

Opinions of Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder Towards Special Education Support and Services

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ABSTRACT Providing necessary support and services to children with autism spectrum disorder is very important for their development. Recently, family involvement in special education services is being emphasized. Therefore, it is important to learn about the opinions of families of children with autism spectrum disorder towards special education support and services, and this study aims to investigate the opinions of mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder towards special education support and services. This is a qualitative study, and a semi-structured interview method was used in order to collect the data. According to the results, mothers indicated that special education support and services are not sufficient for their children and families. The results were discussed in detail with reference to previous literature. Finally, implications and recommendations for further research were also provided in order to improve the quality of education policies, programs and practices for mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder.

INTRODUCTION

Anthropology has a crucial role in the design and implementation of programs for providing services for families. These services include developing policies and strategies for bringing together governmental and private institutions to make policies and services aimed at improving children and families' wellbeing based on multidimensional, inclusive and evidence-based interventions (Vindrola-Padros et al. 2015). Raising a child with special needs brings many responsibilities to the family and therefore providing beneficial interventions for these families becomes more important. Satisfying the health, education, transportation, guidance, social and psychological support requirements of children with special needs and their families is a really important issue. Birkan (2002) stated that it is crucial for children with developmental disability or children who are at risk to begin benefiting from special education services as early as possible for their development. Basic approach for special education services in Turkey also emphasizes that early education must begin from the age of 0 (Vural and Yucesoy 2003). Special education services comprise all special education services provided for children with developmental disability or children who are at risk between the ages of 0 and 6 and their families (Gast et al. 1993). Children with disability need to benefit from early special education ser-

vices appropriate for the beginning from the age of 0 in order to acquire independence in their daily lives and increase their capacity to the highest level. In addition, early intervention is crucial for children with special needs in order to gain appropriate behaviors (Temiz and Akman 2015). In recent years, family involvement in the process of special education services is being emphasized and family is regarded as an important referral source in various stages of these services. In line with this situation, legal regulations in special education have become more important in the process of applying special education programs and providing special education services.

In the year of 1975, the "Education for All Handicapped Children Act" was entered into force as a legal regulation for the educational regulations for children with disability. However, support and services towards families were not included in this act. Services that will be provided for children between the ages of 3 and 5 were begun to be regulated under the name of the "Individualized Family Plan (IFP)" within this act in the year of 1986. The emphasis on family in this plan shows that family is at the center of special education support and services as well as children. The name of this act was changed to the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)" in 1990. The final form of the IDEA was published in 2004 based on new regulations and principles on family involvement in special

education services and collaboration between family and school were clearly stated. For instance, family support services provided by the schools were expressed as “the main target of early identification and diagnosis is to satisfy the needs of children with special needs” within IDEA. In addition to this, other various services related with family support services were also identified. Parental counseling and education were defined as “helping the mother and fathers understand the special needs of their children and informing them about child development” (Smith et al. 2006). If early identification and diagnosis of the child is achieved, then appropriate educational services for the child and interventions for autism spectrum disorder would be more applicable (Demirok and Baglama 2015).

As it can be understood from the expression stated in IDEA, while special education services were being implemented based on planning and applications in the control of experts in the past, current approaches emphasize the importance of family involvement as well. In various stages, family is regarded as an important referral source and family-focused approaches are frequently emphasized (Cavkaytar 2014).

Autism spectrum disorder is a developmental disability characterized with serious disabilities in developmental domains such as social interaction skills, verbal and non-verbal communication skills and associated with stereotypical or repetitive behaviors, interests and activities with an onset of before 36 months. The word “spectrum” refers to the fact that the type and severity of the symptoms might change between the range of mild and severe level of disability (Levy et al. 2009). According to Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV (DSM-IV) manual of American Psychiatric Association, there were five sub-categories of autism spectrum disorders. These five sub-categories were Autism, Asperger Syndrome, Atypical Autism, Childhood Disintegrative Disorders and Rett Syndrome. Recently, there are some alterations in the content and scope of autism spectrum disorders. In the last edition of DSM manual published by American Psychiatric Association, autism spectrum disorders are diagnosed within a spectrum ranging through mild and severe. Besides, Asperger Syndrome is no longer included in the broad category of autism spectrum disorders in DSM-V (American Psychiatric Association 2013). When the epidemiology of

autism spectrum disorder is considered, there is a high and increased prevalence in recent years and therefore it becomes more important to provide appropriate and beneficial services for students with autism spectrum disorder. For instance, some international assessments reported that the estimated rate of autism spectrum disorder cases is 1 in 68 children (Ichim et al. 2015).

