitoring, self-evaluation and self-reinforcement (Snell and Brown, 2014). Some other intervention strategies used in increasing appropriate social skills include priming, script fading, peer mediated interventions and organising social activities. The use of games and other activities that will attract the interest of the children with autism has been recommended (Boutot, 2009; Koegel and Koegel, 2006).

In spite of the various intervention strategies, the classroom teachers are the primary intervention agents (Fisher and Meyer, 2002). They play a critical role in the success of inclusive education as they provide the psychological and social opportunities for children with

autism to adjust properly. They have influence on children's peer interactions in the classroom depending on their beliefs and general attitude/disposition towards the children. Their reactions and interaction patterns towards children with autism could influence the way other children react and relate with them. Shapiro (2011) suggests that teachers could work cooperatively with the autistic child's peers to create and maintain a friendly environment that is natural and relaxed. The teachers can work out a reasonable standard of behaviour, reflect a gentle sense of humour and involve all children in activities (Koegel *et al.*, 2012).

Despite evidence indicating that teachers play crucial roles in early education of children with autism, limited studies have focussed on ways they can promote their school adjustment in inclusive setting. Many researches have not focused on the school adjustment difficulties faced by these children in inclusive schools and how the regular teachers could promote positive relationship in the classroom. There is need also of literature on teacher characteristics that can enhance school adjustment of children with autism. Many studies especially in the Western world focused on the influence of peers and parents on the psychosocial adjustment of adolescents without developmental disabilities (Von Der Lippe, 2000; Von Der Lippe and Moller, 2000). Other studies emphasised the psychosocial adjustments of siblings of children with autism (Kaminsky and Dewey, 2002). There seems to be dearth of literature in Nigeria on teachers' perspective on the psychosocial adjustment problems of children with autism, the strategies for promoting their school adjustments and the teacher characteristic that enhances their school adjustment. Exploring this in Nigeria is necessary as the teachers' socio-cultural background experience could influence their perception of children with autism. Rogers-Adkinson, Ochoa and Delgado and Ravindran and Myers noted that the way individuals perceive, treat, care and manage children with disabilities vary across culture, their thinking or belief about children with autism definitely influence the way they relate with them. This study explores teachers' perception of the nature of autism, the teacher characteristics and strategies for enhancing school adjustment of children with autism in early childhood classes. The study was guided by three research questions:

- What are the psychosocial adjustment problems of children with autism in inclusive early childhood classroom
- What strategies do teachers employ to promote the psychosocial adjustment of children with autism
- What teacher characteristics are necessary for promoting school adjustment of children with autism

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design the study adopted a qualitative research design. Qualitative design enables researchers obtain a holistic impression of the behaviour in question (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). It can be used to obtain a comprehensive picture of what goes on in classroom. The approach was adopted to obtain relevant information from teachers regarding the adjustment challenges children with autism face.

Participants: The participants were purposively composed. Teachers who teach children confirmed to manifest symptoms of autism were used. Twenty eight teachers were identified in five schools in South East, Nigeria. Five teachers (one male and four females) were trained in early childhood education and 23 (seven males and sixteen females) were certified teachers but not specifically trained to teach at the preschool classes. The teachers had taught children with autism for a minimum of 5 years. The age of the participants range from 27-51 year (mean = 39.6, SD = 3.42). Seven teachers had participated in in-service training on how to handle children with special needs. Fifteen teachers possess the national certificate in education, the minimum qualification for teaching in Nigeria, 10 teachers possess bachelors degree in education. The experiences of the teachers range from 5-10 year (n = 8), 11-20 years (n = 13), 21 years and above (n = 7). Prior to this, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the head teachers and the teachers' consents were obtained before the study commenced.

Data collection: In-depth interview schedule guided the researchers in conducting interviews with the teachers in their various classes. The questions focussed on the school adjustment problems and needs of children with autism, strategies in promoting school adjustment and teacher characteristics that promote their school adjustments. Probing questions were raised when necessary to obtain clarifying information. A list of sample interview questions is provided on Appendix 1. Each interview session lasted between 45 minutes and 1 h 10 min. The interviews were judiciously recorded and transcribed. In transcribing the data, the researchers listened to the tapes several times to put down the exact words. The transcribed information was read over and codes were developed to identify common responses by the interviewees. Three important themes emerged and these are: school adjustment problems and needs of children with autism, teacher practices adopted to promote school adjustment of the children, and teacher characteristic for promoting school adjustment of autistic children.

