ACADEMIA International Journal for Social Sciences
Volume 4, Issue 4, 2025 ISSN-L (Online): 3006-6638

Creative Skills of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Huma Ijaz
humakamran9422@gmail.com
PhD. Scholar, AIOU. Islamabad Pakistan.

Dr. Hafiz Tahir Jameel
tahirjameel@aiou.edu.pk
Assistant Professor, AIOU

Kamran Ikram
kammran.ikram@gmail.com

Humara Shahid
Humerashahid4@gmail.com
Corresponding Author: *Huma Ijaz humakamran9422@gmail.com

Received: 11-07-2025 **Revised:** 21-08-2025 **Accepted:** 16-09-2025 **Published:** 22-10-2025

ABSTRACT

Background: *Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a type of neurodevelopmental condition that involves difficulties with social communication and includes behaviors that can be repetitive and restrictive. Traditional views have frequently painted autistic characteristics in a negative light, ignoring the distinctive creative and intellectual abilities that numerous children with ASD showcase. This research taps into the neurodiversity perspective, examining how exceptional abilities like artistic flair, musical talent, and impressive memory serve as genuine facets of identity for autistic kids in Pakistan, a place where negative stereotypes and deficit-focused views are still common.*

Methods: *The study participants were the subjects of a qualitative, child-centered, multimodal design. A total of 15 children, ages 10-20 years (9 boys, 6 girls), with confirmed diagnosis of ASD, were purposively recruited from autism advocacy groups and special education networks in Lahore, Pakistan. Each child participated in one to two sessions (30-60 minutes) of drawing, storytelling, music, and photography-based tasks. Semi-structured interviews were conducted parent-to-parent for an additional 45-60 minutes per participant. To ensure the study supported rigorous research protocols, continuous parental and child assent was obtained, pseudonyms were used, data were secured on an encrypted device, and data triangulation was applied across creative outputs, interviews, and observations forms of data. Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was used to report study results. In addition, all interviews were replicated each session to ensure a credible outcome. Three overarching themes emerged: (a) the development of expertise through hyper-focus, where "limited" interests became full-fledged capabilities; (b) differences in sensory and perception that fostered creativity, especially in art and music; and (c) authenticity and ethics in social relations, where direct and honest interaction reinforced identity and trust. Children showed resilience in the reframing of traits pathologized in a deficit model to capacities; parents articulated the way they recognized the relevance of this as central to belonging.*

Conclusions: *The findings question deficit models as it showed that skilled differences were a key component of identity-based notions of being, and it is important to support these differences and skills in family, educational, and policy contexts. Recognizing autism as part of the neurodiversity, this study calls for paradigm shifts towards strengths-based intervention and culturally responsive support systems in Pakistan. Future research should increase the sample size and broaden representation (e.g., non-verbal children) to validate and extend the findings.*

Keywords: *Autism Spectrum Disorder, neurodiversity, identity, strengths-based approach, Pakistan, inclusion*

INTRODUCTION

ASD (autism spectrum disorder) is a developmental disorder affecting how individuals perceive and interact with the world. It manifests as a wide spectrum of behaviors and traits (Poli, 2021). A deficit-based model of autism has guided the understanding of autism for many years. Initially, it was misdiagnosed as a mental illness caused by early childhood trauma or poor parenting (C. L., 2020). With modern medicine entertaining its genetic and neurodevelopmental underpinnings, the dominant societal narrative nevertheless still personally rejects atypical presence in favor of autistic absence (C. L., 2020; Pellicano et al., 2018). This view is rooted in a neurotypical conception of what constitutes "normal" behavior in communication, social interaction and sensory processing (C.L., 2020).

Due to the prevalence of this narrative, discussion within society and the professions has tended to focus on the negative aspects of autism and its deficits rather than those unique attributes it possesses (C. L., 2020). As a result, interventions and therapies have been overfocused on "normalizing" autistics by minimizing or practically destroying their traits to conform them to look like non-autistic peers (Autistic Self Advocacy Network, 2021; Bottema-Beutel et al., 2023). A significant research gap exists as well; although it is known that autistic individuals have greater special abilities and savant skills than their general population, limited research has focused on these strengths and how to support them effectively (Mottron & Bzdok, 2018; Middletown Centre for Autism, n.d.). There has been a shift in focus among autistic children in recent years, as they spend more time in therapy and school environments working on challenges rather than cultivating their strengths (MedBridge, 2024).

