Promoting social interaction among children with high-functioning autism spectrum disorder using a tabletop role playing game

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Introduction

- As a method for promoting social interaction among children with high-functioning autism spectrum disorder (HFASD), we focus on small-group activities using a tabletop role playing game (TRPG).
- TRPG is an interactive game played using a pencil, paper, and dice, instead of a computer, creating fictional stories through dialogues.
- This study used TRPG for examining the effect of spontaneously promoting social interaction and consensus making among children with HFASD in small-group activities.

Methods

- Four children with HFASD in an outpatient clinic (ages 13-14) participated in TRPG activities (total 16 sessions).
- A transcript was made from an audio recording of the 1st and 14th sessions.
- The utterance directed to other participating children was coded and counted as “intentional speech directed to other children”.
- In addition, “making decisions as a group through negotiation among members” was defined and counted as “making consensus”.

Results

- The rate of “intentional speech directed at other children” was 36.7% in the 1st session and 52.4% in the 14th session. It significantly increased in the 14th session (p < .001, Fisher’s exact test). (Fig1)
- The number of “making consensus” was zero time in the first session and five times in the 14th session, i.e., it significantly increased in the 14th session. (Fig2)
- Furthermore, the manner of “making consensus” also changed qualitatively.
- The 1st session mainly involved decision by majority, whereas the 14th session considered logical discussion by listening to other children’s opinion.

![Fig1: change of “intentional speech directed at other children”](image1)

![Fig2: change of “making consensus”](image2)

Discussion

- It is suggested that small-group activities using TRPG promote intentional communication and cooperative interaction among children with HFASD.
- A characteristic structure (i.e., rules and settings as a framework of the activities, indirect communication through a character of the story, and so on) in TRPG might be the factor responsible for the effectiveness of this intervention.

Reference


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