

The use of music to facilitate the recognition of emotion in children with autistic-spectrum disorders in Macao: A preliminary study utilizing parental involvement

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Abstract

The purpose of the current study is to examine the effect of music in enhancing emotional recognition in children with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) in Macao. Five participants from 5-12 years of age were included in this study. Each participant received a training video teaching emotion recognition using facial expressions of emotion in simple and more complex scenes presented simultaneously with classical music emphasizing specific mood states. Parents of participants were instructed to display the 12-minute training video once each weekday for a total of three weeks. Adherence to the treatment protocol was monitored by having parents complete a structured checklist of behaviors exhibited by their child during the viewing of the video. Participants were assessed before and after this three week period. Treatment outcome was measured by change scores on a test paradigm utilizing Matsumoto and Ekman's Japanese and Caucasian Facial Expressions of Emotion (JACFEE) and the Chinese Affective Picture System (CAPS). The ASD symptom severity level of participants was measured by the Social Communication Questionnaire (SCQ) Lifetime. The result may suggest possible effectiveness in improving recognition of happy emotion; however, no general trend was observed from the result because of the small sample size. Widely disparate levels of ASD symptom severity, functional abilities, and ages of participants preclude definitive conclusions from being made regarding the efficacy of the treatment. Study implications and limitations are discussed.

Keywords: Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), music, video, parental involvement, emotion recognition