

## ABSTRACT

The incidence of Autism Spectrum Disorder is rising in prevalence worldwide which has propelled leaders to develop a strategic plan to care for children and families affected by Autism in all nations. Despite studies and data from Kisumu Educational Assessment and Resource Centre (EARC) revealing that the number of autism cases had increased significantly, from diagnosis of two children with autism a year, to about ten children with autistic tendencies per term. This case study design utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches was framed from Autism Inclusive Collaboration Model by Miles and Simpson (1998) and aimed at establishing the challenges and management strategies for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Lutheran Special School for the Mentally Challenged in Kisumu County, Kenya. The objectives of the study included; To establish the management of learners with autism in a special school; To examine teaching and learning resources used in teaching children with autism; To identify the challenges facing teachers and parents while handling children with autism; To establish the coping strategies employed by teachers and parents to promote positive attitude towards children with autism. The study population consisted of one (1) Head teacher, twenty one (21) Special Needs Education teachers, fifteen (15) parents of children with autism, two (2) Teacher Aides and 3 House Parents. The study adopted Saturated Sampling technique and data collection instruments used included questionnaires and interview schedules. Content validity of the instruments was determined by presenting the instruments to the two supervisors in the School of Education at JOOUST, for perusal and their suggestions were incorporated to make them valid, while one head teacher, six (6) teachers, and five (5) parents of children with autism from Disciples of Mercy Academy, Special Unit for children with Autism, were used for a pilot study to determine reliability of data collection instruments. Quantitative data collected using closed-ended items in the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as, frequency counts, percentages and mean. Qualitative data from questionnaires and interviews were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, transcribed, coded, put into various themes and reported in an on-going process as themes and sub-themes emerged. The findings were presented in form of tables, and the findings indicate that, teachers and parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder face several challenges, which were worsened by inadequate training of teachers on how to handle children with autism, inadequate funds for buying teaching/learning resources for children with autism, and lack of sensitization and awareness of the parents on management of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The study concluded that, the children with autism are not handled effectively due to inadequate trained teachers, lack of teaching learning resources and negative perception by the society. The study recommended that teachers should be taken for in-service courses on management of learners with ASD. Other professionals such as speech, physiotherapists and occupational therapists should be placed in the school, to work closely with the guidance and counseling teachers and the school nurse to help improve the coping strategies of learners with ASD. In addition, the guidance and counseling teachers should intensify sensitization programs for parents of children with autism and the community as a whole. Ministry of Education should provide more funds to buy teaching /learning resources for children with autism.