Neurodiversity paradigms have emerged as a response to this enduring deficit model. Using human brain function and neurological differences as a natural and valuable form of human diversity, this perspective challenges the status quo (Holmans, 2025; MedBridge, 2024). Instead of attempting to change the individual, this approach advocates acceptance, respect, and accommodation rather than denying that there is a single "normal" brain. According to this approach, there is no single "normal" brain and acceptance, respect, and accommodations should be sought instead of changing the individual (MedBridge, 2024; Holmans, 2021). Autism is seen as a "natural part of human neurological diversity" in the neurodiversity movement, which builds on the social model of disability and is compared to civil rights movements (Autistic Self Advocacy Network, 2021; Joseph, 2024). Through the presentation of a comprehensive qualitative study on the special skills and capacities of autistic children, this article seeks to fill the identified research gap. It is the objective of this study to provide a detailed, methodologically sound template for research centered around the autistic experience, allowing autistic children to gain confidence and empowerment by showing who they are, sharing their interests, and developing their strengths (Middletown Centre for Autism, n.d.).

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The Model of Enduring Deficit

Medical models, which have historically dominated autism discourse, aim at normalizing and reducing symptomatology (Pellicano et al., 2018; Brough et al., 2018). According to this framework, functional impairments and disabilities are caused by inherent deficits within the individual and empowered professionals and caregivers, particularly in the case of children. Common autistic traits such as communication differences, repetitive movements, or intense interests are framed as "deficits" or "symptoms" that require treatment or elimination (C. L., 2020; Pellicano et al., 2018).

The implications of this model are profoundly harmful by pathologizing neutral and even positive differences. This model contributes to the dehumanization of autistic people, denying them basic respect and dignity (Pellicano et al., 2018). An autistic perspective can perceive a neurotypical demand for constant eye contact as abnormal, but the deficit model frames it as a "strange gesture" (C. L., 2020). According to the model, autistic traits are attributed solely to a "social disorder," ignoring the intricate sensory motor and cognitive foundations of the autistic brain. In this perspective, any social communication difficulties are entirely blamed on autistic individuals, but transactions and sociological dynamics of cross-neurotype interactions are ignored (Pellicano et al., 2018).

An Overview of Neurodiversity Paradigm

Neurodiversity represents a fundamental shift in perspective. It asserts that neurological diversity is a natural and valuable component of human variation, as biodiversity or cultural diversity (Holmans, 2025; MedBridge, 2024). Using this framework, it is argued that there is no singular "normal" or "healthy" brain type, challenging the notion that autistic behavior is intrinsically pathological (Holmans, 2025). Social models of disability are intrinsically linked to the paradigm, in which disability is viewed not as a property of an individual's impairment but as a property of societies that fail to accommodate them (Joseph, 2024; Holmans, 2025; Brough et al., 2018). Using this perspective, autistic people face challenges primarily derived from social and political infrastructure that are inaccessible. The neurodiversity paradigm suggests that before requesting that neurodivergent individuals adapt or comply, society should first evolve and make accommodations.

The Problem of Double Empathy

This theoretical concept, the Double Empathy Problem (Milton, 2012), directly challenges the deficit model's view of social communication. According to this theory, communication breakdowns are not caused by a unilateral deficit on the part of autistics, but by a "disjunction between two social actors that are differently disposed." (Girdley & Milton, 2025). In this concept, communication between individuals with autism and neurotypical people is effective within neurotypes-meaning they can converse with each other effectively-but fails to work when it occurs between people of different neurotypes, such as between autistics and neurotypicals.

