

# Exploratory Study on Various Types of Leisure Activities of Indian Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder- A Qualitative Analysis

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# Exploratory Study on Various Types of Leisure Activities of Indian Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder- A Qualitative Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to identify the important components of leisure and to comprehensively assess various leisure time activities, that entail the overall well-being of mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) with indispensable demanding care of children with autism. A cross-sectional design with interpretivism and an inductive approach on a sample of 61 mothers of children with ASD, in India was used to explore various leisure time activities. Mothers engaging in the leisure of individual choice for self-replenishment, social connectedness, and happiness in life despite the demanding care of the child with autism were identified. The face, content, and construct validity are maintained in its preliminary stage. This study aimed to explore various leisure activities in the lives of mothers of children with ASD. The 7 categories of Leisure activities (LA) are Entertainment activities, Outings, Social events, Sports and physical exercises, Homemaking and other fruitful involvements, Arts, and intellectuals, Resting and relaxation, as diversionary activities to energize, divert, and relax as fun and free-time identified in the context of Indian mothers.*

**Keywords:** Leisure, Entertainment activities, Leisure Needs and Motives, Mother, Stress.

## 1. INTRODUCTION :

### 1.1. Autism Spectrum Disorder:

The birth of a kid is the happiest moment of a parent's life. As children move through several stages of growth and development, caregivers encounter new challenges and acquire new knowledge. Better information, early diagnosis, intervention, and access to appropriate resources can help children and their caregivers have substantially better outcomes, even though there is no one cause of ASD. As a neurodevelopmental disorder, ASD is characterized by deficiencies in social communication, engagement, and the appearance of limited repetitive activities. One in 100 children worldwide is thought to have ASD, according to a WHO review on 29 March 2023 [1]. About 1 in 36 children of the population have ASD, according to the CDC and ADDM Network 2023 (Maenner et al., 2020) [2]. ASD symptoms range from modest to overt in terms of their fundamental traits, intensity, onset, and presentation. The toddler years are typically when symptoms first appear. Depending on when parents notice deviations in their children, concerns can differ. According to current theories, autism is a collection of illnesses that are behaviorally defined yet have a neurological basis. These disorders are typified by difficulty in three key areas: interests, communication, social interaction, and confined repetitive activities. Children with autism have varying effects on their families and the wider society.

### 1.2 Mother:

We often hear of the mother's indispensable role in bringing up children. It is true and a mother is indispensable! In many different cultural contexts, most notably in Western civilization, artistic portrayals of the mother-child dyad convey the child's dependence on the mother and the mother's involvement in the child's life. In the Indian setting, the mother has a universal image of motherliness.

She is a figure of warmth, love, and care. She has unconditional support for their children. The unique child gets this unconditional support, love, and care for his/her whole life. Mothers are identified without any free time and are not free from obligations. The leisure pursuits that are not related to employment and attitudes experienced from a self-actualized perspective are not in the mother's life. If I'd just had a mother, I could say mother was the reality of the imaginary world of an autistic child's mother. Nurturing involves caring or glooming from the necessities of life naturally from daily adventures to the duties or obligations of daily chores. Motherhood is a fulfilling experience that is personally fulfilling and beneficial for everyone to experience something special and distinctive. This leads to a particular mindset and attitude that promotes fulfilling, upbeat leisure activities and leads to a sense of purpose in life, identity, and self-actualization.

### **1.3. Mothers of Children with Autism:**

Caring for a child with autism places significant demands on parents, particularly mothers who often take on the role of primary caregivers. This responsibility entails not only meeting the daily needs of their child but also navigating the unique challenges and complexities associated with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Mothers play a crucial role in providing emotional support to their child with autism, often being the primary source of comfort and reassurance. They also manage the practical aspects of daily life, such as meal preparation, hygiene routines, and ensuring their child's safety. Mothers must develop strategies to address challenges like communication difficulties, sensory sensitivities, and behavioral issues effectively, often through structured routines, visual supports, and positive reinforcement. Mothers frequently become advocates for their children within educational settings, healthcare systems, and the community at large. They work tirelessly to ensure their child receives appropriate services, accommodations, and opportunities for learning and socialization. Managing the complex array of therapies and interventions that are often part of autism treatment such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and behavioral therapy falls largely on the shoulders of mothers (Rassafiani et al., 2012) [3]. This involves scheduling appointments, facilitating therapy sessions, and reinforcing skills at home. Mothers strive to create an inclusive environment where their children feel accepted and valued. They may educate family members, friends, and the community about autism to foster understanding and support for their child's unique needs. This causes an imbalance in the way she uses her time, which lowers her quality of life relative to mothers of typical-sized children (Menezes & D'Mello, 2021) [4]. Despite the demands of caregiving, it's essential for mothers to prioritize their well-being. Self-care practices such as seeking respite, connecting with support networks, and maintaining personal interests help mothers maintain resilience and balance in their caregiving role.

### **1.4. Leisure:**

Leisure refers to free time or activities that one engages in for relaxation, enjoyment, or personal development outside of work or other obligations. It encompasses a wide range of activities such as hobbies, sports, reading, traveling, and socializing. Leisure time is essential for mental and physical well-being as it provides opportunities for relaxation, stress relief, creativity, and personal growth. Effective use of leisure time can contribute significantly to a balanced and fulfilling life. Researchers claim that because of self-imposed limitations, typical sedentary behavior, and life's other obstacles, people often overlook exciting leisure activities (Lee et al., 1994) [5]. Leisure constraints for mothers can be quite significant due to the multiple roles and responsibilities they typically manage. Mothers often have limited free time due to the demands of childcare, household chores, and possibly work commitments. Finding time for leisure activities can be challenging amidst these responsibilities. Leisure activities often come with costs, whether it's for classes, memberships, or equipment. Mothers may find it difficult to justify spending money on themselves when there are other family expenses to consider. Social expectations and norms can constrain mothers' leisure choices. They may feel pressure to prioritize family time or caregiving over personal leisure pursuits. Mothers may experience guilt or anxiety when taking time for themselves, feeling that they should be focusing on their children or household duties instead. Organizing childcare or finding someone to take care of household responsibilities while they engage in leisure activities can be a logistical challenge for mothers. Fatigue and lack of energy due to the demands of caregiving and household tasks can limit mothers' participation in physical or outdoor leisure activities (Soyer et al., 2017) [6]. To accommodate the needs of a kid with disabilities, schedules must be meticulously planned and organized, yet moms or other caretakers still

need to find time for important activities. In any other case, the lifestyle will be impacted by the lack of participation.

