

The Impact Of Language Disorders On Social Communication And School Bullying Among Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder In Abha City: Parents' Perspective And The Effect Of Some Demographic Variables

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Abstract:

Objective: This study examined the impact of language disorders on social communication and school bullying experiences among children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in Abha city, as perceived by parents. Additionally, the study explored the mediating role of social communication and the moderating effect of gender in these relationships.

Methods: Data were collected from parents of 95 children with ASD, divided into Language Disorder Group ($n=47$) and No Language Disorder Group ($n=48$). Participants' social communication abilities were assessed using the Social Communication Questionnaire (SCQ), and bullying experiences were measured through a self-report questionnaire. Multiple regression and moderation analyses were conducted to analyze the relationships between variables.

Results: Language disorders significantly predicted lower social communication abilities ($\beta = -0.48, p < 0.05$) and increased bullying experiences ($\beta = 0.35, p < 0.05$). Social communication partially mediated the relationship between language disorders and bullying experiences ($\beta = 0.24, p < 0.05$). However, gender did not moderate the relationship between language disorders and social communication.

Conclusion: The study highlights the importance of addressing language challenges to enhance social communication skills and mitigate bullying incidents among children with ASD. By fostering inclusive environments and implementing targeted interventions, educators, clinicians, and parents can improve the social well-being of children with ASD in Abha city.

Keywords: *Autism Spectrum Disorder, language disorders, social communication, bullying experiences, gender, mediation analysis, moderation analysis, intervention.*

Introduction:

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that presents a broad range of challenges, with language difficulties being a prominent feature. For children with ASD, communication can be a complex and intricate process, often leading to significant impairments in their ability to express themselves and interact with others (Friedman & Sterling, 2019).

One of the core language difficulties observed in children with ASD is a delay or impairment in spoken language development. Many children with ASD exhibit delays in their first words, and some may not begin speaking until much later than their typically developing peers (Braconnier & Siper, 2021). These delays can vary widely, with some children eventually acquiring language skills at a near-normal level, while others may remain nonverbal throughout their lives. This variability underscores the diverse nature of the autism spectrum (Cermak et al., 2022).

Even when children with ASD do start speaking, their language may be characterized by atypical patterns. Echolalia, a repeating of words or phrases they hear, is a common language behavior observed in some children with ASD. Although it may seem like meaningless repetition, echolalia can serve various functions, such as self-soothing or trying to communicate a need (Manwaring et al., 2017).

In addition to delays and atypical language patterns, pragmatic language difficulties are also prevalent in children with ASD. Pragmatics refers to the social use of language, including turn-taking, maintaining eye contact, using appropriate gestures, and understanding social cues (Versaci et al., 2021). Children with ASD often struggle with these aspects of communication, making it challenging for them to engage in meaningful social interactions with peers and adults. This deficit in pragmatic language can lead to misunderstandings and difficulties forming connections with others (Shum et al., 2022).

Language comprehension can also be affected in children with ASD. They may have trouble understanding figurative language, such as idioms or metaphors, and interpreting ambiguous or indirect language. This literal interpretation of language can hinder their ability to understand humor, sarcasm, or implied meanings in conversations (McDaniel et al., 2018).

Beyond spoken language, some children with ASD may experience difficulty with receptive and expressive communication. Receptive language challenges refer to the ability to understand and process language input, such as following instructions or comprehending stories. On the other hand, expressive language difficulties involve expressing thoughts, needs, and emotions effectively (Tager-Flusberg, 2016).

Due to these language challenges, children with ASD may resort to alternative forms of communication, such as gestures, pictures, or using augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices. AAC can be invaluable in helping them express themselves

and interact with others, bridging the gap caused by verbal communication difficulties(Belteki et al., 2022).

Language difficulties in children with ASD often go hand in hand with sensory sensitivities. Children on the autism spectrum may find certain sounds, textures, or visual stimuli overwhelming, which can lead to heightened anxiety or a desire to withdraw from social situations. These sensory challenges can further exacerbate language difficulties, as the child may struggle to focus on communication when sensory stimuli are overwhelming their senses(Chojnicka & Wawer, 2020).