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented based on the identified themes.

School adjustment problems and needs of children with autism in inclusive early childhood classrooms: The broad theme on school adjustment problems and needs of children with autism is discussed under two sub-themes. The first sub-theme focuses on the school adjustment problems of children with autism. The second sub-theme focuses on their school adjustment needs.

Teachers responses indicate that children with autism react differently to new school environment. Twelve teachers (43%) observed that they manifest such problems as: screaming, shouting and running around endlessly, inattention to relevant stimuli, incessant crying, and hyperactive behaviours. Nine teachers (32%) reported that they lack concentration and attention and may move around from one activity to another. Six teachers (21%) noted that some are withdrawn, isolated and do not cooperate with other children. The participants agreed that these children are unlikely to trust the teacher and other children initially. A teacher observed that "due to their peculiar problems, the children can go off, have tantrums, attack the teacher and destroy things. An unobservant teacher may not understand why." Three of the teachers with in-service training on handling children with special needs noted that only a trained and observant teacher can see these symptoms as manifestations of autism, the uninformed persons commonly ascribe it to the influence of supernatural forces.

School adjustment needs of children with autism: There are differences in the opinions of teachers on the school adjustment needs of children with autism. The teachers with trained in early childhood education (n = 5) and those with in-service training in special education (n = 4) agreed that children with autism in need close supervision, guidance and monitoring. A teacher reported that without proper monitoring and supervision, the child may not do their assignments or carry out instructions or respect the learning space of other children. The teachers must understand the basis of their behaviour and take actions that will help them adjust to the demands of the classrooms.

However, some teachers stressed that the children are possessed by evil spirits and need deliverance from such spirits. According to them, they should be taken to powerful men of God for spiritual deliverance. A particular teacher said I accept such children in the class because I

am compelled by school regulation; and for me to cope in the class, I usually resort to prayers. I believe that unless such children are delivered from the strong hand of the evil spirits, no teacher can help them.

Promoting school adjustment of children with autism:

Three broad themes emerged under this section. They include: practices for promoting school learning, social interaction and developing active teacher-pupil interaction. Practices for promoting school learning: A moderate proportion (13, 46%) of the participants reported that they promote school learning of the children by creating conducive and age appropriate classroom environment. The sitting arrangement in the classroom is critical if children with autism will learn. The teacher needs to put the child in the right sitting position. Ten of the teachers (36%) emphasized the need to sit a child where the teacher can watch him/her closely in order not to disrupt the class. If the child is a loner he/she should be made to sit in the middle of the class. If the child is hyperactive he/she can sit in a corner in the class and a care giver assigned to him/her. This helps reduce disruption and distractions in the class. A child with severe autism has to be placed in a classroom with manageable number of pupils so the teacher can control the child and the environment.

The seven teachers with in-service training on handling children with special needs emphasised the need for a structured environment and programme. Children with autism need their daily activities in a structured manner showing specific time for specific activity. Any alteration in their routine gets them upset, confused and may cause them to throw tantrums or react aggressively. It is sometimes challenging to get the children to change routines. Eighteen teachers (64%) suggested that activities should not be changed abruptly, instead they should be informed in advance of the next task to prepare their mind that a change is about to take place. Giving incentives in form of reward to motivate them will enhance a smooth transition from one activity to another. The reward could be in form of token or a tick on their performance chart or allowing them to play computer games. A small proportion of the participants (5, 18%) suggested that parents should seek spiritual solutions for solution to the spiritual forces that create confusion in the lives of autistic children.

Six highly experienced teachers suggested curriculum modification and differentiation of instruction in content, process, product and the learning environment to meet their individual learning and adjustment needs. They observed that teachers must teach at the level of the children. When, they experience success they will be motivated to participate in class activities.

The participants agreed that the head-teacher or designated teacher must regularly monitor and supervise classrooms to ensure that the right environment is maintained and children's specific needs met in the classroom. Through such supervision, they help where there is problem. The supervisors also ensure that the curriculum is appropriately modified to accommodate their differences.

