


# Understanding Supports and Barriers to Autism Diagnosis by Community Health Care Providers in Canada: A Qualitative Study Using the Theoretical Domains Framework

Masri Ahmar, G. Rapley, J., Ferguson, G., Kanigsberg, J., and Penner, M.; Project ECHO AuDIO Team

## Background

There is a growing demand for autism diagnostic assessments, leaving families and children **waiting for an extensive amount of time**<sup>1</sup>. 

**Every province** has similarities and differences in their **model and policies** on how and who can do these assessments.

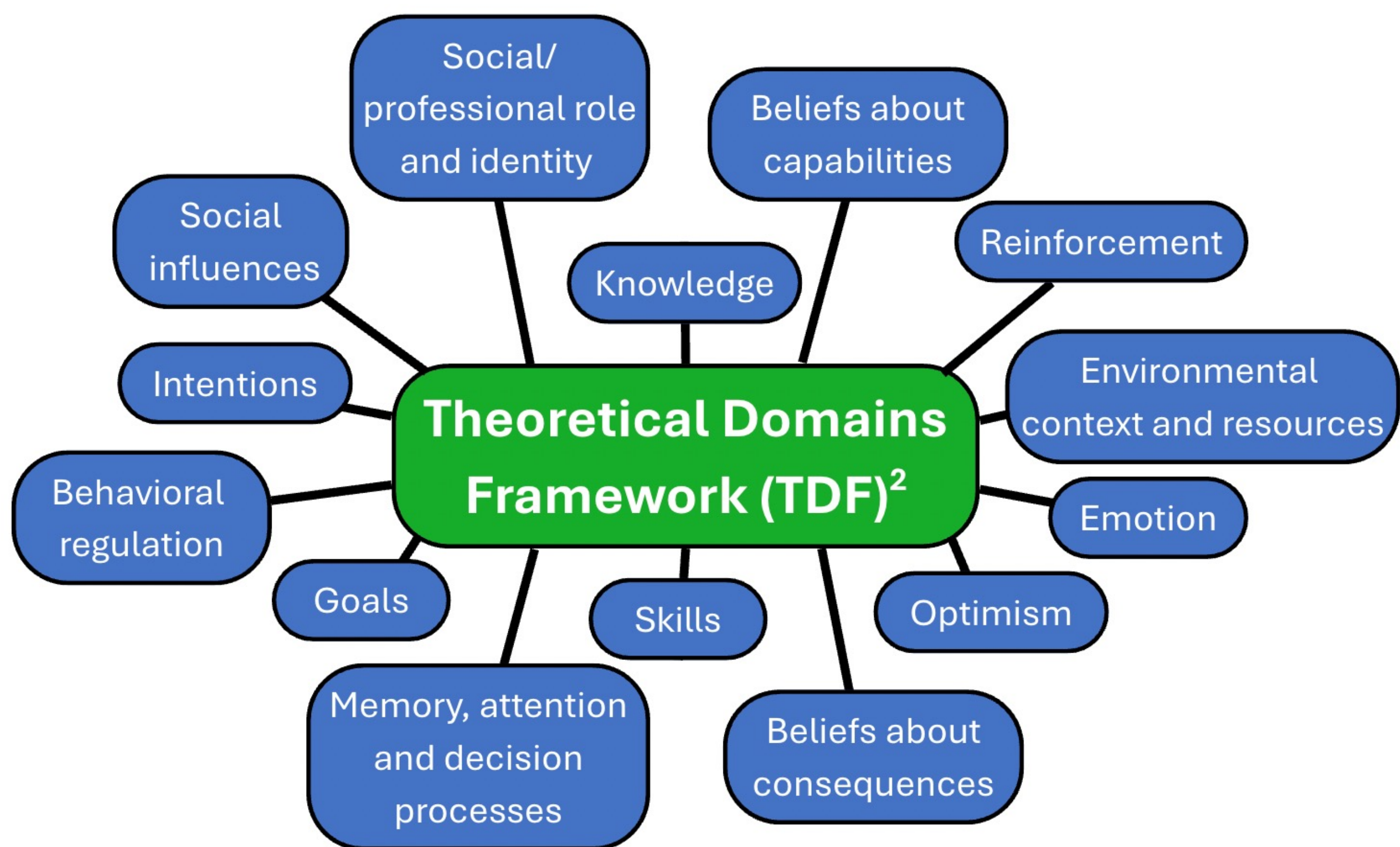
## Objective

To understand the **facilitators and barriers** community healthcare providers (HCPs) face when conducting autism diagnostic assessments across five Canadian provinces.


## Method

### Data Collection

Interviewed 23 community pediatricians across five provinces (Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, Nova Scotia and Quebec).



### Analysis

- Two researchers **deductively coded** each transcript for three provinces following the TDF domains. 
- The first author **inductively generated belief statements** and themes aligned with each TDF domain.

Community pediatricians face various barriers and facilitators across most TDF domains. Specifically, they highlighted the important role of skills and environmental context and resources in conducting autism diagnostic assessments.




## Results

Ontario		
Domain	Skills	Environmental context and resources
Belief statement	Providers use a variety of resources/tools to conduct autism diagnosis assessments	The wait lists for autism diagnosis are long, and they are getting worse


Alberta		
Domain	Skills	Environmental context and resources
Belief statement	Play assessments are a critical part of the autism diagnostic assessment, and it can be helpful to have training and standardized tools that can ensure it is being done effectively	Due to only being able to send referrals to one center, it limits what providers can do for these kids and families

Nova Scotia		
Domain	Skills	Environmental context and resources
Belief statement	Being a good listener, and being attentive to what the parents are discussing is crucial for gathering a good history	Due to records being kept using a paper-based system at the provincial level, it can be difficult for families to access them

## What’s next?

Collaboratively create community-based toolkits and implementation strategies that will help HCPs feel confident conducting diagnostic assessments. 

## Relevance

Understanding the role of HCPs, along with the barriers and facilitators they face, helps develop targeted solutions that support timely diagnoses. 

## References

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- Atkins L, Francis J, Islam R, et al. A guide to using the Theoretical Domains Framework of behavior change to investigate implementation problems. Implementation Science. 2017;12:77.