Early intervention is crucial in supporting language development in children with ASD. Speech and language therapy tailored to the child's individual needs can address communication challenges and help develop functional communication skills. Visual supports, such as picture schedules or social stories, can be valuable tools in improving comprehension and navigating daily routines(Arutiunian et al., 2022).

In recent years, researchers and clinicians have recognized the importance of incorporating technology into language intervention for children with ASD. Interactive apps and software designed for communication and language development have shown promise in engaging children with ASD and promoting their language skills(Kalandadze et al., 2018).

Additionally, social skills training plays a pivotal role in helping children with ASD improve their communication abilities. These interventions focus on teaching appropriate social behaviors, understanding emotions, and interpreting social cues to foster more meaningful interactions with peers and adults(Sandbank et al., 2020).

It's essential to recognize that the spectrum nature of ASD means that each child's language difficulties are unique and require individualized approaches to intervention. What works well for one child may not be as effective for another, emphasizing the significance of personalized and adaptable strategies(Peck et al., 2021).

Furthermore, while language difficulties are a core challenge in ASD, it is essential to appreciate and celebrate the strengths and talents of children on the autism spectrum. Many individuals with ASD possess exceptional memory, attention to detail, and creativity, which can be harnessed to support their overall development and well-being(Cardillo et al., 2021).

Social communication difficulties are a hallmark feature of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in children. These challenges stem from atypical development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills, making it difficult for children with ASD to effectively engage with others and form meaningful relationships(Naigles & Tek, 2017).

One of the primary social communication difficulties in children with ASD is impaired nonverbal communication. They may have difficulty understanding and using nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions, body language, and gestures. This can lead to misinterpretations and misunderstandings during social interactions, making it challenging for them to grasp the intentions and emotions of others(Reindal et al., 2023).

Additionally, children with ASD often struggle with initiating and maintaining conversations. They may find it challenging to start a conversation with peers or adults, and

they may not know how to appropriately respond or keep the conversation going. As a result, they may appear withdrawn or disinterested in social interactions, even though they may desire connections with others(Shakes & Cashin, 2019).

Theory of Mind, which refers to the ability to understand that others have thoughts, beliefs, and perspectives different from their own, is another area of difficulty for children with ASD. This deficit can lead to challenges in empathy and understanding others' emotions, making it hard for them to comprehend social situations and respond appropriately(Xiao et al., 2023).

Children with ASD may also have difficulty understanding and adhering to social norms and rules. They may not pick up on unwritten social expectations, such as personal space boundaries or the appropriate tone of voice for different contexts. This can lead to social awkwardness and sometimes unintentionally inappropriate behaviors, which may further isolate them from their peers(Habayeb et al., 2021).

Peer relationships can be particularly challenging for children with ASD due to their social communication difficulties. They may struggle to engage in reciprocal play with others, leading to difficulties in forming friendships. Their difficulties with understanding social hierarchies and group dynamics can also make it harder for them to fit into social settings(Reindal et al., 2022).

Moreover, children with ASD may show limited interest in sharing experiences with others. They may not engage in pretend play or imaginative games, which are crucial for developing social and cognitive skills. Their limited interest in joint attention (shared focus on an object or activity) can also affect their ability to learn from others and participate in cooperative activities(Scahill et al., 2022).

Early intervention is essential in addressing social communication difficulties in children with ASD. Social skills training can help them learn appropriate social behaviors, such as making eye contact, taking turns during conversations, and recognizing emotions in others. Social stories and visual supports can be beneficial in teaching social norms and expectations in various situations(Zhao et al., 2022).

In educational settings, creating an inclusive environment that fosters understanding and acceptance of differences is crucial. Educators can implement strategies to support social interactions, such as peer-mediated interventions that involve typically developing peers to model and encourage positive social behaviors(Mathée-Scott et al., 2022).

It is vital to recognize that children with ASD have unique strengths and abilities, and their social communication challenges do not define their worth or potential. Emphasizing their strengths and providing opportunities for growth and development can help them thrive and make meaningful contributions to their communities(Amaral, 2023).

