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Validation of the Cultural Goods Consumption Model in the Autism Community

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Abstract

The aim of the present study was to validate a model of cultural goods consumption within the autism community. In terms of purpose, the study was descriptive–analytical, and in terms of implementation, it was conducted as a survey. The statistical population included parents of children with autism, educational instructors, staff, and managers of associations, centers, and institutions related to this group. Sampling was carried out using a stratified random method based on institutions involved in autism education and treatment, along with convenience access. The sample size was determined according to statistical analysis criteria. The data collection instrument was a researcher-developed questionnaire based on the dimensions of the cultural consumption model. Construct validity was examined through confirmatory factor analysis, and the reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for each dimension; the overall mean alpha coefficient of 0.83 indicated acceptable reliability of the questionnaire. Data analysis was performed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The findings indicated that the pattern of cultural goods consumption in the autism community is influenced less by “type of consumption” or “cultural preferences” alone, and more significantly by the management of consequences, particularly the negative consequences of cultural consumption. Based on the path coefficients observed in the model, the dimension of reducing the negative consequences of cultural consumption had the greatest direct effect on the central construct of the model and ranked first. These results suggest that, in order to enhance the effectiveness of cultural consumption in the autism community, attention to the management of negative consequences, the design of structured environments and activities, and institutional–family support is essential. Policymakers can maximize the positive effects of cultural consumption by focusing on these dimensions.

Keywords: model, cultural goods consumption, autism community

1. Introduction

The growing intersection between cultural consumption and special populations has attracted increasing scholarly attention in recent years, particularly within the context of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Cultural goods—encompassing media, arts, music, literature, and digital content—are not only vehicles of entertainment but also serve as mechanisms for identity formation, emotional regulation, social engagement, and cognitive development. In contemporary societies, where cultural participation is closely linked to quality of life and social inclusion, understanding the patterns and determinants of cultural goods consumption among individuals with autism represents a critical research priority. This



importance is amplified by the unique cognitive, sensory, and social characteristics associated with autism, which shape how individuals perceive, process, and engage with cultural environments (Palmer & Riley, 2025; Shinozaki et al., 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, cultural consumption has evolved from a purely economic or leisure-based activity into a multidimensional construct embedded within broader socio-cultural and institutional frameworks. Studies in cultural economics emphasize that consumption of cultural goods contributes to human capital development and social cohesion, thereby playing a fundamental role in societal progress (Shinozaki et al., 2023). At the same time, sociological and behavioral approaches highlight how consumption patterns are influenced by demographic factors, social structures, and individual preferences (Choi, 2021; Hardin et al., 2023). Within this framework, cultural consumption is not merely an outcome variable but a dynamic process shaped by accessibility, policy environments, cultural norms, and individual capabilities. However, much of this literature has focused on general populations, often overlooking marginalized or neurodiverse groups such as individuals with autism.

Autism spectrum disorder is characterized by differences in social communication, restricted or repetitive behaviors, and distinctive patterns of sensory processing. These characteristics significantly influence how individuals interact with cultural products and environments. For example, research has shown that individuals with autism may exhibit heightened sensitivity to auditory and visual stimuli, which can affect their engagement with music, film, and other sensory-rich cultural goods (Bhatara et al., 2010). At the same time, the presence of specialized or intense interests—often referred to as “special interests”—can lead to deep and sustained engagement with specific cultural domains (Grove et al., 2018). These patterns suggest that cultural consumption in the autism community is not only different in form but also in function, serving therapeutic, coping, and identity-related purposes beyond conventional consumption models.

Recent empirical studies have further underscored the therapeutic and psychosocial benefits of cultural engagement for individuals with autism. For instance, participation in arts-based interventions, such as theater programs, has been shown to enhance social competence, emotional expression, and interpersonal communication (Corbett et al., 2023). Similarly, engagement with music has been found to facilitate emotional recognition and regulation, offering a valuable tool for addressing socio-emotional challenges in autism (Bhatara et al., 2010; Shalit et al., 2024). These findings align with broader perspectives in developmental and clinical psychology, which emphasize the role of structured and meaningful activities in promoting adaptive functioning and well-being among individuals with autism.

