

Abstract

Autism Spectrum Disorder in children is an emerging issue in Africa, specifically in Kenya. Most recently the nature, severity and incidence of the condition are being highlighted given the paucity of awareness, training and educational opportunities for such children. NGOs, CBOs and Government authorities are struggling with the psycho-social implications of supporting learners. The study will be carried out to investigate Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study will be guided by the need to: establish diagnostic criteria used to identify children with autism spectrum disorder; classify children with ASD based on behavioural characteristics; establish parents' perception of the diagnosis of children with ASD; Investigate teachers' preparedness to educate children with ASD; and establish the management programs offered to children with ASD. The present study will be guided by theory of Social-cultural learning forwarded by Vygotsky. The study will use the descriptive survey. The study target population will be comprised of 200 registered members of Unleashing Potential in Autism (UPIA, Mombasa County, Kenya), primary specially trained teachers (58), 30 registered occupational therapists' members of the Kenya Association of Occupational Therapist (KOTA, Mombasa County), 6 Educational Assessment and Research Centres (EARC) personnel and 120 pupils with ASD. Multi-stage sampling will be used to select the sample. Purposive sample will be used to select teachers, EARC personnel and occupational therapists, systematic random sampling will be used to select parents, simple random sampling to select children with ASD to be observed while stratified random sampling will be used to select special units. Data will be collected using questionnaires, interviews and observation guide. Questionnaires will be designed for teachers and parents whereas semi-structured interviews will be used for EARC personnel and Occupational Therapists, Observation guide will be designed to examine the behaviours of children with ASD. The tools will be piloted in special schools and KOTA in Kilifi County, Kenya to determine their reliability. Content validity will be determined by experts in the field of special needs. Data collected will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Data will be presented in graphs and tables. The qualitative data will be analyzed and categorized based on thematic content. The significance of the outcomes will directly affect public awareness, parental support, sibling support, family dynamics and the interdisciplinary approach to establishing a broad range of protocols to ensure appropriate professional planning and implantation for children on the Autism spectrum.