Role of Family Involvement and Communication Skills in Predicting Social Integration in Children with Autism

Tobias. Neumann[1]*, Johanna. Meier[2]

[1] Department of Social Work, University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany
[2] Department of Clinical Psychology, University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany

* Corresponding author email address: tobias.neumann@uni-hamburg.de

Editor	Reviewers
Anela Hasanagic Full Professor, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Islamic Education, University of Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina anela.hasanagic@unze.ba	**Reviewer 1:** Zahra Yousefi Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Khorasgan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran. Email: yousefi1393@khuisf.ac.ir **Reviewer 2:** Mehdi Rostami Department of Psychology and Counseling, KMAN Research Institute, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada. Email: dr.mrostami@kmanresce.ca

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the introduction, the sentence "Social integration, defined as the ability to engage meaningfully with peers, family, and community, is a key determinant of long-term developmental, psychological, and academic outcomes" lacks a direct citation supporting this definition. Please add a reference to strengthen the theoretical grounding of this definition.

In paragraph 2 of the introduction, the claim "Effective family involvement encompasses various dimensions, including home-based educational support, participation in school activities, and consistent communication with educators and therapists" would benefit from more elaboration. Consider specifying how each dimension contributes uniquely to social integration in ASD.

The phrase "active father involvement, often underexamined in autism research" in paragraph 3 of the introduction could be strengthened by citing a review study that highlights this research gap to emphasize its novelty and importance.

In the "Communication Skills" subsection, the sentence "Responses are rated on a 4-point scale…" should clarify whether higher scores consistently reflect stronger communication or if reverse coding was applied in some subscales.

The Data Analysis section mentions "assumptions of normality, linearity, and multicollinearity were checked," yet it does not clarify whether any cases were excluded or transformed due to assumption violations. Including this would enhance the transparency of the statistical approach.

In the Findings section, the demographic report notes 72.0% male children, which reflects the general gender distribution in ASD. However, it would be helpful to discuss whether this distribution influenced the statistical outcomes, particularly regarding communication skills.

The multivariate regression in Table 4 identifies communication skills as the stronger predictor, but the difference in beta coefficients (0.42 vs. 0.38) is small. Consider testing whether the difference is statistically significant and discussing its practical implications.

In the Discussion section, the sentence "Communication skills emerged as an even stronger predictor…" could be strengthened by including a theoretical rationale, such as citing Vygotskian or pragmatic language development frameworks, to explain why communication may have greater predictive power.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2.   Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In paragraph 4, the authors state: "the family became the primary source of social interaction and developmental support for children with autism." This assertion is valid but needs empirical citation beyond Cheng et al. (2022) to broaden its evidence base, especially during COVID-19 contexts.

In the last paragraph of the introduction, the authors state: "limited research has investigated how both factors jointly predict social integration…" This statement is central to the article's novelty and would benefit from at least one citation that highlights the lack of integrative studies to justify the research gap.

The Methods section does not mention whether any regional diversity (e.g., urban vs. rural areas in Germany) was accounted for in the sampling process. Please clarify this point, as regional variations can affect family involvement and service access.

In the "Measures" section on social integration, the authors state that the SSIS-RS is suitable for children with developmental disorders. However, this assertion would benefit from citing a validation study of the SSIS-RS specifically within ASD populations.

The explanation of the FIQ in the "Family Involvement" subsection includes strong psychometric claims (e.g., Cronbach's alpha above 0.85). It would improve transparency if the authors briefly mentioned whether these values were re-confirmed in the current sample.

Table 1 reports high mean values across all variables. However, the interpretation of what constitutes "moderate" versus "high" is vague. Please specify cut-off points or standard norms for these instruments to provide clearer context.

Table 2 reports strong positive correlations between social integration and the predictors. However, the manuscript does not report confidence intervals for these correlations. Including them would enhance the statistical robustness.

In the regression model (Table 3), the authors report an R^2 of 0.45. While this is a strong effect, the text does not contextualize whether this level of explained variance is typical in similar ASD studies. Including a comparative comment would enhance the interpretation.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2.   Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.
Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.