Satisfying the needs of children with special needs and providing the necessary support and services to them is very important for their development. Family is the most important component for special education to be effective. If the family becomes more aware and informed about the needs of their children with special needs and themselves, special education services would be more effective and contribute to the development of the children. Therefore, inclusion and social integration of the child with autism spectrum disorder would be facilitated as well (Ichim et al. 2015). The first social unit that children with special needs meet is their families. The life of the whole family entirely changes with the emergence of disability of the child. It is also important for children with special needs to start at an early age to benefit from special education support and services and families should be aware about this issue. When families learn that their children are diagnosed with a disability, they experience an intensive amount of negative emotions (Ozkubat et al. 2014). The “Transactional Model” is the most known among the models investigating the reactions of families when they have child with special needs. According to this model, families generally experience four stages named as shock, denial, blaming and acceptance. At first, the family experience shock when they learn that their child is diagnosed with disability. On the other hand, when the family realizes that the situation does not change and will not change, they deny the situation in order to get rid of anxiety. Then, they begin to blame themselves by asking “Why my child?” and finally they experience the stage of acceptance. In the acceptance stage, the family begins to think about the things that they can do to improve and cope with the situation (Dogru 2014).

Parents of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have many responsibilities and burdens based on the needs of their children (Eapen and Guan 2016). Although special edu-

cation services for children with autism spectrum disorder, development and education of these children and increasing the quality of life of the families are included in legal regulations (Special Education Services Legislation 2006), when the practices are considered, families of children with disabilities experience many difficulties in being informed about legal regulations, having access to support services such as social support, guidance and psychological counseling and applying educational programs based on the needs of the family and the child (Yildirim and Akcamete 2014).

In Turkish literature, there are various studies related with the opinions of mothers of children with autism towards the definition and reasons of autism (Toret et al. 2014), opinions of mothers of children with autism towards their experiences after the diagnosis of their children with autism (Toret et al. 2014; Gulec-Aslan et al. 2014) and opinions of mothers towards the efficacy of behavioral education program for children with autism (Gulec-Aslan et al. 2009). On the other hand, there are a limited number of studies examining the opinions of mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder towards special education services. Besides, when the literature in North Cyprus in which the present study was conducted is examined, there are a limited number of studies on this topic as well. Based on the related literature, the aim of this study is to investigate the opinions of mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder towards special education support and services provided to them. This study is expected to contribute to the related literature since it will reflect the opinions of mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder living in North Cyprus.

Objectives of the Research

In line with the general aim of this study, answers to the following questions were sought:

- ♦ What kind of help did you need when your child was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder?
- ♦ What do you think about the sufficiency of support and services that you benefited or benefitting from?
- ♦ What do you understand from the expression of “support and services in special education”?
- ♦ What do you think about the special education services applied in the country?

- ♦ What are the support and services that you are benefitting from any government or private institution?
- ♦ What are the difficulties that you experience when you are benefitting from special education support and services?
- ♦ What are your suggestions for the difficulties that you experience when you are benefitting from special education support and services?
- ♦ What are the resources that help and support you except your family in the process of care and education of your child with autism spectrum disorder?
- ♦ What are the topics that you need to learn more about informational support in the process of care and education of your child from experts?
- ♦ What are your expectations from the government in terms of economic, social and psychological services for your child?

METHODOLOGY

Research Model

This is a descriptive research, which aims to determine the opinions of mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder towards special education services and the process of benefitting from these services. The semi-structured interview method as one of the qualitative methods was used in this study. Yildirim and Simsek (2005) defined qualitative research as a research revealing case, perception and events in their natural environments in a holistic and realistic way through qualitative research methods such as observation, interview and document analysis. Qualitative research is conducted to provide evidence based on the exploration of specific contexts and particular individuals. Qualitative studies in special education contribute to evidence for practice and policy development as well (Brantlinger et al. 2005). In the semi-structured interview method, questions prepared by the researchers are posed to the participants through individual interviews.