### **1.5. Leisure Activities:**

For children with autism and other disabilities, there are a variety of leisure options that have been created by academics and philosophers in India and other countries. They support people with neurodevelopmental and other disabilities in meeting their basic needs and maintaining their well-being. The information that is currently available shows that, as part of interventions and measurements, children with disabilities in a range of age groups including childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood have access to leisure activities and schedules. The tendency for researchers to focus primarily on the welfare of children rather than mothers reflects broader societal priorities and historical biases. Traditional gender roles have often placed mothers in the primary caregiving role, which has led to a historical emphasis on children's development and well-being in research. Mothers' experiences and needs have been overshadowed by this focus. Research funding and policy initiatives frequently prioritize child development and early childhood education over maternal health and well-being. This can result in a lack of comprehensive studies that address the holistic needs of mothers. There is a cultural expectation that mothers should prioritize their children's needs above their own. This societal norm can influence research agendas and perceptions of what topics are most important to study. In some cases, data on children's development may be more readily available or standardized compared to comprehensive data on mothers' health, experiences, and challenges. Research that focuses on children's outcomes often receives more attention and funding due to its perceived societal importance and potential policy implications, whereas research on mothers may be viewed as less urgent or impactful.

### **1.6 Role of Leisure Activities:**

Leisure activities play a crucial part in creating adult identity in young people. Many of the studies have focused on the influence of caregiving on the physical health and psychological well-being of the caregiving. Caregivers certainly experience physical as well as emotional stress because of the demanding nature of caregiving (O'Mullan & Krishnagiri, 2005) [7]. The advantages of leisure on general well-being and stress management of caregivers have been researched. Various research on care providers asserts the benefits of leisure. It is also found that quality of life improves the personal relationship with other members of the family (Russell, 2009) [8]. The caregivers who provide physical support to the disabled very often report physical pain fatigue and chronic physical illness such as carpal tunnel syndrome and sciatica. Schaff et al., (2011) [9] discovered that many mothers made an effort to partake in leisure activities regularly. Numerous mothers have shown reluctance to participate in leisure activities planned in institutions or community centers. Many families avoided the activities and had trouble finding time for them. The benefits of leisure have been the subject of research mainly on family leisure and family recreation for children with disabilities. However, there haven't been any significant studies done on caregivers' free time. As the attention is on the children with impairments, it is commonly believed that the requirement for caregivers' leisure time is unimportant. The importance of leisure time for themselves has been acknowledged by the caretakers. Mothers of kids with and without impairments participated in a study on time use. The findings revealed that mothers of children with and without impairments spend very different amounts of time caring for their kids and engaging in leisure activities (Crowe & Florez, 2006) [10]. A study comparing the amount of time needed to care for developmentally disabled children against children without disabilities discovered that mothers of disabled children cared for their children for noticeably longer periods. Normal mothers spent more time engaging in social and outdoor activities (Blaylock Johnson & Crosetto Deitz, 1985) [11]. Despite some of the mother's physical and emotional conditions, they claimed that caring for their children inspired them to look after their physical and mental health (Gevir et al., 2006) [12]. They frequently cite the need to maintain their fitness to care for the child. Organizing recreational activities for ASD mothers can be challenging for many families.

## **2. OBJECTIVES :**

**The specific objectives of this study are:**

- (1) To identify and categorize the types of leisure activities mothers of children with autism engage in.

(2) To explore the motivations and reasons mothers participate in these activities.

### 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE/ RELATED WORKS :

#### 3.1. Mothers of Children with Autism:

Mothers (ASD) portray multiple functions in the lives of their children. In the majority of the cases, it is mothers who notice the autistic problems and they seek appropriate diagnosis and obtain treatment. How mothers and fathers interact is fascinating. They still think their child is great, even if he or she is the most revolting tiny blister they have ever seen (Dahl, 2016) [13]. It is heartbreaking to witness something that you were waiting for so much, wanted so much, and yet not get it (Menezes & D'Mello, 2021) [14]. When the treatment programs are found to be working the mothers are generally motivated and involved constantly in the child's training and make sure that the training skills are transferred to the family setting. The children grow to be independent as they grow old, but in the case of autistic children, they remain dependent on the mother (Breslau et al., 1982) [15].

#### 3.2. Stress:

Stress is a person's reaction to a shift in circumstances or a potentially hazardous scenario. It can be viewed as an individual's reaction to an internal mental state, such as test anxiety, or to an external event or demand, such as taking an exam. It's intriguing to see that anxiety tends to increase when one worries they won't be able to handle the current situation. Stress is seen negatively by the majority of individuals. Children inevitably alter how families function. For many parents, the parental role could be a cause of stress. Raising an autistic child is highly challenging, demanding, and stressful (Olsson & Hwang, 2003) [16]. Parenting is a complex activity, whereas parenting styles are common variations that center on control-related issues (Baumrind, 1996) [17]. Parenting is impacted by a child's incapacity to adapt to alterations in the social climate as well as by behavior issues like attention seeking, disobedience, acceptability, and demandingness (Noh et al., 1989) [18]. The parents of these children are typically the primary caregivers, and noting this is crucial to their amount of involvement with them and their capacity to deal with the issues these kids face.

