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South Korean Cultural Attitudes towards Autism and Play, and the Effects on South Korean Parents and Educators of Children with ASD

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South Korea's Perception of Autism and Play, and the Effects on Parents and Educators of Children with ASD

Introduction

•Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a “..lifelong neurodevelopmental condition characterized by difficulties with social communication and the presence of restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, and activities” (Williams, He, Cascio, & Woynaroski, 2021, p.1).

•There are only a handful of studies regarding ASD and play interventions on South Korea, and South Korean perceptions of these topics are not widely studied. As a result, Park, Du, & Choi, 2020 stated that “ there is currently a massive gap between the demand and the supply of quality applied behavior analysis (ABA) services for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families”.

•This exploratory study aims to examine if and how the effects South Korean cultural attitudes have on Korean children with ASD, their parents, and their educators. Additionally, South Korea's cultural attitudes towards play, and if Koreans view play as something that could be beneficial for children with autism's development, will be collected.

Methods & Measures

•Participants completed a Qualtrics survey which asked questions about their knowledge on ASD, perceptions of children with autism, and perceptions of play and play intervention

•Participants were asked if they identify as a parent of a child with ASD, an educator of a child with ASD, or part of the general public and have no personal connection to ASD

•Qualitative questions posed included:

- Describe your perception of children with ASD
- Describe your opinions on play, and play intervention for children with ASD
- Describe your knowledge on ASD, and for parents/educators, describe the intervention services your child is enrolled in

Results

•Much of the general public believe that people with ASD feel isolated, trapped in their own world, are unable to socialize, and have developmental and physical disabilities

•Much of the general public perceived play intervention/education as a positive strategy because play was seen as something easy that would garner interest from children, and could teach social and communication skills; Age 13 most common age general public thought play should decrease at

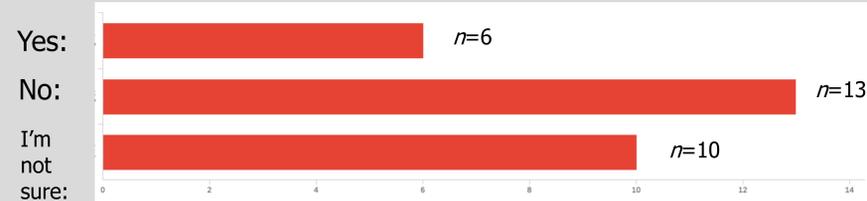
•Compared to general population where $n=13$ said “yes”, and $n=12$ said “I'm not sure” (both out of total $n=32$) to “does South Korean society believe kids with ASD can develop and contribute to society?”; all parents who have kids with ASD responded “no”, and all educators of kids with ASD responded with “no” as well

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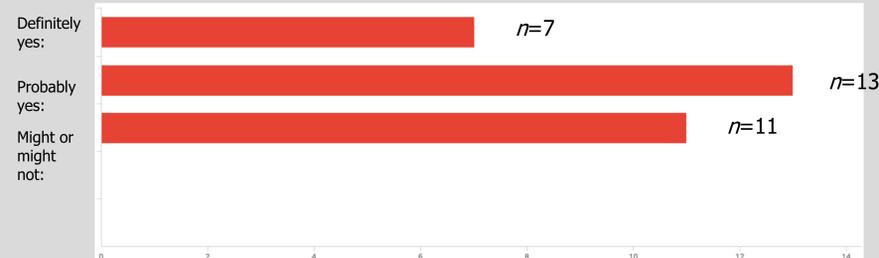
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South Korea General Public's Answers

Question: Do you think that children with autism could be successful at attending the same/education program as their typically developing peers?

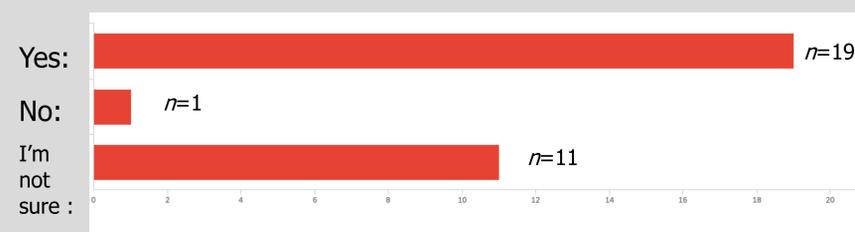


Question: Do you think that children with ASD can engage in play?

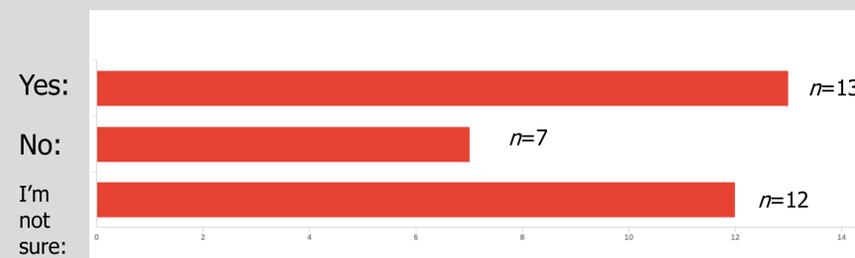


South Korea General Public's Answers

Question: Do you know what Autism Spectrum Disorder is?



Question: Do you think South Korean society as a whole believes that children with ASD can develop and contribute to society?



Qualitative Analysis of General Public's Perception of ASD/Play

Perception of Children with ASD and Perception of South Korean Attitudes towards ASD

- "A mentally disabled person who cannot socialize and who is living trapped in their own world"
- "A disabled child who needs their parents to sacrifice and needs society's attention and help"
- "Due to brain developmental disability, the autistic child is not good at socializing, speaking, exercise, and being independent"

Perception of Play and Play Interventions

- "By focusing on the act of play, (kids with ASD) may be able to learn quicker than they would through other forms of traditional teaching"
- "It will give the child who has difficulties with social relationship building even a small understanding of interactions"
- "Rather than a conventional 'watch and listen' lesson plan, you can participate in play and I think you can improve interactions/socializing which is good"
- "Play is not simply playing, but also communicating and interacting with each other"

Implications

•Majority of responses being stereotypical views of ASD can impact diagnosis rates by society not recognizing ASD as having a range of spectrums, hence symptoms, so children on the lower end of the spectrum may not be given the diagnosis and support they need

•Interventions that center play such as ABA may not be seen as a serious teaching strategy if play is perceived as something easy and busy work, so the focus will stay on caretaking for children with ASD vs. teaching and development

•Majority of general population perceiving people with autism as having mostly physical disabilities who are trapped in their own world can create idea that they cannot be helped, taught, and integrated into general society

•Most people responded no, children with ASD wouldn't be successful at attending the same school as typically developing kids, which could harm efforts to put special education aides and other forms of service in schools, furthering the separation of people with ASD from the rest of society

Limitations & Future Directions

•The reported information so far focuses on South Korea's general public as there have not been enough parents and educators of children with ASD who have responded to the survey

•The participants were not asked questions regarding their age or where in Korea they live for anonymity; these two factors may reveal patterns in how individuals respond

•The study will be ongoing and needs more responses from parents and educators of children with ASD in order to evaluate how cultural attitudes impact them and their children/students