

DISCLOSURE OF ASD DIAGNOSIS AND PEER'S SOCIAL RESPONSE IN GRADE
3 TO 7 CHILDREN

by

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Abstract

One of the common features of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is deficits in social communication skills, which discourages positive social interaction and leads to negative social responses from peers. Inclusive education encourages all students to be included in general classroom settings; this should also apply to those who may be seen as neurodiverse. Beyond just physical presence, social engagement is essential for successful inclusive education. Bolton and Ault (2018) suggested a positive correlation between Autism diagnosis disclosure and positive social response in college students and adults. The current study investigated if similar results can be observed from younger participants. In addition, participants' empathy scores were taken into account in this investigation. Forty-three participants from grades three to seven were recruited from a tutorial centre to participate in this study. The participants were asked to complete a questionnaire to ascertain their social responses toward a peer who demonstrates ASD traits with or without the influence of ASD diagnosis disclosure. Information about participants' gender, grade level and empathy scores were collected to examine the correlation among these variables and participants' social responses. Results from this study found that the group which were disclosed to an ASD designation demonstrated more prosocial responses and less asocial responses toward the peer in the illustration.

Although the difference was not statistically significant, this initial study suggested the possibility of a positive effect of ASD diagnosis disclosure in a younger population.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Social Responses, Inclusive education, Neurodiversity