Study Group

15 mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder constituted the study group of this research. The children were entering a special edu-

cation and rehabilitation center located in Izmir, Turkey. Demographic characteristics of mothers and their children are provided in Table 1.

According to this, 4 of the mothers are 33 years old, 3 of the mothers are 29 years old, 3 of them are 45 years old, 1 mother is 47, 1 mother is 52, 1 mother is 27, 1 mother is 36, 1 mother is 46, 1 mother is 37 and 1 mother is 30 years old. Most of the mothers are graduates from university ($n=7$) and high school ($n=7$) and only one of them is a graduate from primary school. All the mothers who participated in this study are married. Besides, 7 mothers are housewives, 4 mothers are teachers, 1 mother is a psychologist, 1 mother is a secretary, 1 mother is self-employed and 1 mother is a nurse. Most of the mothers indicated that their economic status was middle ($n=13$) and only 2 of them indicated that their economic status was low.

Table 2 shows the age and gender of the children and age of the children at diagnosis. 4 of the children are 10 years old, 6 of them are 5 years old, 1 of them is 16, 1 of them is 14, 1 of them is 9, 1 of them is 4, and 1 of them is 6 years old. As it can be seen, most of the children are boys ($n=11$) and only 4 of them are girls. Most of the children were 2 years old when they were diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder ($n=8$), 7 of them were 3 years old and 1 of them was 1 year old when they were diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

Instrument

An interview form was developed by the researchers in order to learn about the opinions of

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of mothers

<i>Mothers</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Educational level</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Economic status</i>
Mother 1	47	University	Psychologist	Married	Middle
Mother 2	52	University	Secretary	Married	Middle
Mother 3	27	High school	Housewife	Married	Low
Mother 4	33	High school	Housewife	Married	Middle
Mother 5	36	University	Teacher	Married	Middle
Mother 6	46	High school	Self-employed	Married	Middle
Mother 7	45	Primary school	Housewife	Married	Middle
Mother 8	37	High school	Housewife	Married	Low
Mother 9	33	High school	Housewife	Married	Middle
Mother 10	30	University	Teacher	Married	Middle
Mother 11	33	University	Teacher	Married	Middle
Mother 12	29	High school	Housewife	Married	Middle
Mother 13	33	University	Teacher	Married	Middle
Mother 14	29	University	Nurse	Married	Middle
Mother 15	45	High school	Housewife	Married	Middle

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of children

<i>Mothers</i>	<i>Age of the child</i>	<i>Gender of the child</i>	<i>Age of the child at diagnosis</i>
Mother 1	16	Boy	1
Mother 2	10	Girl	2
Mother 3	5	Boy	3
Mother 4	5	Boy	2
Mother 5	10	Boy	2
Mother 6	14	Boy	2
Mother 7	9	Girl	3
Mother 8	10	Boy	2
Mother 9	5	Boy	3
Mother 10	5	Boy	2
Mother 11	4	Girl	2
Mother 12	6	Girl	3
Mother 13	5	Boy	3
Mother 14	5	Boy	2
Mother 15	10	Boy	3

mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder related with special education support and services. The interview form included questions related with demographic characteristics of the participants and 10 open-ended questions prepared based on the aim of the study. The demographic questions consisted of questions related to age, job, marital status of the mothers, and age and age at diagnosis of the child. The 10 open-ended questions were prepared based on the objective of the research.

Procedure

The interview form prepared by the researchers was administered to the mothers. Data of the study was collected by making appointments

with mothers. Interviews were conducted in January 2016. Before the interviews, participants were informed about the aim and content of the research. Besides, mothers were informed that interviews will be recorded and this recorded data will be only used for scientific purposes. Mothers were encouraged to give clear and sincere answers through emphasizing that this will increase the quality of the research. Names of mothers were not used when reporting the research because of ethical principles. Thus, code names were assigned to the participant mothers. Therefore, it was expected that ethical principles would be achieved.

Data Analysis

Data of the research was analyzed with content analysis method. All of the recorded responses were translated into written documents without making any changes. The answers of every participant were examined and codes were constituted systematically. In the light of the obtained data, themes of the research were identified. Tables were formed based on the themes and the number frequencies for every theme were also provided.

