

Assessing if Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder Prefer to Have Choice Opportunities Embedded in their Activity Schedules: A Pilot Study

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INTRO:

Activity schedules are a series of pictures that function as discriminative stimuli to engage in activities; they have been shown to increase on-task behaviors, compliance with routines, and independent schedule-following behavior for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

The opportunity to make choices strengthens personal autonomy and choice itself may function as a reinforcer. Watanabe and Sturmey (2003) and Giles and Markham (2017) embedded choice opportunities in activity schedules, but they did not control for task difficulty or include a control condition.

PURPOSE:

Investigate if children with ASD prefer fixed sequences or to choose their own sequences of activities in their activity schedules.

PARTICIPANT & SETTING:

A 5-year-old female participant with ASD was used for this study. The study was conducted in a community-based program for children with ASD.

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In this pilot study, the participant preferred a specific sequence of activities in her activity schedule. When given choice, she chose to create that specific sequence.



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DESIGN, METHOD, & RESULTS:

An A-B design was used to teach schedule-following behavior. During baseline, the participant was given vocal instructions to do four activities without an activity schedule present. During teaching, the participant was taught to use choice and no choice activity schedules using manual guidance. The dependent variable during baseline and teaching was the percentage of correct, independent responses.

A concurrent operant arrangement was used to measure the participant's selections between choice, no choice, and control activity schedules during a preference assessment.