Supportive and understanding parents, caregivers, teachers, and peers play a crucial role in helping children with ASD navigate social communication difficulties. By fostering empathy, patience, and compassion, we can create a more inclusive society where all children, regardless of their abilities, can feel accepted and valued(Hartley et al., 2019).

School bullying can be a significant concern for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Due to their social communication difficulties and unique behaviors, children with ASD may be more vulnerable to bullying and victimization. Bullying can have serious consequences on their emotional well-being, academic performance, and overall quality of life (Chee & de Vries, 2022).

Children with ASD may present certain characteristics that can make them targets of bullying. For example, their atypical social behaviors, difficulty understanding social cues, and challenges with expressing emotions may lead to misunderstandings or negative reactions from their peers. They might struggle to recognize social norms, making them appear different from their classmates, which can sadly attract unwanted attention and bullying (Thomas et al., 2021).

Bullying can take various forms, including verbal, physical, relational, and cyberbullying. Children with ASD may face verbal bullying, such as name-calling or ridicule, due to their social communication difficulties or repetitive behaviors (Thomas et al., 2021). Physical bullying might occur if their unique mannerisms or responses provoke negative reactions from others. Relational bullying, like exclusion or spreading rumors, can target children with ASD who already find it challenging to establish social connections. Cyberbullying, through social media or online platforms, can also impact them, as their social vulnerabilities may extend into the digital realm (Holden et al., 2020).

The impact of bullying on children with ASD can be particularly severe. They may struggle to cope with the emotional and social implications of being bullied due to their limited social support networks. Anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation are common consequences of bullying for children with ASD. Moreover, being victims of bullying can exacerbate pre-existing behavioral issues or lead to the development of new behavioral challenges (Ofe et al., 2016).

2. Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research article is to examine the impact of language disorders on social communication and school bullying among children with ASD in Abha city. Specifically, we seek to understand how language difficulties contribute to the children's social communication challenges and make them more susceptible to bullying experiences in their school environment.

3. Research Questions

To achieve our research objective, we aim to answer the following questions:

3.1 How do language disorders affect the social communication abilities of children with ASD in Abha city?

3.2 What are the experiences of parents regarding the bullying incidents faced by their children with ASD in school settings?

3.3 To what extent do demographic variables (e.g., age, gender) influence the relationship between language disorders, social communication difficulties, and bullying experiences among children with ASD in Abha city?

4. Significance of the Study

This research holds significant implications for various stakeholders, including parents, educators, clinicians, and policymakers. Understanding the relationship between language disorders, social communication challenges, and bullying experiences in children with ASD is crucial for developing targeted interventions and support systems to improve the well-being and quality of life for these children.

For parents of children with ASD, this study will shed light on the unique challenges their children face, particularly in social settings, and will provide valuable insights into effective ways of supporting their children's social development and protecting them from bullying incidents.

Educators and clinicians can benefit from this research by gaining a deeper understanding of the specific needs and challenges faced by children with ASD in school environments. By recognizing the impact of language disorders on social communication, educators can implement tailored strategies to foster inclusive and supportive classrooms that promote positive social interactions and reduce the risk of bullying incidents.

Policymakers can use the findings of this study to inform the development of comprehensive policies and programs aimed at improving the educational and social experiences of children with ASD in Abha city. Addressing the social communication and bullying challenges faced by these children can lead to a more inclusive and empathetic society that values the uniqueness and diversity of all its members.

1. Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional correlational research design to investigate the impact of language disorders on social communication and school bullying experiences among children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in Abha city. A cross-sectional design allowed for the collection of data at a single point in time, and a correlational approach helped identify relationships between variables.

2. Variables

2.1 Independent Variable

The independent variable in this study was the presence of language disorders. Children with ASD were classified into two groups: those with language disorders and those without language disorders. The classification was based on diagnostic information provided by qualified medical professionals or psychologists.

2.2 Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in this study were:

Social Communication: This variable was assessed using the Social Communication Questionnaire (SCQ). The SCQ is a validated tool that measures social communication abilities and provides insights into the child's communication difficulties and social interaction challenges.

School Bullying Experiences: This variable was measured using a School Bullying Experience Questionnaire. The questionnaire assessed the child's experiences of bullying in the school environment, including the frequency, types of bullying, and the emotional impact.

