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Parent perspectives on home participation of high-functioning children with ASD compared with a matched group of children without ASD

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Introduction: Few studies have focused on home participation of high-functioning children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Objectives: We explored and compared parent perspectives on (1) participation of children with and without ASD in activities at home; (2) the environmental features and resources that affect these children's home participation; and (3) the strategies parents use to help their children participate at home.

Method: This was a mixed-methods design. The Participation and Environment Measure for Children and Youth (PEM-CY) was used to gather online survey and qualitative data from parents of 99 high-functioning children with ASD and 241 children without ASD. Independent sample t-tests and chi-square tests were used to explore differences between groups and Cohen's d was calculated to examine effect sizes. Qualitative data were grouped and organized by characteristics.

Results: Differences were obtained on all PEM-CY dimensions but particularly when comparing parents' satisfaction and perceived environmental barriers to their children's participation. The qualitative analyses revealed that parents in both groups used similar strategies to facilitate their children's participation at home, although parents of children with ASD made use of more distinct modifications.

Conclusion: Our results suggest that attention should be directed more to features of the environment, especially to the availability of resources and to the specific demands distinct activities pose to the child with ASD. It is also important to identify and use environmental supports that can potentially modify existing barriers. The focus should be on the daily lives and situation of each family raising their child with ASD.