

**The attitudes of children
toward unfamiliar peers who use
augmentative and alternative
communication devices**

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SUMMARY

AAC aims at improving the interaction of adults and children with LNFS in their natural daily environments. Despite the considerable research of the past few decades into various aspects of AAC and the concurrent rapid advances in clinical practice during the same period, the social participation of many AAC users remains problematic. The lack of interaction by children who use AAC with their peers has been extensively documented. The potential of technological features of an AAC system to influence the attitudes and interaction of peers forms the basis of this investigation.

The purpose of this research was to determine the impact of voice output, as a characteristic of a child's AAC system, on the attitudes of unfamiliar peers. The effect of the gender of the peers on their attitudes to children with disabilities and LNFS was also of interest as previous studies generally indicated that girls held more favourable attitudes to peers with disabilities. The need to develop a suitable tool to measure the attitudes of peers to a child with disabilities and LNFS was ascertained. The present investigation, therefore, also included an attempt to design a scale, the CADAQ, to measure differences in attitudes toward children who are AAC users, dependent on the output mode of the device.

A descriptive survey design was used and, prior to the main study, the suitability of the attitude scale was tested in a pilot study. Initial attitudes toward the peer with physical disabilities and LNFS were measured by the CADAQ, according to three dimensions: affective/behavioural, cognitive/belief and communication competence. Results reflected more favourable attitudes to the presence of voice output in comparison to the no voice option. Girls were also found to hold more positive attitudes to the peer with disabilities and LNFS. Good internal consistency of the CADAQ was demonstrated through an item analysis.

Clinical implications and recommendations for additional research are discussed.

Key Words: attitude, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), interaction, voice output, gender, communication, peers, communication competence, stereotyping, attitudinal scales and little or no functional speech (LNFS).

OPSOMMING

AAK is gemik op die verbetering van die interaksie van volwassenes en kinders met min of geen funksionele spraak (MGFS) gedurende daaglikse aktiwiteite in hul natuurlike omgewing. Ten spyte van omvangryke navorsing in verskeie aspekte van AAK die afgelope paar dekades en die gelyktydige verbetering van klieiese praktyke, bly die sosiale deelname van baie AAK gebruikers steeds problematies. Die gebrekkige interaksie tussen kinders wat AAK gebruik en hul portuurgroep, is reeds in diepte gedokumenteer. Die potensiaal wat die tegniese aspekte van 'n AAK sisteem inhou ten einde die houdings en interaksie van die portuur groep te beïnvloed, vorm die basis van hierdie studie.

Die doel van die navorsing was om vas te stel wat die impak is van stemuitset as 'n eienskap van 'n kind se AAK sisteem, op die houding van die portuurgroep wat nie voorheen aan die AAK gebruiker bekend was nie. Die effek van die portuurgroep se geslag rakende hul houding teenoor lede van die portuurgroep met gestremdhede en MGFS is van belang, aangesien vorige studies aangedui het dat dogters se houding oor die algemeen meer positief is teenoor 'n lid van die portuurgroep met 'n gestremdheid. Die noodsaaklikheid om 'n toepaslike meetinstrument te ontwikkel wat die houding van die portuurgroep teenoor die gestremde kind met MGFS te kan meet, is gedemonstreer. Die huidige studie het dus gepoog om 'n metingskaal, die CADAQ, te ontwerp om sodoende die verskil wat die hulpmiddel se uitset modaliteit op die houding van die portuurgroep teenoor die AAK gebruiker het, te meet.

'n Beskrywende opname ontwerp is gebruik en die toepaslikheid van die houdingskaal is reeds voor die hoofstudie deur middel van loodsstudie getoets. Aanvanklike houdings teenoor die kind met 'n fisiese gestremdheid en MGFS is met behulp van die CADAQ gemeet ten opsigte van drie vlakke: affektief/gedrag, kognitief/beskouing en kommunikasievaardigheid. Die resultate het aangedui dat houdings meer positief was wanneer daar wel stemuitset was as wanneer daar geen stemuitset was nie. Daar is ook gevind dat dogters se houding meer positief is teenoor die kind met

'n gestremdheid en MGFS van dieselfde portuurgroep. Goeie interne konstantheid van die CADAQ is deur 'n itemanalise aangedui.

Kliniese implikasies en aanbevelings vir verdere navorsing word bespreek.

CHAPTER 1

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