RESULTS

In this section, results of the present study, which aims to determine the opinions of mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder related with special education support and services are provided with tables and examples from the responses of mothers in the tables.

Opinions of Mothers Related with What Kind of Help They Needed When Their Child was Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder

There were 6 different opinions obtained from mothers related to what kind of help they needed when their child was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder as provided in Table 3. Generally, results showed that most of the mothers indicated that they received support from specialists (f=10), they consulted a psychiatrist (f=6) and they were totally unaware about this issue and they needed every kind of help (f=6).

As it can be seen from the Table, 3 mothers indicated that they needed support for their child and not for themselves when they learnt that their child was diagnosed with autism spectrum

disorder. For instance, Mother 13 indicated, *“I did not receive any help for myself. It was easy for me to accept the situation. This is our child and there is nothing to do. We accepted the situation and we looked forward to the future. Since the diagnosis process lasted for ten months, we prepared ourselves for the situation and accepted it. We seek help for our children with my husband.”*

Table 3: Opinions of mothers related with what kind of help they needed when their child was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
I needed support for my child, not for me	3
I expected psychological help and support from my surroundings	1
I received support from specialists	10
We consulted to a psychiatrist	6
We were totally unaware about this issue and we needed every kind of help	6
We consulted to a rehabilitation center	1

According to the results, one mother reported that she expected help from her surroundings, ten mothers received psychological support from specialists, six mothers consulted a psychiatrist, six mothers were totally unaware about this issue and they needed every kind of help, and one mother indicated that she consulted a rehabilitation center.

In addition, ten mothers received psychological support from specialists. For instance, Mother 2 reported, *“It is a great shock to learn that your child is diagnosed with autism. We experienced the five stages of trauma. Of course, we thought that we need psychological support. At first, we helped each other with my husband. Then, we decided that professional help is necessary for us and received psychological help to bounce back.”* 6 mothers indicated that they consulted a psychiatrist. Mother 4 stated, *“...Of course, we consulted a doctor, a child psychiatrist at first. The child psychiatrist explained the situation to us. We did not know anything about autism. It was an unexpected*

Table 4: Opinions of mothers related with the sufficiency of special education services

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
I think that they are sufficient	3
They are not sufficient	11
We do not receive any support or service	1

situation for us and we did not see any child with autism in our environment until that time. We could not know what to do...”

Furthermore, Mother 11 indicated, “...I expected that this situation is a disease and it will recover. It was necessary for me to receive professional support but we did not. We only received support from a psychiatrist and even the psychiatrist told me that it will recover.” Mother 5 also responded as, “We were totally unaware about this issue and we needed every kind of help.” stated that “...We did not know anything about the disorder. When you encounter with a situation that you do not have any idea about, you do not know what to do as well. Although my husband is a doctor, we were very far from the concept of autism.”

Opinions of Mothers Related with the Sufficiency of Special Education Services

According to the results of the study related with the sufficiency of special education services, a small number of mothers stated that special education services that they receive are sufficient (f=3). For instance, Mother 10 reported, “Of course, I am very satisfied with the education that our child receives. Obviously, I was thinking that education is not sufficient for my child at first. However, I am very happy and I think that education is sufficient and beneficial for my child.”

Furthermore, 11 mothers indicated that special education services are not sufficient. For instance, Mother 11 explained, “...Definitely, special education services are not sufficient. We receive special education services from private institutions. However, this will last until we have money. We want our government to support us more in terms of special education

Table 5: Opinions of mothers related with what they understand from the expression of “support and services in special education”

Response	Frequency
Family education must also be provided in addition to individual education	4
There must be an institution for special education counseling towards families	7
Special education for our children	2
I do not receive any support	1
Support and educational activities such as sports, swimming and music	1
Insufficient service	1

services. I can not see any sufficient services.” In addition, Mother 4 responded, “I want my child to receive more amount of special education services but this is so expensive. Unfortunately, everything is entirely related with money. We want our child to benefit from activities such as swimming, language therapist or sports school. Everything is entirely related with money in the treatment of this disability. We cannot afford it since we do not have sufficient amount of money. We want our child to receive education the whole day and participate in sports activities, however we can only afford 15 hours of special education in a week.” One mother indicated that she does not receive any support. Mother 3 responded, “We do not receive any support.”