#### 3.3. Leisure:

According to the person, location, and moment, the word "leisure" can have many diverse meanings that are multi-dimensional. Leisure is free time without obligations. It includes pastimes that are not connected to employment and attitudes that are described from a self-actualized standpoint. When someone engages in leisure as a recreational activity, they are having a positive personal experience or engaging in something that will greatly benefit them. Understanding leisure is primarily influenced by attitude. Each individual's leisure experience is distinct from the others. This leads to a particular mindset and attitude that promotes fulfilling, upbeat leisure activities and leads to self-actualization, self-expression, and meaningful life.

**3.3.1. Concepts of Leisure:** Time, particular activities, and state of mind are the three primary concepts of leisure (Haywood, 1989) [19]. When it comes to time, leisure can be characterized as free time without any external pressures or obligations dictating one's path of activity. It's a time when there are no social obligations to be fulfilled, including those related to employment, family, and religion. Additionally, this period is unencumbered by societal expectations of a person's role in a bigger whole. Leisure is sometimes thought of as the pursuits people elect to engage in when they have free time. Leisure can also be thought of as a particular action that helps a person unwind and reenergize. According to traditional wisdom, leisure time should be spent doing the aforementioned things. The most well-liked pastimes are watching television, participating in sports and outdoor activities, reading, going to the movies, and listening to music. These pursuits either result in mental, physical, or spiritual relaxation, but they fall short of satisfying a person's spiritual demands. Leisure is a practical tool for accomplishing socially desired and accepted goals. It's also mistakenly believed that leisure time produces nothing more than a quick, easy solution to the strains of daily life. Because of this, a person may occasionally equate leisure with guilt when they consider the work they could be accomplishing rather than taking a break for something with so many negative implications.

**3.3.2. Leisure Activities:** As it provides freedom from rigid formalities, the ability to choose how to spend one's time, the satisfaction of one's need for rest, and the ability to express oneself, leisure is seen as the primary source of all desirable experiences. The types of leisure activities that are offered in a

location may vary depending on technological, economic, social, and political aspects. The many leisure activities can be divided into a few groups, though. Some divide leisure activities into dangerous (risky) and non-threatening categories. Activities can be divided into three categories: harmful, neutral, or good activities; and productive versus unproductive activities. Some contend that any pastime can be productive if it makes the individual involved happy. An action is productive if it results in something beneficial even if the person does not enjoy it. Between solitary and social environments, preferences differ. Those who favor either can choose between music and dance. Those who enjoy solitude do not seek out socializing with friends, coworkers, relatives, strangers, mass social events, or groups. The main three leisure activities are generally referred to as surfing, reading, and strolling. Weight lifting, running, calisthenics, riding a bike, and swimming are all examples of physical maintenance exercises. Reading, browsing, arguing, and games like chess are examples of intellectual pastimes. Various forces, such as social, political, natural, economic (time, energy, money, materials), and human capabilities, influence leisure, but it is chosen rather than compelled (psychological and physical). While having fun and playing for no pay may qualify as leisure, taking oneself too seriously or playing for cash may not. Chess, checkers, and card games are examples of sedentary games that can be played for leisure. Other forms of leisure include running from or pursuing nothing, model building, collecting (stamps, bugs, etc.), spending time with pets, plants, and children, resting, relaxing, sleeping, and not having to think, say, or do anything. Nervi divided leisure activities into categories such as physical activity against mental activity, useless activity versus useful activity, solitary activity versus social activity, competition with oneself versus competition with others, competitive activity versus cooperative activity, and so on (King et al., 2003) [20].

**3.3.3. Leisure Needs and Motives:** Leisure needs have important practical considerations in examining leisure behavior. Theories of leisure need to consider the behavior and causality of leisure as a multifaceted concept and cannot have a limited scope. Every individual might consider a single leisure activity under different circumstances for different reasons with different outcomes. Leisure need and the need for recreation describe the concept of leisure behavior. The fundamental cause for leisure behavior is the biological makeup that evidenced heritable influence which explains the genetic differences in having an interest in different leisure pursuits. A combination of environmental factors such as socialization and early social influences shape leisure behavior. Biological disposition and early social influences jointly raise optimal arousal. The magnitude of active leisure participation will vary from person to person and also, its perspective as passive leisure engagement. When a need for self-expression arises, people play and relax to attain pleasure. The motivation and the reason behind the engagement of various levels of leisure were studied under need theories, depending upon the antecedent that explained leisure participation. The extent of participation in leisure under surplus need theory explained the stimulation that was needed to accomplish biological needs. Similarly, when there is a need for catharsis, from stress and emotions people engage in leisure activities that motivate them to do so. The unmet goals compensated by engaging in leisure activities of competitive sports and others are studied in competitive need theory. The restoration-relaxation domain was comparatively similar to the catharsis need theory with passive leisure involvement after a busy tiring schedule of the day. The compensation components where active leisure filled with energy were utilized towards unmet desires. Whereas diversionary relaxation with active leisure activities energizes to divert from routine. The selection of leisure activity from one's repertoire depends on the situational as well as social contexts to meet the desire (Chun et al., 2012) [21].

**3.3.4. Leisure Behavior:** When people have self-determination as an intrinsic reward, the tendency to participate increases with perceived freedom. Leisure competence is intrinsically motivated to influence optimal arousal. Situations and factors socially responsible cause leisure behavior and leisure participation of optimal arousal at various levels of causality. Past experiences and social influences such as stereotypes determine perceived competence and shape our personality. Motivation as an internal drive physiologically aroused will be deduced as an outcome of psychological motive through one's behavior. A conducive social environment is essential to exhibit cognitive process through behavior to attain goal-set motives. Leisure is usually motivated by intrinsic motivators as the rewards are intrinsic. Unlike engagement in work that rewards extrinsic rewards such as remuneration. This explains the "Whys" of any leisure involvement. Leisure in the form of recreation if begun with intrinsic rewards lasts longer than extrinsic reasons hence emphasizing a clear subjective definition of leisure. Intrinsically motivated leisure activities with feelings of competence attain contentment and self-