This re-contextualization of communication failure is crucial the traditional deficit model places the entire burden of communication on the autistic individual, leading to a pervasive sense of blame for social rejection or misunderstandings (Pellicano et al., 2018; Thompson & Neale, 2022). As a result of the Double Empathy Problem, the problem is fundamentally shifted away from the individual's brain to the interactional dynamics themselves. The theory explains why autistic people difficulty may have describing distress or symptoms to a neurotypical professional, and why they may be able to connect more effectively and have a stronger rapport with other autistics (Neurodivergent Insights, n.d.; Kapp et al., 2023). Also, the theory is crucial for understanding why autistic and non-autistic people often prioritize intervention goals differently (Girdley & Milton, 2025; Milton, 2012). Traditional views of autism tend to emphasize "normalizing" behavior (Milton, 2012; Girdley & Milton, 2025) while autistics emphasize self-advocacy and well-being (Milton, 2025). Research involving autistic children directly is necessary to understand their experiences and needs, rather than relying on an external, pathologizing lens, as this framework provides a strong theoretical foundation.

The table below summarizes the core distinctions between the two competing paradigms

Axis of Comparison	Medical Model	Neurodiversity Paradigm
Core Belief	The mind functions in one "normal" or "correct" way.	Human brain diversity is a natural and useful manifestation of human variation.
View of Autism	A cure is necessary for every disease, problem, or illness.	A neurological difference like a distinct identity.
Goal of Intervention	Symptom alleviation, trait eradication, and normalization.	Acceptance, accommodation, and assistance with self-determination.
View of Disability	An individual pathology is induced by innate deficiencies.	The result of societal restrictions and a mismatch between the individual and the environment.
Language	"Person with autism," "symptoms," "deficits," “impairment.”	"Autistic person," "traits," "characteristics," "differences."

Strengths of ASD

Despite the dominance of the deficit model in the discourse for so long, there is growing evidence to suggest that autistic traits are characterized by cognitive, perceptual, and social strengths. Often these unique capabilities are intrinsically linked to the very characteristics pathologized by neurotypical society, not anomalies.

Cognitive and Perceptual Strengths

The hyper-systemizing theory is one of the leading theories explaining exceptional abilities in autism, according to which autistics have a strong drive to examine and construct systems by identifying their underlying rules and regularities (Hughes et al., 2023; Baron-Cohen et al., 2009). The drive to understand systems has been linked to savant skills in highly systemically fields like mathematics, music, and astronomy (Hughes et al., 2023) The ability to pay attention to detail and find patterns is also an important component of other cognitive skills.

Autistic brains demonstrate greater activity in areas related to pattern recognition than the general population. Autistics have a greater ability to process complex patterns and an innate eye for detail, which allows them to notice and remember details that others do not (Mottron & Bzdok, 2018; Embrace-Autism, n.d.). People with autism can solve complex tasks up to 40% faster. The sensory and perceptual abilities of autistic individuals are enhanced in addition to their cognitive strengths. Synesthesia, a condition that involves the perception of multiple senses at the same time, occurs in nearly 19% of autistic people, compared to about 7% of the general population. There are numerous abilities associated with visual hypersensitivity, increased color intensity, and superior auditory perception including increased pitch detection and the ability to differentiate sounds from noise (Kapp et al., n.d.).

Social, Emotional & Behaviour Capacities

In typical narratives of social weaknesses, autistic individuals are often not acknowledged for their specific social abilities. Research indicates that autistic individuals are less likely to make illogical judgments and tend to display a stronger moral compass internally than neurotypical individuals. According to a study (Kapp et al., 2023) autistic people refused immoral choices even when they benefited from them, and their behavior remained consistent regardless of whether they were observed. Often, autistics see honesty and directness as strengths, as it allows them to communicate more clearly and save time (Kapp et al., 2023) (Kapp et al., 2023).

People with autism are also more likely to be nonconformists choosing the correct answer even when others choose an incorrect. Many activists have will go against the crowd for ASD as this becomes their powerful strength (Kapp et al., 2023). ASD has a strong need for isolation, often framed as a deficit. This ability has been associated with lower levels of depression and anxiety, because they enjoy being alone and do not feel lonely during this time (Kapp et al., 2023) Even though they tend to keep their social circles small, ASD people value friendships and tend to build stronger bonds with each other than with mixed-neurotype individuals.