3. Participants

The participants in this study were parents or legal guardians of children with ASD who were currently attending schools in Abha city. The inclusion criteria for participants were as follows:

The child had a formal diagnosis of ASD from a qualified medical professional or psychologist.

The child's age ranged from 5 to 12 years.

The child was currently enrolled in a school in Abha city.

The parents or legal guardians were proficient in Arabic, the primary language of the study.

Data Collection Tools

For this quantitative study exploring the impact of language disorders on social communication and school bullying experiences among children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Abha city, the following data collection tools were utilized:

1 .Social Communication Questionnaire (SCQ):

The Social Communication Questionnaire is a validated tool commonly used to assess social communication abilities and behaviors associated with ASD. It consists of a series of questions that capture various aspects of social communication, such as reciprocal social interaction, nonverbal communication, and the use of gestures and facial expressions. Parents or legal guardians of the children with ASD were asked to complete this questionnaire, providing valuable insights into the child's social communication difficulties and challenges.

2 .School Bullying Experience Questionnaire:

The School Bullying Experience Questionnaire was designed specifically for this study to investigate the child's experiences of bullying in the school environment. It included questions related to the frequency and types of bullying incidents the child may have encountered, as well as the emotional impact of these experiences. This questionnaire aimed to identify any associations between language disorders, social communication difficulties, and bullying experiences among children with ASD in school settings.

3 .Demographic Information Form:

A demographic information form was used to gather essential background information about the children with ASD and their families. This form included details such as the child's age, gender, educational placement, and the presence of any co-occurring

conditions. Additionally, demographic variables of interest, such as parental education and family income, were included to explore their potential influence on the study outcomes.

Data Collection Process:

The data collection process involved reaching out to parents or legal guardians of children with ASD who met the inclusion criteria. Recruitment efforts were made through collaboration with schools, special education centers, and autism support groups in Abha city. Once the participants expressed interest in participating and provided informed consent, the data collection tools were administered. Depending on the participants' preferences, the questionnaires were either provided in person during face-to-face interviews or shared through an online platform for completion. The researchers were available to address any queries or concerns raised by the participants during the data collection period.

Ethical Considerations:

Ethical considerations were carefully followed throughout the data collection process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants to ensure voluntary participation and protect their rights and confidentiality. The data collected were securely stored and accessible only to the research team, ensuring anonymity and privacy.

By utilizing these carefully chosen data collection tools, this study was able to gather quantitative data to explore the relationship between language disorders, social communication difficulties, and school bullying experiences among children with ASD in Abha city. The data collected have provided valuable insights to advance the understanding of the challenges faced by these children and support the development of targeted interventions to enhance their social well-being and inclusion in school environments.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using appropriate statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies, were used to summarize the participants' characteristics and quantitative results. To examine the relationship between language disorders, social communication difficulties, and bullying experiences, a series of correlational analyses were performed. Potential demographic variables (e.g., age, gender) were also considered as covariates in the analysis to explore their moderating effects.

Results Section

1. Participants' Characteristics

Table 1: Participants' Characteristics

Characteristic	Language Disorder Group (n=47)	No Language Disorder Group (n=48)
Age (Mean ± SD)	8.52 ± 1.23	8.68 ± 1.07
Gender (Male/Female)	32/15	35/13

Educational Placement	72% Mainstream / 28% Special	75% Mainstream / 25% Special
Family Income (USD)	45,000 ± 15,000	47,500 ± 16,200

Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of the participants' characteristics, facilitating a comparative analysis between the Language Disorder Group (n=47) and the No Language Disorder Group (n=48) of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Abha city.

In terms of age, both groups exhibit a close similarity, with the Language Disorder Group having a mean age of 8.52 years and a standard deviation of 1.23 years, while the No Language Disorder Group has a mean age of 8.68 years with a standard deviation of 1.07 years. This similarity in age distribution reduces the likelihood of age confounding the study results.

Gender distribution in both groups demonstrates relative balance, with the Language Disorder Group comprising 32 males and 15 females, and the No Language Disorder Group consisting of 35 males and 13 females. This balanced gender representation enhances the study's validity by reducing gender-related biases in the findings.

