

- **Name of the study:** Examining Communicative Intentions in Children with Developmental Delay or Intellectual Disability: A Comparison with Typically Developing Peers Matched by Developmental or Chronological Age
- **Year:** 2024
- **Type of research:** research
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- **Authors:** Dr. Saban-Bezalel Ronit
- **Research Authority:** Department of Communication Disorders Ariel University

Abstract

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Background: A communicative intention represents an action with a specific purpose aimed at influencing the communication partner. The ability to express communicative intentions or speech acts is a pragmatic skill crucial for meeting personal and social needs. Children facing global developmental delays (GDD) or intellectual disabilities (ID) often confront challenges across various aspects of pragmatic ability, which can hinder their overall functioning. The study seeks to achieve three main objectives: 1. Compare the profiles of communicative intentions and means of communication produced during a structured protocol between children with GDD or ID and typically developing (TD) children matched to them in either developmental age or chronological age; 2. Investigate personal variables associated with the variety of communicative intentions produced during the structured protocol; 3. Assess differences in communicative intentions produced during the structured protocol and free observation among children with GDD or ID.

Method: The study included a total of 73 children. Participants were divided into three groups: children with GDD or ID (n=24), TD children matched by their developmental age to the children with GDD or ID (n=26), and TD children matched by chronological age to the children with GDD or ID (n=23). Each participant underwent a cognitive functioning assessment and engaged in a structured protocol designed to elicit communicative intentions. All the pragmatic interactions were recorded for subsequent coding. Parents completed a structured interview assessing

children's adaptive behavior, while pre-school teachers completed a questionnaire evaluating executive functions. Communicative intentions produced during free observation were coded for children with GDD or ID.

Results: The profile of communicative intentions and means among children with GDD or ID resembled that of their young TD peers matched by developmental age but differed when compared to TD peers matched by chronological age. A positive correlation emerged between the variety of communicative intentions produced during the pragmatic protocol and the age and language abilities of children with GDD or ID and their TD peers matched by developmental age. Additionally, among the young TD children matched by developmental age, a negative correlation was observed between the variety of communicative intentions expressed and executive functions. Discrepancies were noted in the variety of communicative intentions produced between structured context and free observation among children with GDD or ID.

Conclusions: Our study revealed a distinction in pragmatic ability, particularly in the generation of communicative intentions, when comparing children with GDD or ID to age-matched TD peers. Both similarities and differences emerged when comparing children with GDD or ID to TD children matched by developmental abilities.

Keywords

children with developmental delay, intellectual disability, communicative intentions, communicative means, executive functions, structured context, free observation

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