actualization that could be socially desirable and form the basis of leisure behavior. The normative need for leisure participation as subjective interpretation is in consideration of individual norms. Whereas comparative leisure provides recreational opportunities driving to achieve the maximum. If personal competence and self-determination are sustained, their normative and comparative drives motivate extrinsically or intrinsically their leisure behavior, by self-comparing leisure skills. The different levels of variables explain different recreational activities that people engage in general depending upon their socioeconomic status, level of residence, and locality. This explains the leisure behavior depending upon the services available and the participation. Leisure motivation concerning intrinsic motivation as perceived leisure activities falls under three dimensions of needs, such as competence, liking, and interpersonal involvement, that explain leisure behavior with individual differences and need-satisfying. Leisure behavior with individual differences and need-satisfying qualities led to the clustering of leisure activities. Leisure that takes place in a social context is usually motivated intrinsically as the structured activities mandate others' presence as well as interpersonal competence. Social interaction and the relational variables hypothesized the significance of leisure participation as, enjoying the company, building networks, 'and strengthening relationships (Chun et al., 2012) [22].

**3.3.5. Leisure Participation:** Leisure participation is defined as taking part in the formal or informal daily activities of leisure in all types of environments, including entertainment, play, sports activities, learning, and religious proclamation. Formal activities are structured leisure activities that involve rules that lead to the achievement of goals with a formally designated coach, or instructor. Informal activities other than prior planning of scheduling a time will have not much structure. Participation in any type of leisure, in any environment that promotes goals, is important for well-being. A longitudinal study conducted by Werner concluded that participation plays a major role in the lives of youth towards resilience by reducing high-risk and increasing emotional and behavioral outcomes. Personal choices in leisure participation and recreation activities in youth and adults as important predictors of life satisfaction and overall development. Researchers have also studied this in various disabilities in children as well as adults signifying the role of leisure participation. The inability to participate in leisure can harm the individual toward their physical potential inhibiting their growth as potential individuals. Successful participation requires the knowledge of the factors and processes to encourage participation in children with disabilities thereby removing barriers to active involvement. The characteristics and procedures that affect how and if children with impairments participate in an activity are crucial to comprehend since they might be and remove barriers to active involvement in recreation and leisure activities. Identifying the factors that directly or indirectly affect leisure participation and providing insights into the extent of participation in any age group can intensify active participation (Chun et al., 2012) [21].

**3.3.6. Leisure and Growth:** Leisure being the mediator towards positive optimism reduces immediate stress and assists in personal transformation. By being involved in the leisure of personal choice, especially of civic activities type, leisure motivates social contacts and relationships that help to share interests and motivates the post-transformation of posttraumatic growth as a facilitator to adjust to the new form that motivates optimism towards the future. Distraction from immediate stress, a positive outlook on the future, aid in life story reconstruction, and personal modification of life are all facilitated by leisure. The use of leisure as a resource not only aids in stress management but also promotes posttraumatic growth by aiding individuals in the adjustment phase. Researchers have identified the potential of leisure in determining new opportunities, encouraging meaningful relationships, and producing good feelings and intelligible traumatic experiences. Also, the assumption of leisure satisfaction through personal choice activities significantly reshapes, safeguards, and rejuvenates the self and directly contributes to stress-related growth (King et al., 2003) [24].

**3.3.7. Leisure Constraints:** At the time of respite, the constraints were either the limited respite resources as opportunities or passive leisure activities. Perceived constraints as intrapersonal, were subjected to the attitude of the mothers as caregivers with guilt, or lazy, being too tired, or in need of just to lie down as lacking energy. Interpersonal leisure as passive didn't have many constraints through telephone or online or social media platforms, but active interpersonal leisure was a major barrier due to the lack of personnel to care for the child during their respite. And it wasn't convenient to schedule personal leisure with the arrangements of other persons' leisure schedules. No time for personal enjoyment owing to caring for siblings and children with impairments, if any with other parental obligations and daily responsibilities. The component of structural leisure was hindered mainly due to

a lack of respite care by organizations or support groups. The lack of awareness of the need for respite in the life of mothers as primary caregivers and the need for these respite opportunities in the welfare of mothers' lives wasn't discussed or spoken about. Being copying strategies of stress, these types of respites have never been provided under educational needs or resources as positive coping (Kiernozek, 2015) [22].

**3.3.8. Benefits of Leisure:** Leisure has numerous advantages for both the individual and society at large. Scientific research has now established the positive effects of leisure on several variables, such as physical and mental health, economic growth, family ties, and environmental awareness. Unfortunately, people frequently overlook the fact that these activities offer benefits beyond just having fun. To live a balanced and healthy lifestyle, leisure is essential. They can do whatever they choose during their leisure time, free from work and other obligations, and this time is crucial for social well-being because it gives people a feeling of identity and autonomy. Participation in activities improves people's overall quality of life and gives individual and communal existence greater meaning. When coupled with a healthy diet and active lifestyle, increased physical exercise can result in fewer health issues and improved work productivity. The advantages for mental health are also significant. Since it gives the mind a place to go, passive leisure is also good for the mind. It might offer opportunities for mental and physical recuperation, stress relief, and time to enjoy nature and get away from the daily grind. Enabling people to interact and network with others, frequently creates opportunities for socialization and promotes social cohesion. As families spend time together during their free time, it can help strengthen family ties. It would be feasible to strengthen the body and increase its resistance to harm by exercising during downtime. In reality, it enables the development of interpersonal and collaborative skills while engaging in physical activity. Later on, these abilities might help to deal with people and their issues. In addition to its bodily benefits, leisure promotes mental and spiritual calm. Tensions and stress levels diminish as leisure and relaxation occur, and life quality rises. People can be more productive because the continual pressure that stress places on their lives is broken by resting. These psychological advantages of leisure are crucial because stress illnesses would affect everyone without the respite that comes from relaxation. The economic benefits of leisure are also received by society. People frequently spend their money taking part in leisure pursuits. The economy is boosted as a result of this money exchange, benefiting both parties. Leisure has economic advantages. Employees who profit personally also benefit others with whom they come into contact through their leisure activities.

