



Critical Appraisal Form

Date: 16-Sep-19

Members in Discussion: Janine Lebeter, Jillian Baldwin, Nicole, Anna Crauford

Article:

Sutton, B., Webster, A., & Westerveld, M. (2019). A systematic review of school-based interventions targeting social communication behaviours for students with autism. *Autism*, 23, 2, 274-286

Participants:

72 male and 6 female students aged 3-12. IQ reported in 7 studies ranged from 71 to 128. Participants were generally described as having functional communication skills and could use language to ask and answer questions.

Control or Comparison Group/s: no

Methods: 19 studies examined initiating behaviours associated with social communication and 14 studies included measures of student's response to communicative initiation of peers. The majority of the studies (19) measured the frequency of initiation and response behaviours; 3 measured duration of these behaviours. Quality of the behaviours was not measured. **Types of Intervention:** Child-specific interventions (11), Peer-mediated interventions (2), Ecological interventions (3), Comprehensive interventions (2), Collateral skill intervention (1). Specifics of the interventions for replicability were not described in detail in this article.

Outcomes: Positive outcomes for increasing the frequency (n=19) or duration (n=3) of initiations and/or responses to peers were reported in 20 of the 22 studies. 2 studies reported on statistical significance and effect size, including (Mason et al., 2014) with a multiple component treatment program including training of both participants and peers. Both of these studies reported statistically significant improvements. The two studies that did not demonstrate a positive effect both utilized social stories as the primary intervention.

Strengths and Limitations:

Several studies did not include enough detail to replicate the intervention; Quality of the interaction was not rated in any study; Possibly decreased feasibility and applicability for teachers as most training was conducted by researchers; Clinicians looking to replicate interventions would need to read individual studies involved.

Quality of the evidence from each study generally low.

	Compelling	Suggestive	Equivocal/Uncertain
Validity		x	
Clinical importance		x	

Clinical Implications/discussion:

Though difficult to make specific recommendations for teachers, results do suggest that interventions that involve instruction, prompts, and engagement with peers do result in improved social communication skills.

Many studies used school playground breaks as locations for intervention, however, the study points out that many students with ASD may be looking to have a break from social interaction and/or play alone during these times

In this study there is a focus on feasibility of implementation for teachers within the classroom, and that being a potentially optimal treatment location; members agreed with this; members also discussed building relationships with teachers and the challenge of teachers having to be responsible for a number of students.

Members discussed using before and after checklists as a way to measure quality of social communication behaviours.