**A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF BEHAVIOURAL INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES**

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**Objectives:** According to several comprehensive systematic and narrative reviews (e.g., National Autism Centre [NAC], 2015), interventions based on Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) principles are considered evidence based for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ABA treatment outcomes for children with ASD are often measured in terms of improvements in cognitive and adaptive abilities. As children with Intellectual Disability (ID) also experience these deficits, ABA interventions may also be beneficial for children with ID. However, no comprehensive review of the literature related to ABA interventions for children with ID currently exists. The aim of the present study is to provide a comprehensive review of ABA treatments for young children presenting exclusively with ID.

**Methods:** Following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, a systematic review of the relevant published literature on the use of ABA interventions to develop skills in young children with ID was completed. A preliminary search of the literature identified 1067 potential studies examining ABA interventions for children with ID**.** The review process resulted in 42 articles consisting of 43 studies (i.e., one paper contained two studies) that met the inclusion criteria. Full papers were then reviewed for methodological quality using the NAC’s Scientific Merit Rating Scale (SMRS) adapted for an ID sample, as well as the Treatment Effect Rating system, and the Strength of Evidence Classification System (NAC, 2015).

**Results:** ABA interventions targeting communication, adaptive, and pre-academic skills met criteria for *established* interventions. ABA interventions targeting academic skills met the criteria for *emerging* interventions. Of the 43 studies that met the inclusion criteria, 93% of the studies were single-case design (SCD). Many of the included studies had low SMRS quality ratings due to small sample sizes (*n* < 3), poor measurement of treatment fidelity, and a lack of maintenance or generalization data. In addition to these research design weaknesses, studies often used general terms to describe children in their sample, such as ‘being in special education’, ‘developmentally delayed’ or ‘verbal delays’, which could potentially describe children with a diagnosis of ID, but could also describe children with milder cognitive challenges.

**Discussion/Conclusions:** Future systematic reviews should include SCDs, given the large amount of behavioural literature utilizing this research design. In order to improve study quality, future studies should consider increasing their sample size (n ≥ 3), and include the collection of treatment fidelity, maintenance, and generalization data within their study design. It would be beneficial for authors to clearly define their population in future studies by using appropriate diagnostic terms (i.e., ID), and/or provide appropriate assessment results so that an accurate diagnosis can be inferred.

This rigorously conducted systematic review provides the first comprehensive overview of the literature on ABA interventions for teaching skills in young children with ID. Although results indicate that ABA interventions for this population are evidence based, there are few high-quality studies in this area with many of the included studies having methodological weaknesses that need to be addressed in future research.

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