Some teachers emphasised that a trained care giver should be in every class to support the teachers in handling these children. These trained caregivers can foresee and help forestall disruptive behaviour in the class. The seven teachers who had in-service training (25%) highlighted the use of behaviour shaping in managing behaviour of children with autism. However, they use time-out technique as a last resort when the children become aggressive. They noted that they do not apply self regulatory strategies at the early childhood classes in shaping behaviour. The other teachers (n = 21 representing 75%) admitted that they lack the skills in applying the strategies. They believe that for children to apply them they need to be taught by the teachers and the teachers can only teach what they know. They stressed that handling these children is very difficult and teachers require special training. According to them, only few of the teachers are trained to manage children with autism. The teachers exposed to early childhood education had their training focused on normal children and not children with special needs in regular schools. Some teachers are at a loss in handling them and some others are influenced by the superstitious beliefs from their socio-cultural environment.

Practices in promoting social interaction: The respondents shared the view that promoting social adjustment of children with autism in the regular classroom requires creating opportunities for these children and their normal peer to play, interact and socialize together. The common practices in schools is to provide opportunities for the children to play games and sports together, dance, play computer games, watch children's play on video or television and do other interesting activities together. They noted that children with autism may stand aside initially but after a while join others actively. However, eight teachers (29%) reported that some parents frown when children with autism play with their children in the belief that when they do that their children may become possessed. Some parents believe that such children are witches and advise their children to avoid them at school. Even, when the teachers wish to encourage the children to play together, those children usually withdraw in obedience to their parents.

The attitude of the teachers who themselves cling to the superstitious believe further compound the problems of children with autism.

Practices in promoting active teacher-pupil interaction:

Twelve (43%) of the participants stressed the importance of warm and positive teacher-pupil interaction in and out of the classroom. They encourage children with autism to develop active and positive interaction with normal pupils and engage them in group play. A teacher noted, 'there is always a temptation to ignore, neglect and forget children with autism in the class especially when they are loners and are withdrawn'. Some teachers reported that they normally help them come out of their shell by involving them in class activities, asking them questions and being patient with them. They emphasized that teachers play critical role in ensuring harmonious relationship among the children and others in the classroom. The teacher ensures that they are not rejected by other children who may avoid or tease them. The participants believed teachers should explain to their normal peers that these children are just as they are though with little difference. They should explain the nature of the problems usually experienced by the children and encourage other children in the class to accept and accommodate them. Children learn and imitate their teachers. When the children see their teachers accept the children with autism they will equally accept them.

Teacher characteristics for promoting school adjustment of children with autism:

School adjustment of children with autism has been observed to depend a lot on teachers. Fifteen (54%) of the participants agreed that for children with autism to cope in school, the teacher must be caring, patient and sensitive to their needs and should not be easily frustrated by their behaviours. The teacher must understand these children and accept them as those with right to learn in the classroom. The teachers should be flexible and creative.

Nine (32%) of the participants emphasised teachers' attitude as very important in the school adjustment of children with autism. Teachers should not segregate, discriminate or isolate such children in the classroom but should show love while dealing with individual peculiarities. Some of the interviewees observed that to achieve these, awareness should be created among teachers and parents on the causes and behavioural manifestations of autism as well as sensitisation on the professional roles of the teachers.

DISCUSSION

Data collected showed the school adjustment problems and needs of children with autism in early

childhood classrooms, strategies teachers adopt and teacher characteristics that enhance school adjustments.

School adjustment problems and needs of children with autism:

The results showed that children with autism experience school adjustment difficulties especially in the first few months after enrolment into the regular early childhood classroom. This is attributed to the new school environment that is fundamentally different from the home. Children with autism do not cope easily in a new environment and may react in different ways. They express this through such bizarre behaviour as shouting, screaming, excessive crying, hyperactivity or throwing tantrums. They sometimes go off and attack even their teachers and peers. On the other hand, the children could be withdrawn without communicating with anybody. They may show lack of attention, concentration and unwillingness to cooperate with other children. These findings agree with earlier studies which indicate that when children with autism find themselves in novel environments, they easily get upset and exhibit tantrums, aggression and other inappropriate behaviours (Clancy *et al.*, 2001; Margetts, 2005; Sansosti and Smith, 2010). The results are consistent with existing literature which show that children with autism are characterized by deficits in social skills and could sometimes engage in behaviour that could put them at risk of rejection by peers (Chamberlain *et al.*, 2007).