Despite these promising insights, significant barriers continue to limit access to and effective utilization of cultural goods within the autism community. Accessibility remains a critical issue, as many cultural institutions and environments are not designed to accommodate the sensory and behavioral needs of individuals with autism. Research highlights the importance of inclusive design, adaptive programming, and staff training in enhancing accessibility and participation (Hoskin & et al., 2023). Furthermore, institutional and policy-level factors play a crucial role in shaping opportunities for cultural engagement. Without supportive policies and coordinated efforts among stakeholders, individuals with autism and their families often face structural constraints that hinder their participation in cultural life.

Another important dimension of cultural consumption in the autism community relates to the role of digital technologies and new media. The rapid expansion of digital platforms has created new avenues for cultural participation, enabling individuals with autism to access and engage with cultural content in more flexible and personalized ways. Digital environments can provide safe and controlled spaces for exploration, communication, and self-expression, thereby reducing some of the barriers associated with traditional cultural settings (Normand et al., 2021; Pinchevski & Peters, 2016). However, the increased reliance on digital media also raises concerns regarding screen use, digital literacy, and the potential for social isolation, highlighting the need for balanced and informed approaches to digital cultural consumption.

Cultural localization and adaptation also emerge as critical factors in understanding consumption patterns among individuals with autism. Cultural goods are inherently embedded within specific socio-cultural contexts, and their relevance and accessibility depend on how well they align with the values, norms, and needs of the target population. Research on culturally adapted interventions emphasizes the importance of tailoring programs and content to reflect local cultural contexts and individual differences, thereby enhancing their effectiveness and acceptance (Palmer & Riley, 2025). In the context of autism,



this implies that cultural goods and interventions must be designed not only with sensitivity to neurodiversity but also with consideration of cultural diversity and contextual factors.

In addition to contextual and structural determinants, individual-level factors such as preferences, motivations, and emotional responses play a significant role in shaping cultural consumption. Studies have shown that experiences of nostalgia, authenticity, and personal meaning can influence engagement with cultural goods and contribute to psychological well-being (Bennett et al., 2024). For individuals with autism, these experiences may be particularly salient, as cultural engagement often provides a means of connecting with personal interests and constructing a sense of identity. At the same time, consumption patterns are influenced by family dynamics, caregiver support, and educational interventions, which can either facilitate or constrain access to cultural opportunities (Asaro-Saddler et al., 2022).

The interplay between positive and negative outcomes of cultural consumption represents another important area of inquiry. While cultural engagement can yield numerous benefits, including improved well-being, social integration, and cognitive development, it may also produce negative consequences if not properly managed. For example, excessive or unstructured engagement with certain types of cultural content may reinforce repetitive behaviors or contribute to sensory overload. Therefore, effective management of cultural consumption—particularly the mitigation of negative consequences—becomes essential in maximizing its benefits for individuals with autism. This perspective aligns with broader discussions in behavioral and developmental research, which emphasize the importance of structured environments and guided interventions in promoting adaptive outcomes (Marshall et al., 2023).

Taken together, the existing literature highlights the need for a comprehensive and integrative model that captures the multidimensional nature of cultural goods consumption in the autism community. Such a model should account for the complex interactions among accessibility, individual characteristics, institutional support, educational interventions, and consumption outcomes. It should also consider the role of cultural and digital contexts in shaping engagement patterns and outcomes. Despite the growing body of research in related areas, there remains a significant gap in the empirical validation of such models, particularly within specific cultural contexts and populations. Addressing this gap is essential for informing policy, practice, and future research aimed at enhancing cultural participation and well-being among individuals with autism.

Therefore, the aim of the present study is to validate a comprehensive model of cultural goods consumption in the autism community, examining the relationships among accessibility and adaptability, consumption characteristics, therapeutic and coping functions, educational interventions, institutional and policy support, cultural localization, emphasis on consequences, positive outcomes, and reduction of negative consequences.

2. Methods and Materials

The research method was descriptive–analytical in terms of purpose and was implemented as a survey. The statistical population consisted of parents of children with autism, educational instructors working with these children, and staff and managers of associations, centers, and institutions related to this group. Sampling was conducted using a stratified random method based on institutions involved in autism education and treatment, combined with convenience sampling. In the sampling process, particularly in the quantitative section of the study, efforts were made to ensure gender balance (male and female) in order to examine potential gender-related differences in participants' perspectives. Considering the statistical population and using the Krejcie and Morgan Table, a sample size of 384 participants was selected for the quantitative section of the study.