Regarding educational placement, the majority of children in both groups attend mainstream settings. In the Language Disorder Group, 72% of the children are in mainstream educational environments, and the remaining 28% are placed in special educational settings. The No Language Disorder Group exhibits a similar pattern, with 75% of the children in mainstream settings and 25% in special settings. While a slight difference in the distribution of educational placements exists, it remains relevant to consider this factor during data analysis to account for potential impacts on social interactions and bullying experiences.

Family income data reveal that the Language Disorder Group has a mean family income of 45,000 USD, with a standard deviation of 15,000 USD. In comparison, the No Language Disorder Group reports a mean family income of 47,500 USD, with a standard deviation of 16,200 USD. Although there is a marginal difference in family income between the two groups, this variance is not substantial enough to significantly influence the study outcomes. Nonetheless, family income will be included as a potential covariate in the data analysis to ensure comprehensive control over factors that might affect social communication and bullying experiences.

2. Social Communication Abilities

Table 2 provides a crucial comparison of the social communication abilities between the Language Disorder Group and the No Language Disorder Group of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in Abha city.

Table 2: Social Communication Abilities

Social Communication Measure	Language Disorder Group (n=47)	No Language Disorder Group (n=48)
SCQ Score (Mean ± SD)	24.35 ± 4.92	12.78 ± 3.55

The findings reveal that the Language Disorder Group obtained a significantly higher mean SCQ score of 24.35 with a standard deviation of 4.92, while the No Language Disorder Group had a substantially lower mean SCQ score of 12.78 with a standard deviation of 3.55. This stark contrast in SCQ scores between the two groups indicates that children with language disorders experienced more challenges in social communication compared to their peers without language disorders.

3. School Bullying Experiences

Table 3 provides valuable insights into the school bullying experiences of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Abha city, comparing the Language Disorder Group and the No Language Disorder Group.

Table 3: School Bullying Experiences

Bullying Measure	Language Disorder Group (n=47)	No Language Disorder Group (n=48)
Frequency of Bullying (%)	34%	12.5%
Types of Bullying (%)		
- Physical Bullying (%)	17%	6.25%
- Verbal Bullying (%)	25%	8.33%
- Relational Bullying (%)	10%	4.17%
Emotional Impact (Scale)	2.67 ± 1.23	1.23 ± 0.87

The results indicate notable differences in the frequency of bullying incidents between the two groups. In the Language Disorder Group, approximately 34% of the children reported experiencing bullying, whereas only 12.5% of children in the No Language Disorder Group reported similar experiences. This suggests that children with language disorders are more vulnerable to bullying in the school environment, emphasizing the need for targeted anti-bullying interventions and support.

Furthermore, the table highlights the different types of bullying encountered by the children. The Language Disorder Group experienced higher percentages of physical

bullying (17%), verbal bullying (25%), and relational bullying (10%) compared to the No Language Disorder Group, where the percentages were relatively lower (6.25%, 8.33%, and 4.17% respectively). These disparities in the types of bullying experiences signify the potential influence of language disorders on the nature and severity of bullying incidents faced by children with ASD.

The Emotional Impact scale further emphasizes the consequences of bullying experiences. Children in the Language Disorder Group reported an average emotional impact score of 2.67 with a standard deviation of 1.23, indicating a moderate emotional toll. In contrast, children in the No Language Disorder Group reported a significantly lower average emotional impact score of 1.23 with a standard deviation of 0.87, reflecting a comparatively lower emotional burden resulting from bullying experiences.

4. Correlations

Table 4 presents the correlation matrix between Language Disorders, Social Communication, and Bullying Experiences among children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Abha city.

Table 4: Correlations between Language Disorders, Social Communication, and Bullying Experiences

Measure	Language Disorders	Social Communication	Bullying Experiences
Language Disorders	1.00	-0.48*	0.35*
Social Communication	-0.48*	1.00	-0.63*
Bullying Experiences	0.35*	-0.63*	1.00

Note: *p < 0.05 (significant correlation)

The results show that Language Disorders have a significant negative correlation with Social Communication ($r = -0.48, p < 0.05$) and a positive correlation with Bullying Experiences ($r = 0.35, p < 0.05$). This suggests that children with language disorders tend to experience more challenges in social communication, and they are also more likely to encounter bullying incidents in the school environment.

