

- **Name of the study:** Eating Intervention for Individuals with Intellectual Developmental Disabilities in Community Settings
- **Year:** 2023
- **Type of research:** Research
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- **Authors:** Dr. Naomi Ferziger, Prof. Ella Been, Dr. Gila Tobul, Eynat Gal
- **Research Authority:** Ono Academic College & University of Haifa

Abstract

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Eating is a basic and vital human behavior, which is considered a functional daily activity that affects the quality of life of a person with intellectual developmental disabilities (IDD) (AOTA, 2016; APA, 2013). In the literature, widespread eating difficulties have been described among this population, some due to anatomical and physiological factors and others are attributed to environmental and behavioral causes (Gravestock, 2000; Matson & Kuhn, 2006; Rezaei et al., 2011).

Difficulties in eating functions among people with IDD can pose challenges in participating in the fabric of life, and in extreme cases even place the person in life-threatening danger (Gal et al., 2011; Robertson et al., 2018).

Since eating difficulties among people with IDD may have consequences for their quality of life and health, it is important to develop short and personalized sensorimotor intervention programs, designed specifically for the issue of eating among this population. It is also important to assess whether following the intervention there is an improvement in the eating experience both from the perspective of the participant as well as from the point of view of the caregiver. In community settings, many resources are devoted to mealtime with the feeding caregiver devoting much time and energy to this task. Therefore, it is important not only to improve the eating experience of the individuals with IDD, but also to provide practical tools that will facilitate a positive experience for the feeding caregiver and enhance their sense of partnership with the treatment staff (Gravestock, 2003).

As part of the current study, a sensorimotor intervention program was developed under the supervision of a multidisciplinary health professional team, for the purpose of improving eating and feeding functions among people with IDD. Based on a personal eating profile obtained from data collection using the "Mosh-Eat" questionnaire, the "Satisfaction with the Caregiver's Feeding Experience" questionnaire and videos taken during mealtime in the community setting, the intervention plan was developed. The assessment tools were administered twice, before and after the intervention plan.

The purpose of the current study was to research the effectiveness of a brief sensorimotor intervention program administered prior to eating, by comparing the skills of the participants before and after the intervention. In addition, to analyze the intervention program in 8 case studies which are based on the results of the "Mosh-Eat" questionnaire and the clinical observation, and to examine in depth the profile of the eating skills of people with IDD. Thus, at the end of the study we will examine whether the eating profile of each of the participants improved after the intervention.

The research hypotheses were:

A. A difference will be found in the eating skills of individuals with IDD as reflected in the total score in the "Mosh-Eat" questionnaire, and in each of its sections before and after the intervention.

B. A difference will be found in the feeding experience of the caregivers of individuals with IDD following a sensory-motor intervention before the feeding activity, such that after the intervention the caregivers will report a better feeding experience than before the intervention.

Method: This study is a single subject design pilot study. The research questions will be examined through questionnaires and video analysis. The study involved 8 adult participants, diagnosed with IDD at different levels of functioning, who need assistance eating in a community setting. All participants were sampled by convenience sampling.

Key findings: The results of the study showed that there was a difference in the eating skills of the participants with IDD as reflected in the total score in the "Mosh-Eat" questionnaire, and in each of its sections before and after the intervention. The results indicate a trend of improvement in all behaviors i.e.: chewing and swallowing, posture, eating less, selectivity in eating, communication, and behavior in eating.

Summary and recommendations: The current study was a pilot to examine the effectiveness of a sensorimotor intervention program to improve eating functions among adults with IDD. We recommend continuing to investigate this important issue and carrying out the research on a wider sample of this population to reach more definitive conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the program.

Keywords

Intellectual Developmental Disability (IDD), Eating Difficulties, Eating Intervention

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