Opinions of Mothers Related with What They Understand from the Expression of “Support and Services in Special Education”

When mothers were asked to indicate what they understand from the expression of special education services, they mostly indicated that there must be an institution for special education counseling towards families as well, and secondly four mothers responded that family education must also be provided in addition to individual education (f=7). Mother 1 responded, “The first thing that comes to my mind is that providing education both to the child and family. Family education is important for improvement of psychological wellbeing of the families and integration of them into their child’s education. Family education must be provided in the educational institution. Therefore, education will be also carried out into daily life of the families.” One mother emphasized the importance of support and educational activities such as sports, swimming and music for children and responded, “If my child is ready and appropriate for this, swimming and other play or sports activities must also be provided. Because we encounter many difficulties when trying to find out what to play with our child.”

Opinions of Mothers Related with Special Education Services Applied in the Country

As it can be seen from Table 6, most of the mothers indicated that special education services applied in the country are not sufficient and lecture hours are very limited (f=11). According

Table 6: Opinions of mothers related with special education services applied in our country

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Sufficient	1
Not sufficient, lecture hours are very limited	11
Not sufficient, there is a need for pecuniary resource	3

to the results, Mother 6 stated, “...*I think that our country has many drawbacks in terms of special education services. When I looked at other developing countries, I observe that our country is behind other countries.*” In addition, three mothers indicated that special education services are not sufficient and there is a need for a pecuniary resource (f=3). For instance, Mother 8 explained the insufficiency of special education services with these words, “...*As I mentioned before, there are many problems related with economy. In other words, the government provides such limited pecuniary resources for our children. Generally, I think that special education services are not sufficient.*” Results showed that only one mother out of fifteen thinks that special education services are sufficient (f=1).

Opinions of Mothers Related With Supports That They Benefit From

As it can be seen from Table 7, majority of the mothers (f=10) indicated that they benefit from government support (special education support for 8 individual sessions and 4 group sessions). For instance, Mother 8 stated, “*I benefit from support provided by government two times a week.*” “Four mothers indicated that they do not benefit from any support, and one mother indicated that she benefits from support provided by both government and another resource.”

Table 7: Opinions of mothers related with supports which they benefit

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
I benefit from government support (special education support for 8 individual sessions and 4 group sessions)	10
I benefit from support provided by government and another resource	1
I do not benefit from any support	4

Opinions of Mothers Related with Difficulties that They Experience When They Are Benefitting from Special Education Support and Services

Opinions of mothers related with difficulties that they experience when they are benefitting from special education support and services are provided in Table 8. Results showed that there are seven different opinions obtained from the mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder. Mothers mostly indicated that they experience financial difficulties (f=9) and some of the mothers reported that they experience difficulties related with taking reports from the hospital and Guidance and Research Center (f=4). Two mothers emphasized the issue of stigmatization and one mother expressed her opinion with these words, “*Stigmatization generally occurs. In the beginning, I was very impressed by this, however I learned to cope with this situation after overcoming many stages.*”

Table 8: Opinions of mothers related with difficulties that they experience when they are benefitting from special education support and services

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Taking reports from hospital and Guidance and Research Center	4
Stigmatization	2
Financial difficulties	9
Insufficient number of teachers	1
Insufficient number of special education personnel at rehabilitation centers	1
Quality of education	1

Furthermore, Mother 7 indicated her difficulties with these words, “*In my opinion, the greatest difficulty that I experience is the rate of disability among children. I think that every child with disability must benefit from every oppor-*

Table 9: Opinions of mothers related with suggestions for the difficulties that they experience when they are benefitting from special education support and services

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Raising awareness	5
Centers for supporting the socialization of children must be opened	7
There should be psychological support for families provided by the government	1
Increase in the duration of education	5

tunity provided by the government regardless of their rate of disability. In relation to the opinion of financial difficulties." Mother 10 stated, "Of course, financial difficulties come at first about special education. However, we can overcome these difficulties with our financial situation now. But we do not know what to do in the future."