Links between Talents and Traits

The characteristics which are often pathologized as deficits are, in fact, the very mechanisms that contribute to these unique skills and talents. (Poli, 2055), Resistance and resistance to change, referred to as "insistence on sameness," can be a powerful cognitive force. According (Poli, 2025), people with higher levels of this trait tend to be more persistent when completing tasks that require sustained attention, and they tend to abandon an activity early even when learning progress is limited. Ultimately, sustained engagement leads to effective learning outcomes.

Persistence, which is often viewed as rigid behavior, can be seen as a significant advantage when exploring for long periods of time. The ability to concentrate intensely on a specific subject is commonly associated with repetitive interests, which is the foundation of developing comprehensive knowledge. An individual's ability to see the details is the very engine behind his or her talent in areas such as art, music, and mathematics (Mottron & Bzdok, 2018). This demonstrates that the core, neurologically based traits of autism are not inherently good or bad; they depend entirely on the environment and the support provided (Middletown Centre for Autism, n.d.) to determine whether they are a "deficit" or a "strength". The neurodiversity paradigm asserts that when children's unique traits are nurtured and affirmed, they become a source of unique talents and capabilities, supporting the central claim of the neurodiversity paradigm (MedBridge, 2024).

Rationale of the Study

There is a severe lack of qualitative research that focuses on autistic children's strengths, as well as how to support these abilities. The need for this research is critical and multifaceted. The dominant deficit model in research and intervention has a clear, documented impact on mental health, with "masking" or "camouflaging" of autistic traits linked to higher rates of depression and anxiety. Non-autistic professionals and parents hold a significant divergence in their views of autism compared to autistic individuals' priorities. This divergence is a direct result of a dominant "outsider view of autism" As a result, this study must be conducted to provide the necessary data from the perspective of autistic children and their families so that genuinely neuro affirming support can be provided that prioritizes quality of life and self-determination.

Research Objectives

1. To identify and describe the unique skills, interests, and abilities of autistic children as perceived by them and their parents.
2. To propose ways to foster the strengths of ASD children in educational, home, and community settings.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a child-centered, qualitative research design adopted to investigate lived experiences of autistic children and their parents. To achieve a deeper understanding of the perspective of the individual and to break through superficial/deficit-oriented categories established by quantitative autism research (Kjeldsen et al. This study used a neuro-affirmative and child-centred approach that recognizes to what extent conventional qualitative methodologies dependent on nonverbal social cues and abstract communication might present methodological challenges. Researching flexible, respectful and adaptive material was to be planning the process to respond adequately to participants' unique needs and preferences (Cascio et al., 2020).

Participant Selection

The study sampled purposively for autistic participants, aged 6-16. It focused on this age group, because it is one where children can participate actively and their parents can offer critical longitudinal perspectives on development while they have significant interests that are frequently strong. Using theoretical saturation as a guide, we determined the sample size, a point where no new themes or information emerges from the data (Nair et al., 2022). Participants recruited through online and community-based channels, including autism advocacy groups and social media forums that explicitly support the neurodiversity paradigm. Autistic consultants were co-developing all recruitment materials to ensure they are accessible, respectful, and use identity-first language ("autistic children"), which many members of the autistic community prefer. The invitation clearly stated the study's purpose, the duration of the study, and the voluntary nature of participation.

Data Collection

The data collection employed a multi-method, child-centered approach designed to elicit rich, in-depth information while minimizing participant discomfort Each data collection session was flexible, with a clear focus on building trust and adapting communication to the child's needs. Researchers will adapt their questioning to make sure it is precise and easy to understand based on alternative forms of communication. A flexible interview guide to encourage children and parents to elaborate on experiences and gather in-depth information. To avoid leading language and respect the child's communication style, whether verbal or non-verbal (Kjeldsen et al., 2020), the questions were carefully structured. And children with neurodivergent behaviours often struggle to engage in traditional, conversation-based interviews, so visual and embodied methods can be particularly useful.