The questionnaire used in this dissertation was researcher-developed and structured across 6 dimensions, 34 components, and 119 indicators. Each dimension in the questionnaire corresponded to overarching themes based on the Attride-Stirling Thematic Network Analysis approach. Accordingly, organizing themes were reflected in the components, and basic themes were operationalized through the indicators. Validity in this section was assessed using content validity methods, including both face and content validity. To confirm content and face validity, the research instrument (the researcher-developed questionnaire) was administered to 30 participants. Construct validity was evaluated through confirmatory factor analysis. In order to determine reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for each dimension of the questionnaire. The overall mean Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.83, indicating acceptable reliability of the instrument.



3. Findings and Results

The highest proportion of the sample in terms of age was within the 30–40-year range (42.5%). In the statistical sample, 58% were male and 42% were female. The findings also indicated that most participants held a bachelor's degree.

Given that parametric methods are used for normally distributed data and non-parametric methods for non-normal distributions, the normality of the data was first assessed before testing the research hypotheses. For this purpose, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov (KS) test was applied. If the data were normally distributed, Pearson's correlation coefficient would be used; otherwise, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient would be employed as a non-parametric alternative.

Table 1. Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test for Assessing the Normality of Research Variables (n = 384)

Variables	Kolmogorov–Smirnov Z	Sig.
Accessibility and adaptability of cultural goods	1.93	0.01
Consumption characteristics	2.02	0.01
Therapeutic and coping function	1.80	0.01
Educational interventions	1.90	0.01
Institutional and policy support	2.58	0.01
Cultural localization	1.63	0.01
Emphasis on consequences of cultural consumption	1.87	0.01
Positive outcomes	1.69	0.01
Reduction of negative consequences of consumption	2.52	0.01

As shown in Table 1, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test results were significant for all variables. Therefore, the data distribution was non-normal, and the Partial Least Squares approach was used for analysis.

To ensure the validity of measurement instruments, confirmatory factor analysis and PLS software were employed. Confirmatory factor analysis determines the relationships between observed variables and latent constructs. In this context, it was examined whether each observed variable had a significant factor loading on its underlying construct. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Variables	Composite Reliability	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Accessibility and adaptability of cultural goods	0.86	0.53	0.85
Consumption characteristics	0.87	0.54	0.83
Therapeutic and coping function	0.80	0.56	0.82
Educational interventions	0.81	0.57	0.80
Institutional and policy support	0.92	0.54	0.86
Cultural localization	0.87	0.50	0.82
Emphasis on consequences of consumption	0.83	0.57	0.81
Positive outcomes	0.88	0.51	0.88
Reduction of negative consequences	0.87	0.59	0.83

The fit indices reported for each construct in Table 2 indicate acceptable levels. The results demonstrate that all constructs exhibit satisfactory reliability and validity indicators.

The results related to the second validity criterion are presented in Table 3. All dimensions showed the highest factor loadings on their respective constructs, and the minimum difference between loadings exceeded 0.10, indicating adequate discriminant validity.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix and Square Root of Average Variance Extracted

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Accessibility and adaptability	1								
2. Consumption characteristics	0.37**	1							
3. Therapeutic function	0.39**	0.42**	1						
4. Educational interventions	0.33**	0.43**	0.32**	1					
5. Institutional support	0.34**	0.47**	0.32**	0.42**	1				
6. Cultural localization	0.58**	0.40**	0.32**	0.39**	0.43**	1			
7. Emphasis on consequences	0.30**	0.38**	0.44**	0.49**	0.32**	0.36**	1		
8. Positive outcomes	0.29**	0.32**	0.35**	0.28**	0.35**	0.31**	0.26**	1	
9. Reduction of negative outcomes	0.35**	0.37**	0.41**	0.35**	0.34**	0.38**	0.32**	0.42**	1

**p < 0.01



According to Table 3, the square root of the AVE for each variable was greater than its correlations with other variables, confirming discriminant validity. Additionally, all correlation coefficients were statistically significant.