Opinions of Mothers Related with Suggestions for the Difficulties that They Experience When They are Benefitting From Special Education Support and Services

Opinions of mothers related with suggestions for the difficulties that they experience when they are benefitting from special education support and services are provided in Table 9. Results showed that most of the mothers suggested that centers for supporting the socialization of children must be opened (f=7). Mothers also indicated that awareness should be increased in the society (f=5) and duration of education must be increased (f=5). Lastly, one mother indicated that there should be psychological support for families provided by the government. For instance, Mother 1 reported, "Society should be made conscious about individuals with disability and special education. When we go to a park with our child, other families and children in the park exclude our child because they are not aware about this issue. I knew nothing about autism until my child was diagnosed with autism." Besides, in relation to the opinion of centers for supporting the socialization of children must be opened, Mother 8 stated, "...Government and local municipalities must work on this issue. Services must be provided to improve skills on swimming or music activities. I think my child needs to participate in more activities to be able to live independently and carry out leisure activities."

Opinions of Mothers Related with the Resources that Help and Support Themselves Except From Their Families in the Process of Care and Education of Their Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder

Table 10 shows the results on the opinions of mothers related with the resources that help and support themselves except from their families in the process of care and education of their

Table 10: Opinions of mothers related with the resources that help and support themselves except from their families in the process of care and education of their children with autism spectrum disorder

Response	Frequency
Teachers	5
No	10

children with autism spectrum disorder. According to the results, most of the mothers indicated that they do not receive support from other resources except from their families (f=10). In relation to this opinion, Mother 2 indicated, "We do not receive any support except from our families." Five mothers stated that they receive great support from teachers. For instance, Mother 5 reported, "Obviously, we receive support from the teacher of our child about teaching, discipline, authority and how to behave with our child and we continue to receive this support. Our teachers are very helpful."

Opinions of Mothers Related with the Topics that They Need to Learn More about Informational Support in the Process of Care and Education of Their Children from Experts

Results on the opinions of mothers related with the topics that they need to learn more about informational support in the process of care and education of their children from experts are provided in Table 11. As it can be seen from Table 11, majority of the mothers (f=6) indicated that they need information on how they can contribute to the integration of their children into society. Results also showed that mothers receive support from psychologists and psychiatrists (f=5), teachers (f=4), other mothers of children

Table 11: Opinions of mothers related with the topics that they need to learn more about informational support in the process of care and education of their children from experts

Response	Frequency
I examine and learn from the Internet	1
I need information on how can I integrate my child into society	6
I consult to mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder	1
I receive support from teachers	4
I receive support from psychologists and psychiatrists	5

with autism spectrum disorder (f=1) and they learn from the Internet (f=1). For instance, Mother 7 stated, “We receive sufficient support from our teacher and we do not require any other resource for information.” Nevertheless, Mother 10 reported, “...Certainly, I need information on how can I integrate my child into society. Because, as I mentioned before, we are suffering from stigmatization. I am ready to do everything for raising awareness about disability in the society.”

Opinions of Mothers Related with Their Expectations from the Government in Terms of Economic, Social and Psychological Services for Their Children

Results on the opinions of mothers related with their expectations from the government in terms of economic, social and psychological services for their children are provided in Table 12. As it can be seen, majority of the mothers indicated that family guidance centers must be opened (f=13). According to the results, mothers reported that awareness must be raised in the society (f=9), awareness must be raised in the society (f=9), life centers for individuals with disability should be opened (f=7) and there should be more amount of financial support (f=2). For instance, Mother 11 indicated, “...Expectations are great but there is nothing in terms of practices. I would like for there to be a life center for my child as a social institution.” In addition, Mother 7 stated, “...Financial support from the government is definitely insufficient. This support does not even afford our child’s requirements. Social activity centers must be opened but there is no attempt from the government.”

