

The Impact of Augmentative and Alternative Communication Use on Parent-Child Relationships

Children with complex communication needs (CCN) have difficulty understanding and generating language in the same manner as their typically developing counterparts. Typically, children with CCN will rely on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) technologies, which encompasses all forms of communication other than oral speech, in order to construct language output. Currently, research and development of AAC devices focuses on information transfer and rate enhancement as markers of communicative success, with little attention paid to the personal experiences of the individuals who utilize this technology. The current study sought to understand and evaluate the quality of communication and relationships before and after an AAC device was introduced to a child with CCN. Specifically, the study examined if social closeness, efficiency of communication, and quality of life changed after an AAC device was introduced. The current investigation worked with three individuals who utilized AAC technologies and their parents. The participants in this study completed interview questions, surveys, and a naturalistic observation in order to understand communication patterns before and after AAC device implementation. Results will show how AAC has impacted social relationships among parents and their children, as well as understanding specific device features that aid in social closeness. The findings will be essential to the field of AAC, identifying the strengths that these specific devices hold in social communication, as well as identify areas that need improvement to increase the quality of life for AAC users.

Keywords: Augmentative and Alternative Communication, parent-child relationships, quality of life, social closeness, technology development