

## A STUDY TO ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MASSED TRIAL INSTRUCTION ON SOCIAL SKILLS AMONG AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER CHILDREN IN SELECTED SPECIAL SCHOOLS AT KANYKUMARI DISTRICT

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### ABSTRACT

Autism spectrum disorder is a developmental disorder characterized by triad of symptoms as impaired social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication, challenges with sensory processes and restricted and repetitive behaviour. Symptoms of Autism usually begin before the age of three and continue throughout the person's life. **Methods:** The study was conducted in Special Schools at Kanniyakumari District. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted. Samples were selected on the basis of inclusion criteria. Sample size for the study consisted of 60 childrens with autism spectrum disorder between 6 – 12 years of age among them 30 in experimental group and 30 in control group. The study was based on Modified Callista Roy's adaptation theory model(1996). The data collection tool was developed for generating the data. The research design used for this study was pretest posttest control group design. **Results:** In experimental group the post test mean score on social skills among the autism spectrum disorder children was 122.30 with standard deviation 7.40 and control group was 68.92 with SD 3.06. The mean difference was high and statistically significant. Both groups scores are distinct. Hence the Massed Trial Instruction was effective to improve the social skills among the autism spectrum disorder children. In experimental and control group there was no association between pre-test level of social skills among autism spectrum children and their selected demographic variables. Chi-square test was used to find out the association. **Conclusion:** The findings revealed that the Massed Trial Instruction was effective to improve the social skills among the autism spectrum disorder children.

**Key words:** massed trial instruction, autism, and social skills.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Autism is hard in every sense of word. Children with Autism are always unique totally, interesting sometimes and also mysterious. Autism is a fatal disease which makes no mark on the outward appearance, physical appearance of a child who looks normal but has developmental impairments. Autism comes from 'autis' a Greek word meaning 'self' which squarely fits the feature of Autism Spectrum Disorder (Volden, 2015). Discrete-trial training (DTT) is a commonly used instructional method for teaching children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Three methods of presenting discrete trials are commonly used: massed-trial instruction, distributed-trial instruction, and task interpersonal. Massed-trial instruction involves teaching one exemplar or program at a time with no other trials or programs interspersed and with short (i.e., 0 to 8 s) pauses between trials (Chiara, Schuster, Bell, & Wolery, 1995). Distributed-trial instruction, on the other hand, includes long breaks between exemplars; the time between trials can range from 10 s to several minutes (Bambara & Warren, 1993).

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

A study to assess the effectiveness of massed trial instruction on social skills among autism spectrum disorder children in selected special schools at Kanyakumari district.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To assess the level of social skills among children with autism spectrum disorder
2. To assess the effectiveness of massed trial instruction on social skills in children with autism spectrum disorder.
3. To find out the association between pretest level of social skills with selected demographic variables.

**HYPOTHESIS**

**H1:** There will be a significant difference between the pretest and posttest level of social skills on massed trial instruction among autism spectrum disorder.

**H2:** There will be a significant association between the pretest level of social skills in experimental and control group with their selected demographic variables.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY****RESEARCH APPROACH**

- In this study the researcher was adopted Quantitative research approach.

**RESEARCH DESIGN**

- The Pretest posttest control group design will be adopted to achieve the objectives of the study.

**POPULATION**

- The target populations were 125 children with autism spectrum disorder from the selected school in which 70 children were the accessible population who met the inclusion and exclusion criteria, among them 60 samples were selected randomly for the study.

**SAMPLE**

- In this study the sample were the children under the age group of 6 to 12 years selected in the special schools.

**SAMPLE SIZE**

- The sample sizes for the study consisted of 60 children's with autism spectrum disorder between 6 – 12 years of age. Among that 30 is experimental group and 30 in control group.

**SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

- In this study sample stratified random sampling technique was adopted for the selection of samples.

**CRITERIA FOR SAMPLE SELECTION****INCLUSION CRITERIA**

- ☐ Children with other associated disorders like learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactive disorder.
- ☐ Children with autism spectrum disorder between age group of 6 and 12 yrs.
- ☐ Children who are willing to participate.
- ☐ Children who are able to sit in a place for at least 20 - 30 minutes for doing massed trial instruction.
- ☐ Children who can understand Tamil and English.

**EXCLUSION CRITERIA**

- ☒ Children with Asperger's syndrome.
- ☒ Children who are sick during the study.

**SETTING OF THE STUDY**

- The study was conducted in the special school at Nambikkai Aalayam near Kazhuvanhattai was situated at a distance of 21.5km away from Christian college of nursing, Neyyoor.

**VARIABLES UNDER STUDY**

**Independent variables:** Massed Trial Instruction.

**Dependent variables:** level of social skills among autism spectrum disorder.

**INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION**

The tool consists of two sections

**Section A: Demographic Data.**

**Section B: Autism social skill profile:**

It comprises of 49 items in a 4 – point likert scale. It is used to assess the social skill of the children under the age of 6 to 11 years. The ASSP are rated on a 4- point rating scale ranging from never, sometimes, often, very often. Each item is scored as never – 1, sometimes – 2, often – 3, very often – 4. The maximum possible score is 196. And the minimum score is 49. The scores are interpreted as,

Scoring	Social Skills
149 - 196	Above Average social skills
99 – 148	Average social skills
50 – 98	Below average social skills

**DISCUSSION**

The goal of the study was to assess the effectiveness of massed trial instruction on social skills among autism spectrum disorder children in selected special schools at kanyakumari district. In this study the sample were the children under the age group of 6 to 12 years selected in the special schools. Level of social skills was assessed using autism social skill profile. Data analysis showed that the pretest mean score on social skills among the autism spectrum disorder children in the experimental group was 65.46 with SD 2.68 and in the control group was 65.26 with SD 2.72. The mean difference was low and statistically not significant. That means both scores are same and comparable. The posttest score in the experimental group was 122.30 with SD 7.40 and in the control group was 68.92 with SD 3.06. The mean difference was high and statistically significant. That means both scores are distinct. Hence we conclude that the massed trial instruction was effective to improve the social skills among the autism spectrum disorder children.

**CONCLUSION**

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study. Mass trial instruction method was an effective method for improving social skills on autism spectrum disorder children. This method helps for easy understanding and gives more awareness about autism spectrum disorder among children.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the finding of the study the investigator proposed the following recommendations.

- ❖ A similar study can be replicated on a large sample to generalize the findings
- ❖ Studies can be conducted to determine effectiveness of massed trial instruction in children with learning disability and other disorders.
- ❖ Studies can be done to determine the awareness of autism disorder and effective intervention among the parents.
- ❖ Prospective studies can be conducted to determine the impact of healthy practices and prevention of common health problems in children with autism

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