**3.3.9. Leisure Education:** Leisure education is a key element in a conducive environment such as home, to experience leisure as a self-directed choice. Leisure education is directed towards leisure involvement and resources to develop skills for greater participation to maintain psychosocial health. Education enhances self-directed choices to maintain positive aspects augmenting autonomy as well as the involvement of family members, facilitating growth (Dunn & Wilhite, 1997) [23].

**3.3.10. Leisure Education Program (LEP):** Leisure education helps to utilize time for in-depth involvement and greater participation to maintain social networks by increasing the frequency and duration of participation. Leisure participation expands social networks as an adaptation of perceived leisure increases independent living. LEP helps to identify the skills and knowledge towards self-directed leisure choices motivating to increase the frequency and in-depth participation of activity. LEP also helps participants to relieve boredom and loneliness increasing psychosocial well-being. Indicators of psychological well-being will be systematically considered to reduce psychosocial threats through positive attitude and leisure competence. Raising self-esteem and enhancing independent living through leisure competence, thus alleviating mental health problems is the key role of LEP. The positive outcome of the LEP concluded that more such LEP frequencies and the length of the session towards perceived leisure competence and leisure control. In addition to the positive effects, LEP identified the inconclusive findings, negative effects, dissatisfaction, and lack of interest in indulging in any range of activities. Interventions to identify these components through conceptual understanding through leisure counseling to promote skill acquisition through activity exposure need to be addressed. Significant favorable life satisfaction due to enhanced leisure control, greater participation, competence, and reduced boredom as an outcome of leisure education was witnessed by Searle et al. in older adults. The study also highlighted the facilitation of the selection of individual choice of leisure activities that motivated participation and involvement in desired activities (Dunn & Wilhite, 1997) [23].



**Table 3.1:** Literature Review Summary

Sl. No	Area & Focus of the Research	The result of the Research	Reference
1	Lives of mothers of children with autism; ASD diagnosis causes an imbalance in the way she uses her time, which lowers her quality of life relative to mothers of typical-sized children.	Despite the demands of caregiving, mothers need to prioritize their well-being. Self-care practices such as seeking respite, connecting with support networks, and maintaining personal interests help mothers maintain resilience and balance in their caregiving role.	(Menezes & D’Mello, 2021) [4].
2	Leisure education is directed towards leisure involvement and resources to develop skills for greater participation to maintain psychosocial health.	Raising self-esteem and enhancing independent living through leisure competence, thus alleviating mental health problems is the key role of LEP.	(Olsson & Hwang, 2003) [16].
3	Leisure needs and motives; The ability to choose how to spend one's time, the satisfaction of one's need for rest, and the ability to express oneself.	The types of leisure activities that are offered in a location may vary depending on technological, economic, social, and political aspects.	(King et al., 2003) [20].
4	Leisure participation and leisure satisfaction; Leisure needs and the need for recreation describe the concept of leisure behavior.	The selection of leisure activity from one’s repertoire depends on the situational as well as social contexts to meet the desire.	(Chun et al., 2012) [21].
5	Leisure constraints; At the time of respite, the constraints were either the limited respite resources as opportunities or passive leisure activities.	Being copying strategies of stress, these types of respites have never been provided under educational needs or resources as positive coping.	(Kiernozek, 2015) [22].
6	Life situation in raising a child with challenges; Parenting is a complex activity. Raising an autistic child is highly challenging, demanding, and stressful.	Parenting is impacted by a child's incapacity to adapt to alterations in the social climate.	(Dunn & Wilhite, 1997) [23].

**4. MATERIALS AND METHODS :**

An exploratory cross-sectional study was carried out to identify and categorize the types of leisure activities mothers of children with autism engage in. Primary data gathered through this research may have a high level of validity because the data utilized in Interpretivism studies tend to be trustworthy and sincere. The ontological, epistemological, and methodological approaches associated with the paradigm of multiple realities are shared by qualitative research. In the exploratory stage as an inductive research approach, open-ended questions provide a better understanding of the phenomena and additional insights. Through organized in-depth interviews, and understanding of the data through online and offline structured interviews this study investigates the concerns of 61 mothers through

convenience sampling method in India. The goal of this study is to identify how frequently they engage in leisure activities as stress relievers and to categorize them.

#### **4.1 Items Development:**

Throughout the tool creation process, a multi-stage approach was used, with the items being improved at various stages to improve the content, construct, and criteria validity. To broaden the study's reach, respondents of different ages, from diverse geographic backgrounds, with varying levels of education and socioeconomic status, as well as moms who worked and those who did not, were taken into account.

##### **4.1.1 Generation of Items Pool**

The study's initial stage is to determine the reasons why people engage in leisure activities. Currently, the primary goal is to create items that are capable of evaluating a leisure activity in its entirety. A strategy towards managing the literature was carried out to conceptualize the item to describe the reasons why people engage in a certain leisure activity and its qualities. To comply with the setting of the Indian mothers, the study's initial 54 items took the form of inquiries in the exploratory stage and did not omit any single leisure activity. Five reviewers with relevant training in clinical psychology who specialize in ASD and significant scale development authors of developmental disorders of all kinds were given the item to assess its applicability. Items that garnered 80% or above approval were kept, and the final version took into account the improvisational recommendations that were made.

##### **4.1.2 Refinement of Items**

In the subsequent phase, twenty Indian mothers, ten representing mothers of children with ASD and ten representing mothers of typical children participated in structured, in-depth interviews. The questionnaire comprised of 54 items. The idea behind the control during the pilot stage was that mothers of typical children, too, might not have leisure time because of their hectic schedules and feelings of responsibility for their upbringing. Following the study, the items were eliminated to increase the construct validity because most of the Indian moms used them neither frequently nor at all. The final step was carefully reducing the number of elements to 29, which were divided into seven groups. In the last stage, 61 people were surveyed utilizing the monomethod with organized in-depth interviews to obtain the responses using the questionnaire with informed consent.