Moreover, Social Communication exhibits a significant negative correlation with Bullying Experiences ($r = -0.63, p < 0.05$). This finding indicates that children with better social communication abilities are less likely to face bullying in school. It highlights the protective role of effective social communication skills in reducing vulnerability to bullying among children with ASD.

The significant correlations observed in the table emphasize the interconnected nature of language disorders, social communication difficulties, and bullying experiences in children with ASD. The results reinforce the importance of addressing language disorders and social communication challenges to mitigate the risk of bullying and improve the overall social well-being of children with ASD.

5. Regression Analysis

Table 5 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis predicting Social Communication abilities among children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Abha city.

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Social Communication

Predictor	β	t	p
Language Disorders	-0.54*	-4.27*	0.000*
Age	-0.12	-1.03	0.304
Gender (Male/Female)	-0.08	-0.68	0.499
Family Income (USD)	0.16	1.27	0.207
R ²	0.33		

Note: *p < 0.05 (significant predictor)

The analysis reveals several important findings. Firstly, Language Disorders emerge as a significant negative predictor of Social Communication ($\beta = -0.54$, $t = -4.27$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that children with language disorders tend to have lower social communication abilities compared to their peers without language disorders. The negative β coefficient suggests that as the severity of language disorders increases, social communication abilities are likely to decrease.

In contrast, the other predictors in the model, namely Age, Gender (Male/Female), and Family Income (USD), do not show significant associations with Social Communication. Age ($\beta = -0.12$, $t = -1.03$, $p > 0.05$), Gender ($\beta = -0.08$, $t = -0.68$, $p > 0.05$), and Family Income ($\beta = 0.16$, $t = 1.27$, $p > 0.05$) do not appear to have a substantial impact on the participants' social communication abilities in this study.

The R² value of 0.33 indicates that the regression model explains approximately 33% of the variance in Social Communication scores. While this value indicates a moderate level of explanation, it also suggests that there may be other unmeasured factors contributing to the variance in social communication abilities among children with ASD.

6. Mediation Analysis

Table 6 presents the results of the mediation analysis, exploring the role of Social Communication (SCQ) as a mediator between Language Disorders and Bullying Experiences among children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Abha city.

Table 6: Mediation Analysis: Social Communication as Mediator between Language Disorders and Bullying Experiences

Path	β	t	p
Language Disorders -> SCQ	-0.40*	-3.75*	0.000*

SCQ -> Bullying Experiences	-0.60*	-5.61*	0.000*
Total Effect (Language Disorders -> Bullying Experiences)	0.35*	3.46*	0.001*
Indirect Effect (Language Disorders -> SCQ -> Bullying Experiences)	0.24*	2.50*	0.014*
Direct Effect (Language Disorders -> Bullying Experiences Controlling for SCQ)	0.11	1.15	0.255

Note: *p < 0.05 (significant mediation)

The analysis indicates that Language Disorders negatively predict Social Communication abilities ($\beta = -0.40$, $t = -3.75$, $p < 0.05$), and Social Communication abilities negatively predict Bullying Experiences ($\beta = -0.60$, $t = -5.61$, $p < 0.05$). Children with language disorders are more likely to experience difficulties in social communication and are also more vulnerable to bullying incidents. The mediation effect shows that part of the impact of language disorders on bullying experiences is mediated by social communication abilities ($\beta = 0.24$, $t = 2.50$, $p < 0.05$). These findings emphasize the significance of addressing social communication challenges in interventions to reduce bullying incidents and improve the social well-being of children with ASD in Abha city. By focusing on improving social communication skills, educators and clinicians can potentially mitigate the impact of language disorders on bullying experiences, leading to more positive social interactions and increased social inclusion for children with ASD.

7. Moderation Analysis

Table 7 reveals the findings of the moderation analysis, examining Gender as a potential moderator between Language Disorders and Social Communication in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Abha city.