To predict cultural goods consumption in the autism community, the proposed conceptual model was tested using structural equation modeling, and the PLS method was applied to estimate the model. The structural model and research hypotheses were evaluated based on path coefficients and R² values (Seyed Abbaszadeh et al., 2012). Bootstrapping (with 500 subsamples) was used to calculate T-values for testing the significance of path coefficients. T-values greater than ±1.96 and ±2.58 were significant at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels, respectively.

The tested model provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing cultural goods consumption in individuals with autism. It clearly illustrates the relationships among consumption dimensions, educational interventions, institutional support, and consumption outcomes. The model indicates that cultural consumption in this community is not merely a recreational activity but a multidimensional process influenced by individual, social, cultural, and institutional factors, producing both positive and negative consequences.

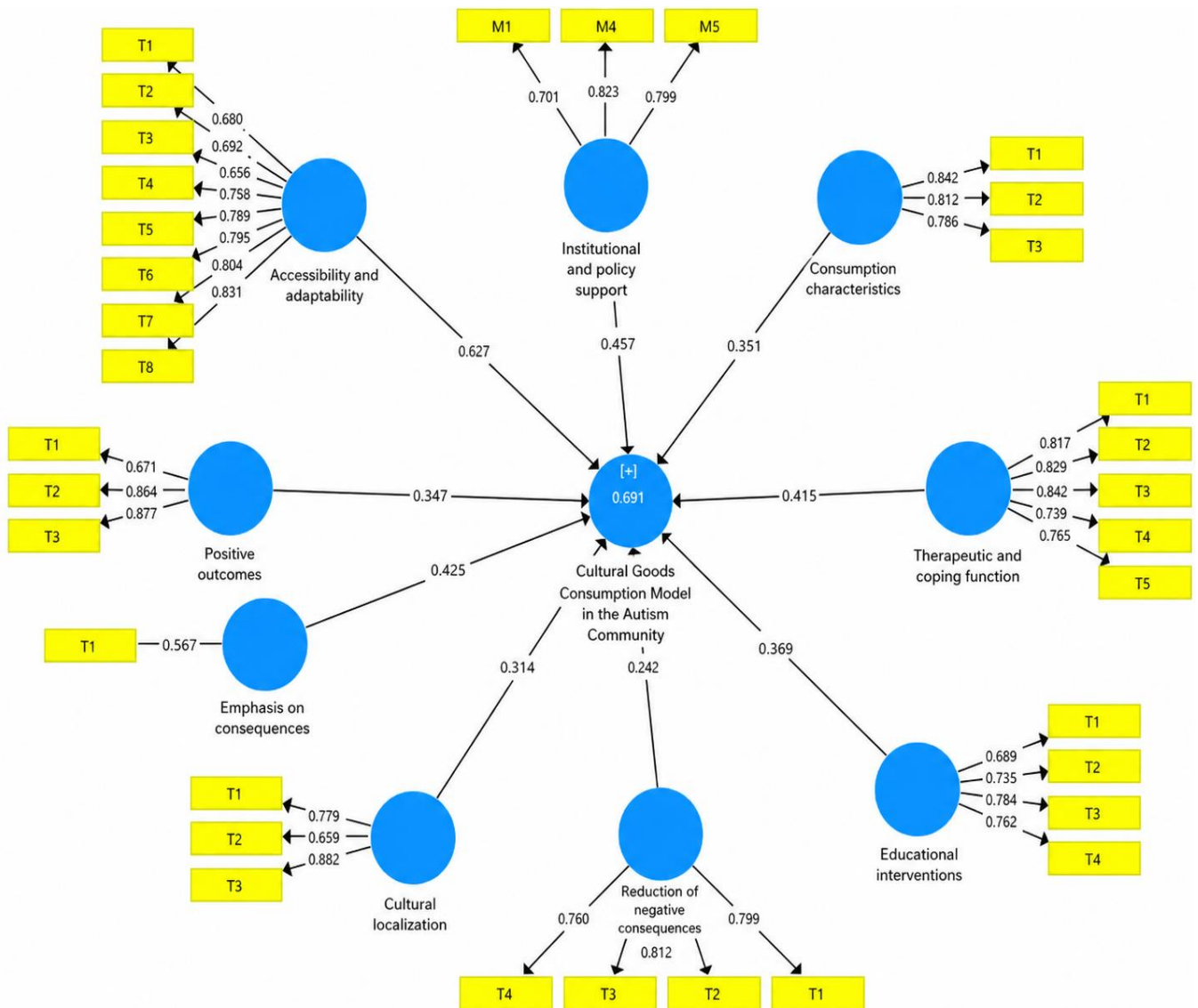


Figure 1. Model with Beta Coefficients

Table 4. Explained Variance, Community, and Redundancy Validity

Research Variables	Q ² (CV-Redundancy)	CV-Community
Accessibility and adaptability	0.352	0.321
Consumption characteristics	0.323	0.399
Therapeutic and coping function	0.358	0.395
Educational interventions	0.303	0.370
Institutional and policy support	0.362	0.371
Cultural localization	0.341	0.359
Emphasis on consequences	0.358	0.382
Positive outcomes	0.347	0.364
Reduction of negative consequences	0.328	0.382

As shown in Table 4, all communality and redundancy validity values are positive, indicating acceptable model quality. Cross-validation indices, including CV-Community and CV-Redundancy (Stone–Geisser Q²), were used to assess the measurement and structural model quality. Positive values confirm adequate predictive relevance of the model.

In addition, the overall model fit index in PLS is the Goodness-of-Fit (GOF) index, which ranges from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating better model quality. The GOF value obtained for the present study was 0.57, indicating an acceptable fit of the tested model.