In addition, some teachers averred that children with autism require guidance and supervision and teachers with patience and understanding. The psychosocial adjustment problems of children with autism are usually compounded by negative attitude of some teachers with superstitious belief that children with autism are possessed by certain diabolic spiritual forces. This belief is common in Nigeria and has adversely affected the proper integration of children with autism in the regular classrooms.

Practices for promoting school adjustment of children with autism:

Teachers reported various strategies they apply to assist children with autism achieve proper school adjustment. Teachers keep observing and monitoring children suspected to manifest signs of autism for further assessment and confirmation. Through observation, they identify the things that upset children to enable the school create an appropriate environment that is safe. An environment that supports and encourages peer interaction is most appropriate. The teachers elicit the cooperation of the parents to find out the children's likes and dislikes. They also ascertain from them what they have been doing with the children. This information

provides data that would form the baseline data for the school. This supports the assertion of Koegel *et al.*, (2003) that school-parent collaboration is essential for the control of targeted behaviour and ensuring early school adjustment.

The strategies teachers adopt that are in line with literature include the provision of appropriate environment or modification of class environment (Machalicek *et al.*, 2007); use of positive reinforcements to increase desired behaviour (Cooper *et al.*, 2007). Many teachers believed that when a child exhibits self-injurious behaviours or behaviour that could put the safety of other children at risk, there is need to make special provision for the child. Such a child could be placed under the close supervision of a teacher or caregiver. A teachers noted, 'the safety of all children is important and all children must be protected'. It has to be noted that not all teachers adopt these research based approaches. There are teachers influenced by the socio-cultural belief about autism. These teachers approach children with autism with suspicion, fearing that they are possessed by evil spirits thereby compounding their adjustment problems.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that teachers who are trained in early childhood education understand more the nature, problems and professional competencies required to handle children with autism in the regular classrooms. Teachers with teacher professional development background and well experienced in handling children with autism showed clearer understanding of research based strategies for coping with autistic children. However, a high proportion of the teachers lack clear awareness of the causes of autism and attribute it to the influence of spiritual forces which can only be handled through spiritual deliverance. This belief influences the negative attitude towards children with autism.

IMPLIATIONS

Implications for educational practice: The implications for the education of children with autism in the regular classroom are presented as follows:

There is need to develop a training programme specially designed for all teachers in the regular early childhood classrooms. This is necessary to ensure that all teachers are fully aware of the causes and manifestations of autism and the professional help needed by classroom teachers to promote psych-social adjustment. This will assist in early identification of autism Teachers should

sensitize parents and community members on the nature and causes of autism to disabuse their minds on the erroneous belief that autism is caused by certain unexplainable spiritual forces. This may help to elicit the cooperation of parents and community members. There should be advocacy visits to relevant government agencies on the need for the provision of adequate infrastructure and facilities required for teacher and learner friendly environment. This will facilitate teachers' efficiency in carrying out her professional responsibilities.

APPENDIX

Sample interview questions:

- What are some of the psychosocial/school adjustment problems children with autism exhibit? Probe for information in areas like: school assignment, punctuality, cooperation, self control, attention in the class, avoidance of others, empathy
- What are the psychosocial/ school adjustment needs of children with autism in inclusive classrooms
- What are the specific behaviours that pose serious challenge to the inclusion of children with autism in the regular classrooms
- How would you deal with rejection, isolation and teasing of the children with autism
- How do you prepare children with autism for a change in their environment and routines
- How do you provide opportunities for children with autism to play and socialize with other children
- What other things do you do to encourage the child to socialize with others while in class or at play
- For those of them that are very inward what do you do to make them begin to communicate with others
- In your own opinion what are the most effective methods to deal with behavioural problems autistic children sometimes display
- How do you ensure that children with autism conform to rules and the demands of classroom routine
- How do peers react to children with autism?
- Do you teach children without autism to help those with autism? Probe for how often they do this?, Demand for an instance
- What strategies do peers adopt in coping with children with autistic in the regular classroom
- What are the things you think could be done either by the teacher, school, peers or parents to improve the psychosocial/school adjustments of children with autism

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