Table 7: Moderation Analysis: Gender as a Moderator between Language Disorders and Social Communication

Predictor	β	t	p
Language Disorders	-0.48*	-4.10*	0.000*
Gender (Male/Female)	-0.14	-1.12	0.269
Interaction (Language Disorders * Gender)	0.15	1.23	0.223
R²	0.27		

Note: *p < 0.05 (significant interaction)

The analysis indicates that Language Disorders negatively predict Social Communication abilities ($\beta = -0.48$, $t = -4.10$, $p < 0.05$), highlighting the impact of language difficulties on social interactions. However, Gender does not significantly influence Social Communication abilities ($\beta = -0.14$, $t = -1.12$, $p > 0.05$), and the interaction term "Language Disorders * Gender" is also not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.15$, $t = 1.23$, $p > 0.05$). These results suggest that the relationship between Language Disorders and Social Communication is consistent across genders, emphasizing the importance of addressing

language challenges to enhance social communication outcomes for all children with ASD in Abha city, regardless of their gender.

Discussion

The current study aimed to investigate the impact of language disorders on social communication and school bullying experiences among children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in Abha city from the perspective of parents. The study explored the mediating role of social communication and the moderating effect of gender in these relationships. The findings shed light on crucial factors influencing the social well-being of children with ASD and have important implications for intervention and support strategies.

Consistent with previous research (Mondi et al., 2021; S. Kennedy, 2019), the results revealed that language disorders had a significant negative impact on social communication abilities in children with ASD. Children with language disorders experienced more challenges in social interactions, which could contribute to difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships with peers, educators, and family members. This highlights the importance of early intervention programs that target language development to improve social communication skills and foster positive social interactions among children with ASD.

Moreover, the study found a significant association between language disorders and increased bullying experiences among children with ASD. These results corroborate earlier research (Furukawa et al., 2023; Graham et al., 2016) and underscore the vulnerability of children with language disorders to bullying incidents in school settings. Bullying can have profound negative effects on the emotional well-being and academic performance of children with ASD (Skafle et al., 2020). Therefore, anti-bullying interventions and creating inclusive school environments are imperative to protect children with ASD from bullying behaviors.

The mediation analysis revealed that social communication partially mediated the relationship between language disorders and bullying experiences. This finding suggests that the challenges in social communication faced by children with language disorders may contribute to their increased vulnerability to bullying incidents. Improving social communication skills through targeted interventions can potentially mitigate the impact of language disorders on bullying experiences and foster more positive social interactions (Russ et al., 2013).

Regarding gender differences, the moderation analysis demonstrated that gender did not significantly moderate the relationship between language disorders and social communication abilities in children with ASD. This aligns with previous research that found no substantial gender differences in social communication challenges among individuals with ASD (Fogler et al., 2019). Thus, interventions aiming to improve social communication should be tailored to all children with language disorders, irrespective of their gender.

While the current study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. One limitation is the reliance on parent reports for data collection, which may introduce

biases.(Lyons et al., 2016) Future research could incorporate multi-informant assessments to gain a more comprehensive understanding of children's social communication and bullying experiences. Additionally, the study focused on children with ASD in Abha city, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other populations.

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the critical role of language disorders in influencing social communication abilities and bullying experiences among children with ASD. Targeted interventions that address language challenges and promote social communication skills can enhance social interactions and protect children with ASD from bullying incidents. By fostering inclusive and supportive school environments, educators and clinicians can contribute to the overall well-being and success of children with ASD in Abha city and beyond.

Conclusion

The study highlighted the significant impact of language disorders on social communication and school bullying experiences among children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Abha city, based on parents' perspectives. Language disorders were found to be associated with lower social communication abilities and increased vulnerability to bullying incidents. Social communication was identified as a crucial mediator between language disorders and bullying experiences. The study emphasizes the need for early interventions targeting language development to improve social communication skills and foster inclusive school environments. Gender did not significantly moderate the relationship between language disorders and social communication abilities. These findings have practical implications for educators, clinicians, and parents in supporting the social well-being of children with ASD in Abha city and beyond.

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