

The Impact of Early Intervention on Cognitive and Adaptive Functioning in Children with Down Syndrome

¹Longe Bankole-Phillips Ayodeji & ²Longe Olumide Babatope

¹Atlantic International University Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

¹The Devereux Foundation, Town Hall IRA, 141 Devereux way, Red Hook, New York USA

²West Midlands Open University, Lagos, Nigeria

E-mails: ¹blonge@ad.devereux.org; bankole.phillips@westmidlands.university;
longeolumide@fulbrightmail.org

ABSTRACT

Early intervention programs significantly impact cognitive and adaptive functioning in children with Down syndrome, improving cognitive development, intellectual functioning, adaptive behavior, and daily living skills. Speech and language therapy also play a crucial role in supporting communication and language development for children with cerebral palsy, enhancing articulation, intelligibility, language comprehension, and social interaction skills. These interventions foster independence, self-sufficiency, and overall quality of life for children with neurodevelopmental disorders.

Keyword: Early Intervention, Cognitive and Adaptive Functioning, Children, Down Syndrome

Aims Research Journal Reference Format:

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early intervention, Down syndrome, Cognitive development, Adaptive functioning, Speech and language therapy, Cerebral palsy, Communication, Language development Social interaction, Neurodevelopmental disorders, Intellectual functioning, Adaptive behavior, Daily living skills. In his 2020 study, Bull argues that one of the main impacts of early intervention on cognitive and adaptive functioning in children with Down Syndrome, is that it improves cognitive development and intellectual functioning: Through early intervention programs that center around structured educational activities, it is possible to positively influence the cognitive development of children with Down syndrome. It is worth reiterating that these programs have one aim and that is to stimulate various areas of cognitive functioning.

When these areas, which include language, problem-solving and memory are stimulated through targeted activities and strategies, children can develop essential cognitive skills at a critical period in their brain development. Enhanced adaptive behavior and daily living skills are also impacts realized as a result of early intervention on cognitive and adaptive functioning in children with down syndrome. What is adaptive behavior? This is simply the ability to perform practical, age-appropriate tasks necessary for independent living. It is quite common for children with Down syndrome to face challenges in acquiring and mastering these skills.



Fig 1; Typical Training Scenario for a Child with Down Syndrome

Early intervention programs that are mainly focused on teaching and reinforcing adaptive skills have the ability to foster the development of greater independence and self-sufficiency. These in the grand scheme of things, positively impact their overall quality of life and ability to function in various settings. Improved social and emotional development: In addition to cognitive and adaptive domains, early intervention programs also address social and emotional development. Children with Down syndrome may experience difficulties in social interaction, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships. Early intervention strategies aim to foster positive social skills, teach emotion recognition and management techniques, and promote healthy attachments with caregivers and peers.

Ensuring that there is a supportive environment would mean that these programs are in a good position to help children develop strong social-emotional foundations. As mentioned earlier on, these foundations are very important for building meaningful relationships in the long run. With all these in mind, it is very vital to remember that the effectiveness of early intervention can be informed by so many factors key among them being the quality and intensity of the program and the individual characteristics of each child. With research still growing in this area, there is bound to be more refining and optimization of early intervention approaches to maximize their impact.

2. EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY IN CHILDREN WITH CEREBRAL PALSY

Patel et al., (2020) use their studies to underline the fact that speech and language therapy do in fact play an important role when it comes to supporting communication and language development for children with cerebral palsy. By way of basic definition, cerebral palsy is a neurological disorder that affects movement, posture, and muscle coordination. In the wide scheme of things, it does lead to speech and language difficulties. These are some of the key points relevant when it comes to the examination of the effectiveness of speech and language therapy in children with cerebral palsy.



Fig 2: Pictorial Representation of Different Scenarios

First, it is only fair to begin by making it clear that speech and language therapy have the ability to improve articulation and intelligibility in children with cerebral palsy. As highlighted earlier on, these children often experience challenges with communication. By relying on targeted exercises and techniques, speech therapists can help strengthen and improve the functioning of the muscles involved in speech. In the larger scale of things, this will lead to clearer articulation and enhanced intelligibility. At the same time, therapists may introduce augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) methods. These include but don't end with picture exchange systems or voice output devices.

When used accordingly, they could facilitate effective communication when speech is severely impaired. Speech and language therapy can also positively impact language development and comprehension in among children with cerebral palsy. As Patel et al., (2020) explains, these children do experience difficulties in acquiring and understanding language and this is because of the neurological implications of their condition.



Fig 3; Learning Skills

To combat this, and change the situation for the better, speech therapists employ various strategies. These strategies include language stimulation activities, modeling, and visual aids with the sole aim of promoting language acquisition and comprehension. When done efficiently, the results are in most cases than not promising, hence a reiteration of how positively implicating speech and language therapy is for children with Cerebral Palsy



Fig 4: Hyperactivity Scenario

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Lastly but not least, speech and language therapy can improve overall communication and social interaction skills. At the center of being able to communicate, is the ability to have social skills. As per Gulati (2018), effective communication is essential for developing meaningful relationships. With this in mind, speech therapists assist children in developing pragmatic social skills that inform language functionality. Herein, skills like turn-taking, topic maintenance, and social cues, are all taught. The more they are taught, the more the children become better at successfully communicating with their friends and peers.

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