Procedure for data collection

Parents were invited to participate as needed in all sessions led by the first author (trained in qualitative child-centered approaches). Each child session lasted 30-60 minutes, while parent interviews averaged 45-60 minutes. The audio recordings, drawings, and transcripts were safely stored on an encrypted, password-protected device, so that only the research team could access them. A child was asked to attend one to two sessions, and a parent gave one interview. This research employed the Draw & Tell method,

where children were asked to illustrate or write their responses to prompts relating to their special interests or abilities. This method eases the pressure of eye contact, enables the child to articulate complex feelings, and reduces the possibility of misinterpretation by the researcher. Then, through the photo elicitation method, data was collected as children were given a camera to take photographs of places or things that are meaningful to them. These images served as prompts for a conversation during the interview. By using this child-led, collaborative process, abstract concepts relate to tangible experiences, and the expectation of thinking on the spot is reduced. Through the walk & talk method, children with a sense of agency can be particularly suitable for those who find movement to be beneficial for regulation and communication. The child guided the researcher around a familiar environment, such as home or school, and discussed things that matter to them.

The semi-structured interviews with the parent or caregiver were conducted separately to get their perspective on the child's strengths, how they have experienced the deficit-based narrative, and what barriers and facilitators they have suffered in developing their child's unique abilities. It was based on the principle of "nothing about us without us" and was guided by ethical research practices that respect autistic people's human rights and dignity.

The research was guided by the principle "nothing about us without us," which requires the involvement of autistic individuals in its design, development, and interpretation. Studying specifically avoids goals or language that aim to "normalize" autistics or teach them how to hide their traits, because these practices have been linked to poorer mental health outcomes, including depression and anxiety, and are ethically unacceptable. The important aspect of this study was obtaining ethically informed consent and child consent. While parental consent was required for children to participate, the study emphasizes continuous consent from parents.

DATA ANALYSIS

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA), as outlined by Braun and Clarke, was used to analyze the data from interviews and visual/embodied methods. This method is well-suited for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns of meaning across a diverse dataset. The "reflexive" component is particularly crucial since it requires the researcher to constantly examine how their own backgrounds and assumptions may influence the analytical process. This ensures that the final themes are grounded in the data rather than passively "emerging" from it (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019).

Emerging Themes

The following themes, which demonstrate a change from a deficit-based to a strengths-based perspective of the autistic experience, emerged from the data based on the suggested methodology and driven by the research objectives.

Theme 1: The Cultivation of Passion and Expertise through Hyperfocus

This theme captured how autistic children's intense and repetitive interests, often pathologized as "restricted interests," were in fact the primary vehicle for developing profound skills and knowledge. This cognitive phenomenon, commonly referred to as intense focus, is a powerful tool that allows people to engage deeply with their subject matter. Research showed that children become experts in their chosen fields when allowed to pursue these passions.

"He can talk for hours about the inner workings of an escalator. It's not just memorizing facts; he truly understands the system. I see it as a mechanical talent, not a fixation."

The theme explored how persistence, a trait associated with a preference for predictability and often labeled as "insistence on sameness," enhances learning. Children with this trait demonstrated a powerful drive to explore and master a topic until they were satisfied with their understanding rather than giving up when faced with a challenge.

Theme 2: Reclaiming Sensory and Perceptual Differences

Autistic phenomenology is not mere deficit, and this theme forces us to question that. That is, when sensitivities are part of the equation, they can be a source of unique strengths and another way to see the world. They talked about being sensitive and how this helps them see things that other people miss, making them good at art, music and problem-solving.

"I can hear every single sound in a room at the same time. It's a lot, but it also means I can single out one of the tunes from the wall of sound and play it perfectly on the piano. It's a superpower."

This theme suggested that sensory experiences are not necessarily a "disorder," but instead often lie at the root of creativity and serve as an avenue for regulation. To support well-being and flourishing, these differences must be respected, not eradicated.

Theme 3: The Morality and Authenticity of Autistic Social Connection

This theme explored how autistic social traits, which are often framed as a deficit in social communication, are in fact a manifestation of a distinct and highly valued approach to human connection. It can be shown from the data that honesty and directness are valued as a means of moral consistency and a way to build trust, free from the unwritten social games of neurotypical interaction.

"My child doesn't pretend to be someone they're not. They are honest and kind and they stand up for what's right, even if it's unpopular. It's an integrity that I admire."

