



# Findings of Experience Working with Children with Communication Disorders



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Submission: November 18, 2021; Published: December 06, 2021

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**Keywords:** Communication disorders; Autism Spectrum Disorder; Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder; Intellectual Disability; Prevalence rate; Incidence rate

## Opinion

The article reflects the results of working with children having communication disorders, raises awareness about probable risk factors possibly contributing to communication difficulties and suggests ways to help parents in need of right guidance by rehabilitation professionals.

## Relevance

Communication disorder is any disorder that affects an individual's ability to understand, express and / or apply language and speech to effectively communicate with others. The prevalence rate of children with communication disorders is alarming. There are various causes of communication disorders each contributing in different proportion to communication disorders. Development of language is dependent on various factors like development of pre linguistic skills, sensory development of children, genetic predisposition, language stimulation at home, to name a few. Communication disorders affect various domains of a child's development. Social, emotional, academic, and behavioural domain development is closely associated with communication development. Childhood Language disorders like Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Language Delay, Intellectual Disability etc a few of these disorders. The current study focuses on children with ASD. It is important to mention that the rate of incidence of autism has been found to be increasing. In the U.S this increase in incidence rate is 10-17% per year. In India, the prevalence rate is approx. 1 in 500 or 0.20% and the incidence rate is approx. 1 in 90,666 or 11,914 people. Despite various explanations, the real reasons for this increase in the incidence rate need to be researched. The case

history gives picture of red flags and helps clinician understand various predisposing factors in the case. Moreover, well defined red flags or environmental conditions could also help in early identification of at-risk population. Case history of 57 children in the age range of 3.2 years to 5.6 years who were seen in last 5 years were analysed for common factors among those cases. The purpose of the current study is to present a constellation of risk factors for the growing number of children with communication disorders. Results: All children were diagnosed by team of professionals like SLP, Occupation Therapist and pediatrician using interview with parents, informal assessment tools, observation method. Few children were already diagnosed with ASD and the diagnosed was reconfirmed by the team of professionals. The degree of severity of symptoms varied from mild to severe. The case history sheets were analysed for the presence of the below mentioned conditions. After careful analysis of all the case history sheets, following conditions were found to be common.

i. Single Child: out of 57 children, 43 of them were found to be the only child of their parents.

ii. Educated parents and digital exposure of the parents – Out of 57 mothers, 32 mothers had post-graduation as their highest qualification. In 21 cases, mothers were found to be working. In 9 cases, mothers were reported to be preparing for higher studies / competitive exams. When the data about the number of hours spent by parents on mobile, the results were shocking as 52 mothers out of 57 reported to be having screen time between 4-5 hours per day for various purposes like for studying, entertainment or work.

iii. Nuclear Family – This factor was found to be consistently present in the case history sheets of 39 families.

iv. Digital exposure – This factor is one the most important factors. All the studied children had digital exposure in the range of 3-10 hours a day. The most shocking finding was that young children in the age group of 3.2 years – 3.11 years were found to be exposed to digital media that includes mobile, television, laptop etc for more than 6 hours a day. The digital exposure was found to be present even during feeding time.

### Conclusion

There are many probable causes for ASD. With increase in incidence rate of ASD, it becomes very important to analyse the possible factors for this increase as it will not only help in early identification of the at-risk population but also determine the Dos and Don'ts in this condition. The four conditions were found to be present in the studied cases. All these conditions when present in a family could more likely indicate towards probability of communication disorder. This knowledge will help guide expectant mothers regarding the same.



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DOI: [10.19080/GJIDD.2021.09.555762](https://doi.org/10.19080/GJIDD.2021.09.555762)

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