

A Twelve-Week Intervention Programme to Improve the Gross Motor Skills of Selected Children Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Abstract : Neuro-typical children develop the motor skills necessary to play, do schoolwork and interact with others. However, this is not observed in children who have learning or behavioural problems. Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are often referred to as clumsy because their body parts do not work well together in a sequence. Physical Activity (PA) has shown to be beneficial to the general population, therefore, providing children with ASD opportunities to take part in PA programmes, could prove to be beneficial in many ways and should be investigated. The purpose of this study was to design a specialised group intervention programme, to attempt to improve gross motor skills of selected children diagnosed with ASD between the ages of eight and 13 years. A government school for ASD learners was recruited to take part in this study, and a sample of convenience (N=7) was selected. Children in the experimental group (n=4) participated in a 12-week group intervention programme twice per week, while the control group continued with their normal daily routine. The Movement Assessment Battery for Children-Second Edition (MABC-2), was administered pre- and post-test to determine the children's gross motor proficiency and to determine if the group intervention programme had an effect on the gross motor skills of the experimental group. Statistically significant improvements were observed in total motor skill proficiency ($p < 0.05$), of the experimental group. These results demonstrate the importance of gross motor skills interventions for children diagnosed with ASD. Future research should include more participants to ensure that the results can be generalised.

Keywords : autism spectrum disorder, children, gross motor skills, group intervention programme

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