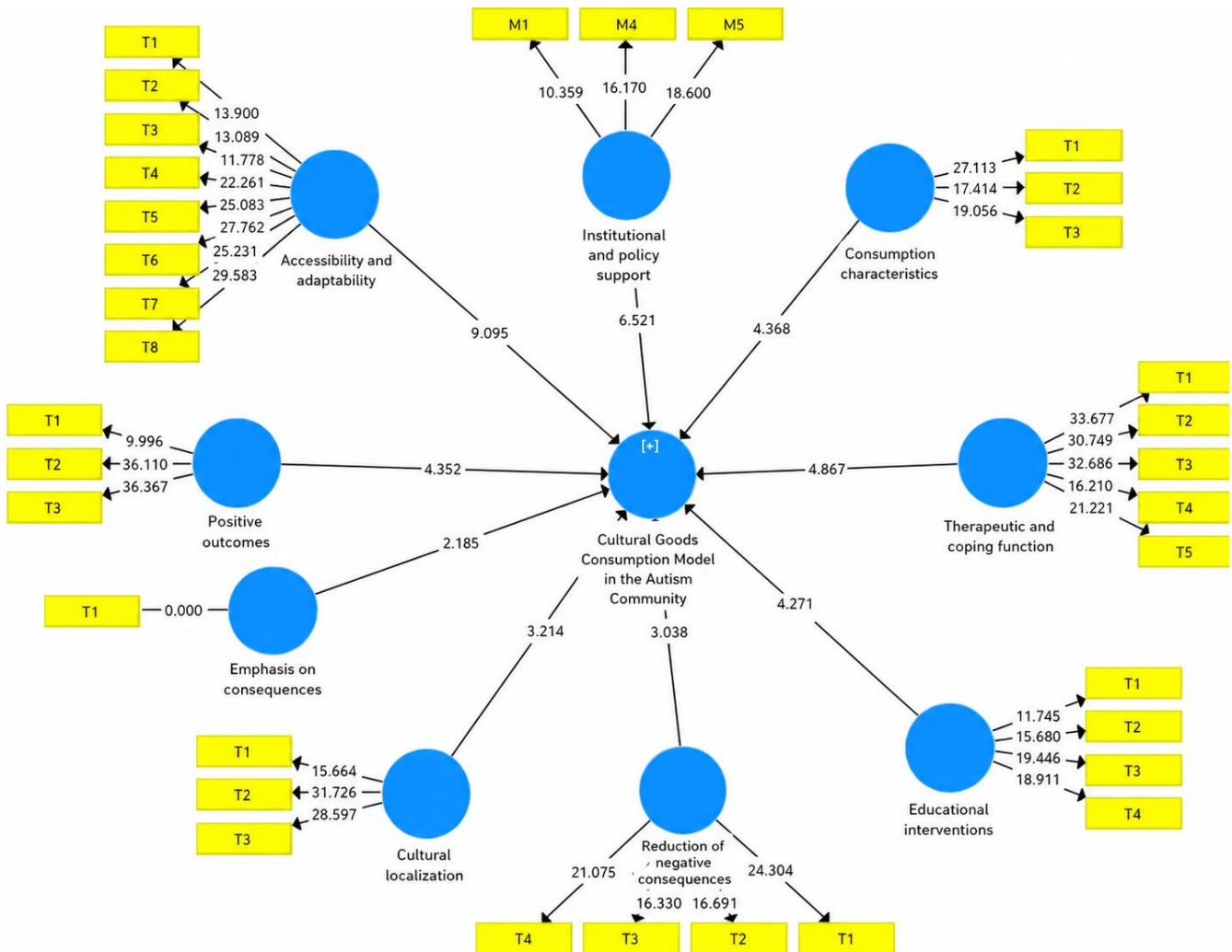


Figure 2. Model with T-Values



4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study provide strong empirical support for the proposed model of cultural goods consumption in the autism community, highlighting the multidimensional and interdependent nature of this phenomenon. The structural model demonstrated that cultural consumption in this population is not merely determined by individual preferences or consumption characteristics but is significantly shaped by a combination of accessibility, institutional support, educational interventions, and, most critically, the management of consumption-related consequences. Among the examined dimensions, the reduction of negative consequences emerged as the most influential predictor of the central construct, followed by institutional and policy support and therapeutic–coping functions. These findings indicate that effective cultural consumption in the autism community is fundamentally contingent upon mitigating adverse outcomes while simultaneously enhancing supportive contextual conditions.

The prominence of reducing negative consequences as the strongest predictor suggests that cultural engagement for individuals with autism is highly sensitive to potential risks such as sensory overload, emotional dysregulation, or reinforcement of restrictive behaviors. This aligns with existing literature emphasizing the importance of structured and carefully managed environments for individuals with autism, where uncontrolled stimuli may lead to maladaptive responses (Marshall et al., 2023). The findings further support the notion that cultural participation must be guided and moderated to ensure that it contributes positively to well-being rather than exacerbating challenges. This interpretation is consistent with research on digital engagement among individuals with autism, which highlights the dual nature of cultural and media consumption as both beneficial and potentially harmful depending on the context and level of regulation (Normand et al., 2021).

