

# Effects of the COVID-19 lockdowns on the care delivery to the children with autism spectrum disorder: a web-based cross-sectional study

Mirahmadizadeh Alireza, Heiran Alireza, Nemati Hamid, Aminnia Shiva, Azadian Fatemeh, Rezaei Fatemeh, Sahebi Roya, Miyar Ata, Sharifi Mohammad Hossein, Tavasoli Mojgan

## Abstract

**Purpose:** Children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder need special attention for their mental and physical health and education. This study aims to investigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on them.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted on data collected from an online survey. Respondents were the parents or caregivers of autistic children aged 3–18. It measured opinions about the favorable and unfavorable behavioral changes related to their children during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

**Findings:** In total, 131 respondents participated in the study. The mean age of their autistic children was  $11.45 \pm 4.26$  years, of whom 78% were boys. Improved good behaviors during lockdowns included interaction with parents and siblings, eating healthy foods, quality of sleep, eye contact, pointing and asking for something, imitating sounds and phrases, sharing interests, reaction to emotions and empathy with family members, but sleep hours decreased.

**Originality/value:** Lockdown provided opportunities for examining the behaviors of children with autism taking into account its favorable and unfavorable effects, to improve communicating and behaving with these children.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Acknowl, Autism spectrum disorder