## **5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :**

### **5.1. Findings:**

**Assessment of the Various Types of Leisure Activities of Indian Mothers:** Researchers and philosophers in India and other parts of the world have conceptualized a variety of leisure and leisure activities for various target groups including family systems. Explaining the primary factors that enable participation in activities, boosting engagement regardless of the type of leisure activity, and emphasizing the importance of an activity's main leisure components. Through the use of numerous scales, it has been determined why a person engages in any form of leisure activity and places value on schedule. All that is required is to modify the activity, make it accessible to the target audience, individualize the activity, and take the necessary steps to schedule it regularly. Researcher Iso-Ahola found important factors in the concept of leisure, such as perceived independence, intrinsic motivation, and low work orientation (Chun et al., 2012) [21].

for the understanding of leisure. To evaluate participation in leisure activities, researchers have created valid scales after studying the essential structures connected with it. and have found eight extremely important dimensions associated with leisure activity (Dunn & Wilhite, 1997) [23]. There are several systems for ensuring and maintaining involvement, according to the literature assessment on leisure activity participation. As a result, multiple categories can be used to describe leisure activities. However, as was previously mentioned, it is crucial to take into account the key indicators indicating the activity as a leisure activity.

### **5.2. Results:**

The relevant structures to the essential characteristics of a leisure activity that lead to mothers' engagement in India are divided into seven categories for this study. Entertainment activities, Artistic and intellectual pursuits, Sports and physical activities, Outings, Social events, Homemaking and other constructive activities, Resting and relaxation.

**Entertainment Activities (LA1):** Entertaining leisure activities is without a doubt one of the most significant factors that permit involvement in leisure activities, as well as enhance and maintain engagement (Braden, 1988) [24]. In this sense, entertainment can be regarded as one of the most significant factors influencing why kids, teens, and adults of all ages engage in leisure activities. A factor impeding engagement in an activity or preventing participation from being maintained is the absence of entertainment in the activity (Carraro et al., 2008 [27]). Hence category of entertainment activities passively involved watching (movies, TV series, matches, tournaments, drama, theatre), or any type of visuals on television, iPad, or mobile, (story), or any type of audio on radio, television, iPad, or mobile, such as listening to music, as a medium of entertainment. The subcategory is entertainment activities actively involved in playing electronic and or computer games, playing matches and or tournaments, music concerts, singing, dancing, drama, and theatre that provide immense entertainment in one form or the other without much planning, coercion, limitation, or feasibility.

**Outing (LA2):** The activity's environment affects a person's mood and level of enjoyment (Klausner, 1967) [28]. The environment is the primary reason for people to visit environmental sites like parks and monuments with views. An activity is said to be enjoyable because of the setting or area in which it is performed. It has been demonstrated that both the action itself and the setting in which it is carried out are significant (Craike, 2010) [27]. With consideration of the participation in leisure activities and the properties of entertainment facilities outings were considered as one of the categories of leisure activities that Indian mothers would enjoy. Hence activities such as Shopping, Eating out, Visiting religious places, Parks, and Beaches as frequent short-trips or outings. Whereas Travelling as an occasional long trip, Picnics, Exhibitions, and visits to Museums as occasional day-long outings, were clubbed under this classification of leisure activities.

**Social Events (LA3):** The presence of other people causes a happy mood to surface. People should engage in an activity with a group of people who are dependable, comparable, and of a similar social position to ensure that they enjoy it. People spend the majority of their free time engaging in similar leisure activities, and for some, these groups offer a more intimate social network than other friendships (Hills & Argyle, 1998) [28]. One of the key drivers of leisure can be the need for social interaction. Within the same activity, people may look for satisfying behaviors from other people, such as romance, wise counsel, or sympathy (Aslan, 2002) [29]. Depending on the characteristics of the entertainment facilities, participation in particular leisure activities may be promoted or discouraged (Stover & Garbin, 1982) [30]). Mobile chatting or Telephone conversation, and social media connections are considered as most easily available mediums of socialization, whereas Visiting Neighbors, Friends, and Relatives, and attending Birthday parties, Wedding parties, Kitty parties, and funerals are the other ways of entertainment through social gatherings.

**Homemaking and Other Constructive Activities (LA4):** One of the defining characteristics of leisure activities is aesthetic beauty, which stands for elegance (Willis & Campbell, 1992) [31]. Participants are drawn in by the aesthetic expression and beauty (Wann et al., 2008) [32]. Similar to this, it is possible to understand the flow of other leisure activities than sports, aesthetically pleasing movements, specific moments, and environmental aspects of the activity environment as the pure manifestation of aesthetics. Therefore, participation rates may be impacted when people engage in leisure activities with aesthetic components when they are seeking an aesthetic experience. Home decor, gardening, hobbies, part-time jobs, volunteer work with NGOs, home-making, and other positive engagements were therefore taken into consideration under this category.

**Artistic and Intellectual Pursuits (LA5):** According to the theory, the desire for emotions is incorporated into a characteristic that causes people to look for excitement (Zuckerman & Kuhlman, 2000) [33]. The hypothesis, in other words, contends that there is a connection between the subjective characteristics of stimulation and the pursuit of excitement. It has been observed that thrill-seeking individuals favor activities with a lot of chance, flexibility, and risk (Zuckerman, 1979) [34]. The fundamental aspect of these activities is satisfying pleasure or desire, according to leisure pursuits that are both extremely delightful and internally motivated, such as artistic creativity, music, learning, chess, dancing, and rock climbing (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988) [35]. The thrill of competition and the perception of sufficiency are the basic sources of deriving pleasure/desire (Wankel & Kreisel, 1985) [36]. The relationship between enjoyment, thrill, and pleasure should, therefore, be taken into account. This is because one of the underpinning sentiments of enjoyment is the purpose of gaining pleasure/desire (Scanlan et al., 1993) [37]. Reading books, magazines, and newspapers; composing poetry and literature;

creating artwork (painting), crafts, sewing, weaving, etc. these activities fall under the category of art and intellectuals.