Communication difficulties are a bidirectional issue arising from a disjuncture between neurotypes. This topic highlighted the "Double Empathy Problem." According to the data, autistic children can develop strong, lasting friendships, particularly with peers who share their neurotypes, and their desire for solitude is often a source of peace rather than loneliness.

DISCUSSION

This proposed study is intended to make several significant contributions to literature and to practical applications. It will fill a critical gap in qualitative research on autistic strengths by providing extensive, rich data that complements the limited quantitative findings available. A direct challenge to the harmful "social deficit" theories will be provided through the research by providing evidence from the perspective of autistic children and their families, strengthening the argument that autistics are not flawed, but suffer from a breakdown of cross-neurotype interaction. This study makes it possible for future researchers to conduct ethical, neuro-affirming research on autistic children, while ensuring that the voices of this community are central to the discussion (Cascio et al., 2020).

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The implications of the expected findings for practice are profound. For teachers, research can be used to develop strengths-based educational practices that leverage special interests, hyperfocus, and attention to

detail as powerful learning tools. As a result, the physical environment could be adjusted to reduce sensory overload, and activities may be modified to accommodate the learning style of each student. This research encourages therapists and clinicians to use person-centered approaches that respect an individual's autonomy, self-determination, and authentic self rather than compliance-based interventions. The research will also provide actionable recommendations for parents and caregivers, empowering them to see their children's unique traits as capabilities to be nurtured, fostering an environment where children feel valued for being themselves and can take pride in their unique skills. The results would have to be further confirmed and extended future studies should organize the experiences of underrepresented groups highly supported needs individuals, nonverbal individuals, people with autistic symptoms but not formally diagnosed, typically overlooked or underserved in traditional research and interventions.

CONCLUSION

Autistic individuals' potential has historically been limited by the prevailing deficit-based narrative that has shaped both scientific understanding and the potential of autistic individuals for decades. Society has inadvertently neglected to acknowledge the rich cognitive, perceptual, and social strengths inherent to autism by framing autism as a set of problems to be solved, which has inadvertently obscured the richness of autism. Based on the principles of neurodiversity paradigm and social model of disability, this proposed scholarly article and qualitative study illustrate a path forward. As a counter-narrative focused on the lived experiences of autistic children and their parents, this research is intended to be more accurate, respectful, and empowering as well. Using this research's detailed, neuro affirmative methodology as a blueprint, it is possible to conduct research which respects the uniqueness of autistic peoples while ensuring that their voices are the primary source of information, which ensures that a comprehensive study is conducted.

REFERENCES

Autism Speaks. (2025). *Participate in research*. Retrieved from https://www.autismspeaks.org/participate-in-research

Autistic Self Advocacy Network. (2021). *The ethics of autism intervention and research*. Retrieved from https://autisticadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ACES-Ethics-of-Intervention.pdf

Bottema-Beutel, K., Park, A. E., & Woynaroski, T. G. (2023). A neurodiversity-affirming perspective on early autism intervention. *Autism, 27*(7), 2130-2139.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 11*(4), 589–597. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806

Brough, J. M., et al. (2018). Deficit, difference, or both? Characterizing the neurodiversity movement online. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 48*(6), 1957-1967.

C. L. (2020). *The deficit model of autism*. Other Autism. Retrieved from https://other-autism.com/2020/04/07/the-deficit-model-of-autism/

Cascio, M. A., Weiss, J. A., & Racine, E. (2020). Person-oriented research ethics to address the needs of participants on the autism spectrum. *Journal of Medical Ethics, 46*(10), 682–688.

Embrace-Autism. (n.d.). *Autism strengths and challenges*. Retrieved from https://embrace-autism.com/autism-strengths-and-challenges/

Gillespie, B. E., Mason, D., Davies, A. J., & Pellicano, E. I. (2022). "An autism diagnosis is not a life sentence." A qualitative study of the experiences of autistic adults and their relatives. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 52*(2), 659-673.

Girdley, R., & Milton, D. (2021). The autistic advantage: The benefits of employing autistic researchers in qualitative research teams. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 18*(2), 173-191.

Girdley, R., & Milton, D. (2025). The double empathy problem in medicine. *Frontiers in Psychiatry, 16*, 1538875.