Institutional and policy support also demonstrated a substantial effect on cultural consumption, underscoring the critical role of structural and systemic factors in facilitating or constraining access to cultural goods. This finding is in line with previous research indicating that accessibility barriers in cultural institutions can significantly limit participation for individuals with autism and their families (Hoskin & et al., 2023). The present results extend this line of inquiry by demonstrating that institutional support not only enhances access but also contributes directly to the effectiveness and sustainability of cultural engagement. In this regard, policy frameworks that promote inclusive design, staff training, and adaptive programming can play a transformative role in enabling meaningful participation in cultural activities.

The therapeutic and coping function of cultural goods was another significant predictor, reflecting the role of cultural engagement as a mechanism for emotional regulation and psychological support. This finding corroborates evidence from intervention studies showing that arts-based and theater-based programs can improve social competence, emotional expression, and adaptive functioning in individuals with autism (Corbett et al., 2023). Similarly, research on music engagement highlights its capacity to facilitate emotional perception and processing, particularly in populations with socio-emotional challenges (Bhatara et al., 2010; Shalit et al., 2024). The present study contributes to this body of knowledge by integrating these therapeutic dimensions within a broader consumption model, thereby emphasizing the functional significance of cultural goods beyond their recreational value.

Consumption characteristics, while significant, exhibited a comparatively moderate effect on the central construct, suggesting that individual preferences and patterns of use are important but not sufficient determinants of effective cultural engagement. This finding aligns with research indicating that consumption behaviors are shaped by a complex interplay of individual, social, and structural factors rather than being solely driven by personal choice (Choi, 2021; Hardin et al., 2023). In the context of autism, this interplay is further complicated by the presence of specialized interests, which can both facilitate and constrain engagement with cultural goods (Grove et al., 2018). The results of the present study suggest that while these interests are important, their impact is mediated by broader contextual factors such as accessibility and support systems.