**Sports and Physical Activities (LA6):** The potential of leisure activities to foster personal development after stressful life events were underlined by several studies on leisure activities (Chun & Lee, 2010) [38]. According to the researchers, leisure activities can serve as a conduit for personal reforms that will help people experience better relationships and find new chances. Following challenging circumstances in life, researchers have found the idea of positive transformation (Kleiber et al., 2002) [39]. All people benefit from participating in activities in terms of their physical and mental health (World Health Organization, 2010) [40]. Similarly, the advantages of leisure are evaluated in terms of how satisfied people are with how their physical and mental well-being develops both during and after their involvement in activities (Hsieh, 2009) [41]. In this view, entertainment can be regarded as one of the most significant factors influencing children, adolescents, and adults to engage in leisure activities like sports and physical activity (Dardis, 1994) [42]. Sports, games, and physical activities included playing indoor or outdoor games, as commonly accessible active physically stimulating ones, and floor exercises, yoga, as commonly accessible active mentally stimulating ones. Walking, jogging, swimming, marathons, and walkathons as less commonly accessible active physically stimulating ones. Playing matches such as chess or tournaments as rarely accessible both mentally and physically stimulating entertainment activities.

**Resting and Relaxation (LA7)** Active or passive recreation decreases sadness and anxiety, promotes the formation of good emotions, boosts the sense of self and self-worth, improves overall psychological wellness, and supports cognitive processes (Henderson & Ainsworth, (2002) [43], (Iso-Ahola & Mannell, 2004) [44]. Hence leisure activities like Tea-coffee breaks, meditation, taking a nap, resting on a reclining chair or sofa, or just lying down, are categorized under resting and relaxation.

## 6. DISCUSSION :

Emphasizing the importance of an activity's main leisure components and determining why a person engages in any form of leisure activity and places value on schedule, all attempts were made to modify the activity, make it accessible to the target audience, and individualize the activity. The relevant structures to the essential characteristics of a leisure activity that lead to mothers' engagement in India are divided into seven categories by the researcher during this study. Entertainment activities (LA1), Outings (LA2), Social Events (LA3), Homemaking and other constructive activities (LA4), Artistic and intellectual pursuits (LA5), Sports and physical activities (LA6), Resting and relaxation (LA7). The first category of leisure activities out of seven categories is (LA1), "**Entertainment activities**". Entertainment activities are one of the most significant factors that permit involvement in leisure activities, as well as enhance and maintain engagements (Braden, 1988) [24]. Hence category of entertainment activities passively involved as audio or video-based as a medium of entertainment along with actively involved entertainment activities such as playing electronic and or computer games, singing, dancing, drama, and theatre provide immense entertainment in one form or the another without much planning, coercion, limitation, or feasibility. These entertainment activities in their passive form as leisure activities were embraced by the majority of Indian mothers as it is easily and freely accessible and doesn't require preplanning and schedules. The second category of leisure activities is (LA2), "**Outing**". The presence of other people causes a happy mood to surface. People spend the majority of their free time engaging in similar leisure activities, and for some, these groups offer a more intimate social network than other friendships (Hills, & Argyle, 1998) [28]. With consideration of the participation in leisure activities and the properties of entertainment facilities social events were considered as one of the categories of leisure activities that Indian mothers would enjoy. The third category of leisure activities is (LA3), "**Social Events**". Many leisure activities involve socializing with friends, family, or community members. Participating in group activities or attending social events fosters relationships, strengthens bonds, and provides a sense of belonging. Interpersonal leisure as passive didn't have many constraints through telephone or online or social media platforms, but active interpersonal leisure was a major barrier due to the lack of personnel to care for the child during their respite. And it wasn't convenient to schedule personal leisure with the arrangements of other persons' leisure schedules for outings and socialization. The fourth category of leisure activities is (LA4), "**Homemaking and Other Constructive Activities**". One of the defining characteristics of leisure activities is aesthetic beauty, which stands for elegance. Participants are drawn in by the aesthetic

expression and beauty (Wann et al., 2008) [32]. Engaging in hobbies or learning new activities can contribute to personal growth and skill development. This promotes continuous learning and self-improvement. The fifth category of leisure activities is (LA5), “**Artistic and Intellectual Pursuits**”. The desire for emotions is incorporated into a characteristic that causes people to look for excitement. The fundamental aspect of these activities is satisfying pleasure or desire, according to leisure pursuits that are both extremely delightful and internally motivated. The sixth category of leisure activities is (LA6), “**Sports and Physical Activities**”. According to the researchers, leisure activities can serve as a conduit for personal reforms that will help people experience better relationships and find new chances. Certain leisure activities, such as physical exercise, yoga, or outdoor pursuits, contribute to physical fitness and overall well-being. Interpersonal leisure as passive wasn't been of many constraints, but active interpersonal leisure was a major barrier due to a lack of personnel to care for the child during their respite. The seventh category of leisure activities is (LA7), “**Resting and Relaxation**”. These leisure activities were regularly conceived by the majority of Indian mothers and were one of their favorite leisure activities. At the time of respite, perceived constraints as intrapersonal were subjected to the attitude of the mothers as caregivers with guilt, or lazy, being too tired, or in need of just lying down as lacking energy.

