

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Parent-implemented Behavioral Skills Training of Social Skills

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SUMMARY: Children with autism spectrum disorders often lack social skills, and they may benefit from behavioral skills training by their parents. This study had four mother-son dyads complete a behavioral skills training that included instructions, modeling, role-play, and feedback. Mothers' behavioral skills training techniques and sons' social performance were measured at baseline, immediately post-training, and one month post-training. Results indicated that the training improved mothers' behavioral skills training techniques and children's social performance.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Compared to baseline, all mothers showed improved behavioral skills training techniques for both trained and untrained skills.
- Children showed improved social performance with both the trained and untrained skills because of the training by their mothers.
- The effect of training for both mothers and children remained one month after the training was completed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Collaborate with community-based, child-service programs to help military children with developmental disabilities receive comprehensive care
- Facilitate support groups for families of children who have autism spectrum disorders to increase kinship among these families

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer support groups for parents whose children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders so that they can support each other and exchange information
- Provide parenting workshops for military parents so that they can learn about how to improve children's social skills

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage the development of programs that offer parent-implemented behavioral skills training for military families
- Recommend education of professionals who work with military families on how to provide support to children with developmental disabilities

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METHODS

- All children participants were diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders; the method of recruitment was not reported.
- Each mother-son dyad received behavioral skills training at their residence; the percentage of correct behavioral skills training steps completed by each mother was recorded at baseline and also at one month follow-up. In addition, children's percentage of correct social skills steps was also recorded.
- Data were analyzed to examine the effect of behavioral skills training on children's social skills.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were four mother-son dyads; all mothers were the biological mothers of their child; three out of the four mothers had advanced degrees.
- The average age of the mothers was not reported (age range = 37-47 years); the average age of the sons was 10 years (age range = 9-12 years).
- Most (75%) participants were White and 25% of participants were Black.

LIMITATIONS

- The sample was small (four mother-son dyads), which may limit the reliability of the study.
- Only mothers and sons were included in the study, so caution must be taken to generalize the results to fathers and daughters.
- The children were between nine and 12 years old; therefore, the training results may not be applicable to children who are older or younger.
- There were no data provided on the recruitment of the mother-son dyads, which limits the ability to understand the characteristics of the sample.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Increase the number of participants so that the study findings are more reliable
- Examine whether the parent-implemented behavioral skills training can benefit children who have developmental problems other than autism spectrum disorders (e.g., attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder)
- Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effect of the training on parenting practice and child performance

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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