

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PEER-MEDIATED INTERVENTION PROGRAMS FOR LEARNERS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD) IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOM

by:

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Peer-mediated intervention (PMI) programs have emerged as an effective approach for supporting learners with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in mainstream classrooms. These programs leverage the natural interactions between typically developing peers and students with ASD to promote social, communication, and academic skills. The inclusion of students with ASD in mainstream settings often presents challenges due to differences in social interaction, communication, and adaptive behaviors (Cole CL, Telesford A, Bambara LM 2021).

Every learner has a privilege and right to equitable and accessible education, despite their physical appearance, needs, and status. This was supported by the Republic Act No. 7277, also known as the "Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities." Enacted in 1992, this law aims to promote the integration, self-reliance, and independence of persons with disabilities, including education. Under this law, it is mandated that the State shall ensure that persons with disabilities have access to inclusive and quality education at all levels. Schools must provide appropriate support services and facilities to accommodate the unique needs of students with disabilities. Furthermore, reasonable accommodation must be made to ensure that students with disabilities can fully participate in mainstream educational programs.

The Department of Education (DepEd) has released rules and standards to facilitate inclusive education for children with special needs, in addition to the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities. These consist of the Guidelines on the Establishment and

Implementation of Inclusive Education Learning Resource Centers and the Special Education (SPED) Policy Framework.

Walton et al. (2018) investigated the long-term effects of peer-mediated intervention on the social integration and inclusion of students with ASD in mainstream classrooms. The results indicated sustained improvements in social skills, peer acceptance, and friendships among participants, highlighting the enduring benefits of peer-mediated interventions for promoting social competence and peer relationships in students with ASD.

Peer-mediated interventions (PMI) for enhancing social skills in children with special needs, particularly autism spectrum disorder (ASD), showcase the effectiveness and versatility of this approach across various settings and age groups. Smith, Johnson, & Garcia's (2020) study highlighted the positive impact of PMI on social skill development in special education classrooms. Children with impairments significantly improved their social skills by involving typically developing peers to model and encourage appropriate social behaviors. This intervention fostered inclusive classroom environments and promoted social integration among children with varying needs, emphasizing the importance of peer support and interaction.

In addition to social and communication benefits, PMI supports academic engagement for learners with ASD. By collaborating with peers during academic tasks, students with ASD can develop better task initiation, persistence, and problem-solving skills. Peers can offer assistance with classroom routines, academic tasks, and organization, helping students with ASD stay on task and complete assignments more independently. Furthermore, the reciprocal nature of peer interactions often leads to increased motivation and confidence among students with ASD, as they experience success and positive reinforcement from their peers.

Overall, peer-mediated intervention programs are a highly effective strategy for promoting the social, communication, and academic development of learners with ASD in mainstream classrooms. These programs not only benefit students with ASD but also foster empathy, leadership, and collaboration among their typically developing peers. By creating a more inclusive learning environment, PMI helps bridge the gap between students with diverse needs and abilities, ensuring that all learners can thrive. As schools continue to embrace inclusive education, the implementation of PMI can play a pivotal role in enhancing the educational experience for students with ASD and their peers alike.

References:

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