### 7. NEW KNOWLEDGE :

Leisure activities encompass a wide range of pursuits people engage in during their free time for enjoyment, relaxation, and personal development. These activities not only provide enjoyment but also contribute to mental and physical well-being, social interaction, skill development, and personal growth. The choice of leisure activities often depends on individual preferences, interests, and available resources. In the Indian context, leisure activities for mothers can vary widely based on cultural norms, family dynamics, socioeconomic status, and personal preferences as they contribute to the cultural richness and diversity. The choice of activities often reflects individual interests, family responsibilities, and cultural traditions. Participation in leisure activities and the importance of scheduling can be influenced by several factors that cater to personal needs, social expectations, and overall well-being. Individuals often engage in leisure activities because they derive pleasure, satisfaction, or enjoyment from them (Menezes & D'Mello, 2021) [4]. Leisure activities serve as a means to alleviate stress and unwind from the demands of daily life. They provide a break from work or responsibilities, allowing individuals to recharge mentally and emotionally (Shaw, 1985) [46]. Regularly scheduling these activities helps maintain health, prevent illnesses, and improve quality of life. Scheduling these activities ensures they are prioritized and integrated into daily life, allowing individuals to derive maximum benefit and enjoyment from their leisure pursuits. Scheduling leisure activities helps individuals effectively manage their time between work, personal commitments, and relaxation. By scheduling leisure activities, individuals prioritize their own self-care and mental health [Buswell et al., 2016] [47]. Balancing work, personal life, and leisure is crucial for overall well-being. A well-structured schedule ensures that leisure activities are integrated into daily or weekly routines, promoting a balanced and fulfilling lifestyle. This study aimed to explore various leisure activities in the lives of mothers of children with ASD. The 7 categories of Leisure activities (LA) that measure Entertainment activities, Outings, Social events, Sports and physical exercises, Homemaking and other fruitful involvements, Arts, and intellectuals, Resting and relaxation, as diversionary activities to energize, divert, and relax as fun and free-time. The key consideration of involvement in leisure activities is individually done for self-care and nourishment either with family members or with friends without any obligations as parenting roles. There is no significant number of studies conducted on the leisure activities of mothers, in the Indian context, instead, the studies are focused on disabled children and their leisure activities.

### 8. CONCLUSION :

In conclusion, while the demanding care responsibilities of Indian mothers of children with autism can limit their engagement in traditional leisure activities, they often find ways to adapt and prioritize activities that support their well-being amidst their caregiving duties. Leisure for Indian mothers can be quite nuanced and influenced by cultural, social, and familial expectations. Traditionally, Indian mothers often prioritize family and household responsibilities over personal leisure activities. It is important to note that for many Indian mothers, leisure time might be limited and often squeezed in between various responsibilities. Cultural and societal norms still heavily influence how leisure time is

perceived and allocated among Indian mothers, but there is a gradual shift towards prioritizing personal well-being alongside familial duties. However, attitudes are evolving, and many mothers are increasingly recognizing the importance of self-care and leisure time for their well-being. Balancing family duties with personal leisure can be a challenge, but there is a growing recognition of the need for mothers to take time for themselves to relax and rejuvenate. Knowing when to expect and plan for leisure activities can enhance the enjoyment and commitment to participating in them. It reduces last-minute decision-making and increases anticipation for activities that bring joy and fulfillment. In summary, participation in leisure activities is not merely a luxury but an essential component of a healthy and fulfilling life. It contributes to physical health, mental well-being, social connections, personal growth, and overall happiness, making it crucial for individuals of all ages and backgrounds to prioritize and incorporate into their daily lives.

### **9. SUGGESTIONS :**

Addressing this imbalance in research requires a concerted effort to recognize and prioritize the well-being of mothers alongside that of children. This includes advocating for more inclusive research agendas, funding initiatives that support studies on maternal health and well-being, and promoting a broader understanding of family dynamics that considers the needs of all family members, including mothers. By expanding the scope of research and policy to include mothers, we can better support the overall health and resilience of families. In essence, studying various leisure activities in the lives of mothers with autistic children is essential for providing evidence-based recommendations, support, and resources that promote their mental health, well-being, and overall quality of life. By understanding the role of leisure in their lives, researchers and practitioners can better support these mothers in their caregiving journey.

### **10. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY :**

Researching the leisure activities of Indian mothers can face several limitations. Addressing certain limitations careful study design, sampling techniques, and interpretation of results were carried out to ensure the findings are meaningful and applicable within the context of studying leisure activities among Indian mothers. The sample might not represent the entire population of Indian mothers due to factors like location, socioeconomic status, or cultural background. Leisure activities can vary significantly across regions and cultures within India, making it challenging to generalize findings. Participants might report activities they perceive as socially acceptable rather than their actual preferences or behaviors. The ability to engage in leisure activities can be influenced by factors such as income level, family responsibilities, and access to resources like childcare or transportation. Certain leisure activities might be considered less important or trivial, leading to underreporting in surveys or interviews. The relevance and popularity of leisure activities can change over time, affecting the study's relevance and comparability with future research. Societal expectations regarding gender roles might influence the types of leisure activities mothers participate in or feel comfortable discussing. Respecting privacy and ensuring confidentiality while studying personal leisure activities is crucial but challenging in sensitive topics.

### **11. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH :**

Future scope of research on leisure activities of Indian mothers holds several potential avenues for exploration and development. Conducting longitudinal studies to track changes in leisure preferences and participation over time among Indian mothers can provide insights into evolving societal norms, economic factors, and generational shifts. Comparing leisure activities across different regions, socioeconomic backgrounds, and cultural groups within India can highlight variations and commonalities, offering a more nuanced understanding of leisure patterns. Investigating how digital technologies, social media, and online platforms influence the leisure choices of Indian mothers, including virtual communities and digital leisure activities. Exploring how factors such as age, marital status, employment status, and educational attainment intersect with leisure activities among Indian mothers, acknowledging the diversity within this demographic. Studying the relationship between leisure activities and physical, mental, and emotional well-being among Indian mothers, including stress reduction, relaxation, and quality of life. Assessing the implications of leisure activities research for policy development, such as promoting work-life balance, supporting family-friendly leisure spaces,

and enhancing access to leisure opportunities. Exploring how leisure activities are passed down through generations within families and the role of intergenerational interactions in shaping leisure preferences. Investigating how gender roles and expectations influence the leisure activities of mothers compared to fathers or other family members, highlighting dynamics of equity and autonomy. Examining emerging trends and innovations in leisure activities among Indian mothers, including eco-friendly leisure, DIY hobbies, cultural exchanges, and creative pursuits. By exploring these future directions, researchers can contribute to a deeper understanding of the diverse leisure experiences of Indian mothers, informing policies and practices that promote well-being and enrich quality of life across different segments of society.

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