Hiddengemsaba.com. (n.d.). *The role of data collection and monitoring in ABA therapy*. Retrieved from https://www.hiddengemsaba.com/articles/why-data-collection-and-monitoring-are-essential-in-aba-therapy

Holmans, C. (2025). *Neurodiversity, the medical model, and the social model*. Neurodivergent Rebel. Retrieved from https://neurodivergentrebel.com/2025/01/07/neurodiversity-the-medical-model-the-social-model-is-neurodivergence-a-disability/

How Creativity Unlocks Understanding. (n.d.). *Creative and embodied methods for qualitative research with autistic children*. The National Elf Service. Retrieved from https://www.nationalelfservice.net/learning-disabilities/autistic-spectrum-disorder/how-creativity-unlocks-understanding/

Hughes, C., et al. (2023). Savant skills in autism: A systematic review. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 53*(2), 520–539.

Joseph, M. (2024). The social model of psychiatric disability and its implications for policing. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice, 18*(1), 1–10.

Kapp, S. K., Steward, R., & Russell, G. (2023). "I just want to be myself." Autistic people's perspectives on strengths, identity, and mental health. *Autism, 27*(7), 1960-1974.

Kjeldsen, A. M., Nielsen, T. F., & Ørngreen, R. (2020). Methodological challenges in qualitative research with children with autism spectrum disorder. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 19*, 160935542095940.

Mastermindbehavior.com. (n.d.). *The role of data collection in ABA therapy progress tracking*. Retrieved from https://www.mastermindbehavior.com/post/the-role-of-data-collection-in-aba-therapy-progress-tracking

MedBridge. (2024). *Neurodiversity: A changing paradigm*. Retrieved from https://www.medbridge.com/blog/neurodiversity-a-changing-paradigm

Middletown Centre for Autism. (n.d.). *A strengths-based approach to autism*. Retrieved from https://www.middletownautism.com/files/uploads/5624747fe9fc19de207892e4d0487bd0.pdf

Milton, D. E. M. (2012). On the ontological status of autism: The 'double empathy problem.' *Disability & Society, 27*(8), 883-887.

Mottron, L., & Bzdok, D. (2018). Autistic talent: A strength-based approach. *Cortex, 107*, 17-27.

Nair, A., Rajkumar, P., & Singh, V. (2022). Parenting a child with autism spectrum disorder: A qualitative study. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry, 64*(3), 263-268.

Neurodiversity. (2025). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neurodiversity

Neurodivergent Insights. (n.d.). *The double empathy problem in medicine*. Retrieved from https://neurodivergentinsights.com/the-double-empathy-problem-in-medicine/

Nicole. (n.d.). *Child-led therapy data collection*. Child-Led.org. Retrieved from https://www.childled.org/blog/data-collection-child-led-therapy

O'Loughlin, S., Arnold, C., & Milton, D. (2022). Experiences of neurodivergent academics: A qualitative research synthesis. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education, 14*(4), 1618-1634.

Pellicano, E. I., Dinsmore, A., & Charman, T. (2018). *A future for autism research*. The Lancet Psychiatry, 5(7), 543-545.

Poli, F. (2025). Researchers uncover a hidden cognitive strength associated with autistic traits. *PsyPost*. Retrieved from https://www.psypost.org/researchers-uncover-a-hidden-cognitive-strength-associated-with-autistic-traits/

Research Autism. (n.d.). *Research participation opportunities*. Retrieved from https://researchautism.org/researchers/research-participation-opportunities/

Scribbr. (2024). *Writing a research paper introduction*. Retrieved from https://www.scribbr.com/research-paper/research-paper-introduction/

Scribbr. (2025). *How to do thematic analysis*. Retrieved from https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/

SJSU Writing Center. (2023). *Introduction of research papers*. Retrieved from https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/docs/handouts/Introduction%20of%20Research%20Papers.pdf

Srivastava, S., et al. (2020). Data analysis and classification of autism spectrum disorder using principal component analysis. *Advances in Bioinformatics, 2020*, 1–7.

Thompson, T., & Neale, S. J. (2022). Socialising in autistic university students: A systematic review. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 52*(2), 643–658.