Accessibility and adaptability of cultural goods also played a significant role in the model, reinforcing the importance of designing inclusive and flexible cultural environments. This finding is consistent with prior studies emphasizing the need for sensory-friendly and accessible cultural spaces to accommodate the diverse needs of individuals with autism (Hoskin & et al., 2023). Moreover, the emphasis on adaptability highlights the importance of tailoring cultural content and delivery methods to align with individual capabilities and preferences. This perspective is supported by research on culturally adapted interventions,

which demonstrates that customization and contextualization can enhance the effectiveness of programs for individuals with autism (Palmer & Riley, 2025).

Educational interventions emerged as another important predictor, indicating that structured learning experiences can facilitate more effective engagement with cultural goods. This finding aligns with the broader literature on autism interventions, which underscores the role of targeted educational strategies in promoting skill development and adaptive functioning (Asaro-Saddler et al., 2022). By integrating cultural elements into educational programs, practitioners can create opportunities for experiential learning and social interaction, thereby enhancing both cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes. The present study suggests that educational interventions serve as a bridge between individual capabilities and cultural participation, enabling individuals with autism to navigate and benefit from cultural environments more effectively.

Cultural localization also demonstrated a meaningful contribution to the model, highlighting the importance of aligning cultural goods with the socio-cultural context of the target population. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing the role of cultural relevance in shaping engagement and outcomes (Palmer & Riley, 2025). In the context of autism, cultural localization may involve adapting content to reflect local norms, values, and languages, as well as considering the unique needs and experiences of individuals within specific cultural settings. The present results suggest that culturally sensitive approaches can enhance both accessibility and effectiveness, thereby contributing to more inclusive and impactful cultural consumption.

The emphasis on consequences and the role of positive outcomes further underscore the dynamic nature of cultural consumption in the autism community. While positive outcomes such as improved well-being, social integration, and emotional satisfaction were found to be significant, their influence was mediated by the extent to which negative consequences were managed. This finding highlights the importance of adopting a balanced and holistic approach to cultural consumption, where both benefits and risks are carefully considered. It also aligns with research on the psychological impact of cultural engagement, which emphasizes the role of meaningful and authentic experiences in promoting well-being (Bennett et al., 2024).

Finally, the overall explanatory power of the model indicates that the proposed framework provides a robust and comprehensive representation of cultural goods consumption in the autism community. By integrating multiple dimensions and considering both individual and contextual factors, the model captures the complexity of this phenomenon and offers valuable insights for theory, research, and practice. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on autism and cultural participation, extending existing frameworks by incorporating elements of consequence management, institutional support, and cultural adaptation. They also highlight the need for interdisciplinary approaches that combine insights from psychology, sociology, cultural studies, and policy analysis to address the multifaceted challenges and opportunities associated with cultural consumption in the autism community.

One limitation of the present study relates to the use of a cross-sectional research design, which restricts the ability to infer causal relationships among the variables. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data from participants may introduce response biases, particularly in relation to subjective perceptions of cultural consumption and its outcomes. Another limitation concerns the generalizability of the findings, as the sample was drawn from specific institutions and may not fully represent the diversity of the broader autism community. Furthermore, cultural and contextual factors unique to the study setting may limit the applicability of the results to other regions or populations.

Future research should consider employing longitudinal designs to examine changes in cultural consumption patterns over time and to better understand causal relationships among the variables. It would also be beneficial to incorporate mixed-method approaches, combining quantitative modeling with qualitative insights to capture the lived experiences of individuals with autism and their families. Expanding the scope of research to include diverse cultural contexts and populations can enhance the generalizability of findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of cultural consumption in the autism community. Additionally, future studies could explore the role of emerging technologies, such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence, in shaping new forms of cultural engagement for individuals with autism.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study suggest that policymakers, educators, and practitioners should prioritize the development of inclusive and supportive cultural environments that address both the opportunities and challenges associated with cultural consumption in the autism community. This includes investing in accessible infrastructure, designing structured and adaptive programs, and providing training for staff and caregivers to effectively support individuals with autism. Emphasis should also be placed on the careful management of potential negative consequences, ensuring that cultural



engagement contributes positively to well-being and development. By adopting a holistic and evidence-based approach, stakeholders can enhance the effectiveness of cultural consumption and promote greater inclusion and quality of life for individuals with autism and their families.

Ethical Considerations

Page | 9 All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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