Table 12: Opinions of mothers related with their expectations from the government in terms of economic, social and psychological services for their children

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
More amount of financial support	2
Life centers for individuals with disability	7
Increase in the hours of education	9
Family Guidance Centers must be opened	13
Awareness must be raised in the society	9

DISCUSSION

It is really important for families of children with autism spectrum disorder to know about special education support and services, and

develop awareness about how to benefit from these services as for all families of children with special needs. These families need to be supported in terms of economic, psychological and social services and this should be the primary responsibility of special education services. In this context, increasing the number and quality of special education services must be the primary target of government policies. In addition, since teachers have a major role to prepare the individuals for the future, teachers play a crucial role in providing quality education and services to students and informing the families about policy and practices in education and special education services (Kan 2015). This is also important for the professional competencies of teachers (Yazcayir and Selvi 2015). According to the results, mothers indicated that they receive support from teachers except from their families. Therefore, teachers must be aware and competent about new developments and trends in education and support and services provided to students with autism spectrum disorder. For instance, technology has rapidly advanced in recent years and therefore Internet-based applications have become more important and applicable. Teachers should follow these trends and developments and provide accurate and recent information to both families and children (Tugun and Ozdamli 2015; Ersan 2015). Therefore, it can be said that schools, parents and local authorities have an important role to develop an active partnership between these units in order to improve the policy and practices for children with special educational needs (Banes et al. 2015).

In this study, it was revealed that most of the mothers received support from specialists they consulted to a psychiatrist and they were totally unaware about this issue and they needed every kind of help. These results show the necessity of increasing awareness and knowledge in the society. Nevertheless, majority of the mothers indicated that special education support and services are not sufficient. These results are consistent with the findings in the literature (Yildirim and Akcamete 2014). According to the results, mother emphasized that special education support and services must involve both the child and family. In addition, mothers stated that special education services applied in the country are not sufficient and especially lecture hours are very limited. There are similar findings obtained from studies cited in the literature. Yikmis and Ozbey (2009) revealed that mothers mostly

expect from the institutions to expand lecture hours and give more importance to education.

Furthermore, results showed that majority of the mothers benefit from government support. When opinions of mothers and their expectations are considered, it can be indicated that governmental support should be more comprehensive in terms of economic, education and guidance services. Mothers also emphasized that they experience financial difficulties and suffer from stigmatization. It is known that stigmatization might negatively affect the families' parenting skills and attitudes towards their children (Hinshaw 2005). In relation to the opinions of mothers about their expectations from the government, they indicated that family guidance centers must be opened and awareness must be raised in the society. This would increase the wellbeing of families and develop positive attitudes towards children with special needs and therefore get rid of stigmatization. Another issue, which was emphasized by the mothers, is that they need informational support on how they can contribute to the integration of their children into society. Accordingly, they suggested that centers for supporting the socialization of children must be opened. Yates (2012) obtained similar results and showed that families could not benefit from appropriate services and they emphasize the necessity of accurate information and accurate representative from institutions. Overall results showed that mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder experience difficulties in terms of special education support and services and therefore these services must be improved through planning and implementing these services based on law and regulations of the country.

CONCLUSION

From a social anthropological perspective, the family is a social organization and all members of the family have a special role. Responsibilities of the family members, especially mothers' increase when there is a child with special needs in the family. Overall results of the present study showed that mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder think that special education support and services are not sufficient for their children and families. Therefore, it can be said that there should be more preventions and interventions for families of children with au-

tism spectrum disorder. In conclusion, governmental and private institutions provide more services for families especially mothers in order to improve their wellbeing and therefore contribute more to the education of the children with autism spectrum disorder.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are provided based on the results of the study for families of children with autism spectrum disorders about special education support and services:

- ♦ Special education and services network might be constituted towards children with autism spectrum disorder and families by the governments.
- ♦ Family-focused education programs for families of children with autism spectrum disorder might be increased.
- ♦ Isolation and stigmatization towards families of children with autism spectrum disorder might be eliminated by establishing positive attitudes towards individuals with autism spectrum disorder by increasing awareness and consciousness among the society.
- ♦ Legal special education service units might be constituted, which provide accurate, objective, consistent and reliable information for families of children with autism spectrum disorder by experts, and therefore families do not feel alone when they need help.
- ♦ Special education departments of universities should raise more competent and professional special education teachers to be able to work with students with autism spectrum disorder and their families in a more deliberative way.
- ♦ Further research might investigate the opinions, knowledge and awareness levels of special education teachers in order to reveal the current situation.
- ♦ Further research might examine the opinions of mothers with children with other forms of disabilities in order to reveal their requirements as well.

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