

Background

- For children with intellectual disabilities (ID) and with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), participation in recreational and social activities facilitates the development and generalization of social skills and adaptive behaviours.
- For these children leisure activities have been found to have emotional, psychological, and educational benefits and social integration has been suggested to have positive influences on overall well-being.
- Engaging in social and recreational activities provides opportunities for friendships, the development of social skills and adaptive behaviours, and functions to prevent loneliness.
- Previous research has found that children with ID participate in recreational activities with peers more often than children with ASD, which has important implications for the goals of social inclusion (Solish et al., 2010).

Objectives

- The study aims to examine differences in the experiences of social and recreational activities between children with ID and children with both ASD and ID (ASD + ID).

Hypotheses

- Children with ASD + ID will participate in fewer social and recreational activities than peers with only ID due to the social deficits that are inherent in a diagnosis of ASD.
- Activities in both groups will be similar in terms of the support person that is present, but children with ID will be more likely to engage in recreational activities with peers as found in Solish et al., 2010.

Methods

Great Outcomes for Kids Impacted by Severe Developmental Disabilities (GO4KIDDS) is an ongoing research project examining the health, wellbeing and social inclusion of children with severe DD. The current study used data collected from a GO4KIDDS' extended survey completed by parents of children with severe DD from across Canada through an online survey system. Parents were recruited to participate through community agencies and online advertising.

Participant Characteristics:

- 95 parents participated, with 59 (62.1%) having a child with a diagnosis of ASD + ID, and 36 (37.9%) having a child with a diagnosis of only ID.
- Groups (ASD + ID and ID) did not differ on age, and overall adaptive and maladaptive behavior as measured by the SIB-R.
- Children ranged in age from 3-19 years of age ($M = 10.6$ years old, $SD = 3.59$)

Measures:

Scales of Independent Behavior-Revised Short Form (Bruininks et al., 1996)

- General Maladaptive Index: Very Serious = 2%, Serious = 4% Moderately Serious = 25%, Marginally Serious = 20%, Normal = 49%
- Adaptive Behavior: W standard scores ($M = 460.60$, $SD = 24.71$; Age Equivalent $M = 3$ years, 3 months)

Activities Questionnaire (Solish et al., 2010)

- This questionnaire asked parents whether or not their child engaged in a variety of social (unstructured time with peers, social outings, special outings, community activities) and recreational (sports team or lessons) activities and who the support person (parent, other family member, other adult) and peers (with or without disabilities) were during these activities. Parents rated frequency of participation in these activities on a scale from 1 to 5: 1 = less than once a month, 2 = once a month, 3 = once a week, 4 = twice a week, 5 = everyday

Results

- No significant differences were found between groups on proportion of children who engaged (yes/no) in social or recreational activities (Figure 1), or in the frequency of participation in recreational and social activities (Table 1).
- The proportion of social and recreational activities engaged in with parents, other family members, other adults and peers with and without disabilities was computed.
- Children with ID engaged in a significantly greater proportion of their social activities with family members other than their parents $t(37.07) = 2.26$, $p = .04$. No other significant differences were found between groups (Figure 3).
- Children with ASD + ID engaged in a greater proportion of social activities with peers without disabilities $t(34) = -3.33$, $p = .002$, and children with ID alone engaged in a greater proportion of social activities with peers with disabilities $t(34) = 3.33$, $p = .002$. No significant difference in proportion of recreational activities engaged in with peers with and without disabilities was found (Figure 2).

Result

Table 1:
Independent sample t-tests comparing the frequency of participation between groups in social and recreational activities

Activity Type	Mean Difference	t	df
Unstructured time with peers	-.18	-.58	89
Social Outings	.17	.54	89
Special Outings	.67	.43	41
Community Activities	.54	.61	89
Sports Team	.39	1.45	59.89
Lessons	.50	1.49	89

Figure 1: Proportion of children participating in social and recreational activities

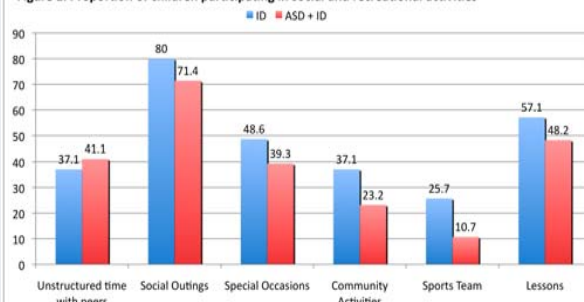


Figure 3: Percentage of activities engaged in with differing support persons

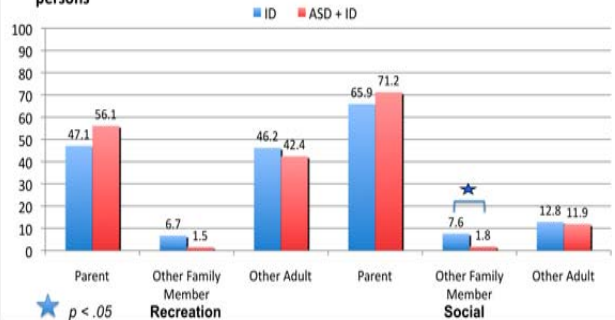
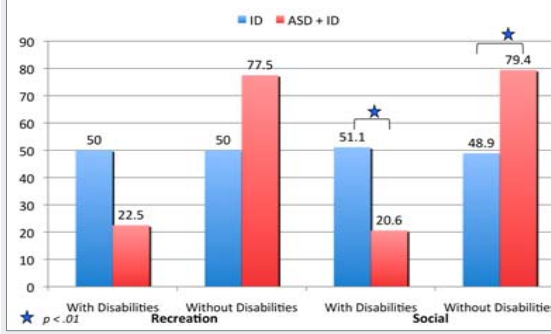


Figure 2: Percentage of activities engaged in with peers with and without disabilities



Discussion

- The current findings suggest that children with ID and ASD + ID experience similar structure within their social and recreational activities.
- Whereas children with ID participated in social activities more often with peers with disabilities, children with ASD + ID had a higher rate of involvement in social activities with peers without disabilities.
- Many of the results were likely not significant due to high variability within each group and small sample size.
- Although non-significant, a higher percentage of children in the ID alone group were reported to engage in a variety of social and recreational activities. Contrary to our hypothesis children with ID alone were not significantly more likely to engage in social activities than children with ASD + ID and did not participate in these activities more often than children with ASD + ID.
- These results demonstrate that children with both ASD + ID and ID alone are engaging in a variety of social and recreational activities.

Future Research

- Future research should examine factors that influence the types of peers participating in social and recreational activities with children with developmental disabilities.