

Aquatic Readiness and Emotional Satisfaction of Children with ID and ASD as a Result of a Therapeutical Swimming Programme in Sports for All Settings

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Abstract: *Children with intellectual disability (ID) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are participating more and more actively in exercise programs, with swimming being one of the most popular ways to improve motor and psychosocial skills for these children. The Sports for All program, led internationally under the central responsibility of each Ministry through the General Secretariat for Sport in cooperation with Local Authorities, promotes the global effort to adopt this model of sport for citizens with and without disabilities of all ages. However, research has not yet been conducted to investigate the effect of exercise on Sports for All environments for people with disabilities, even more so on therapeutic swimming programs in Sports for All settings. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of a therapeutic swimming program within the Sport for All Program setting on the aquatic readiness and emotional satisfaction of children with ID and ASD. The sample consisted of 13 children with ID and ASD, participating in a therapeutic swimming program for a duration of 10 weeks at a frequency of 3 sessions per week, 60 minutes per session. Instruments included the use of pre- and post-measures of HAAR and WOTAI for aquatic readiness and the SSI questionnaire completed at the end of the program to assess children's satisfaction. Non-parametric analyses (Wilcoxon and Mann-Whitney) that were used, identified statistically significant differences in aquatic readiness for both children with ID and ASD, whereas satisfaction of all children from their participation in the program was completely positive. In conclusion, the therapeutic swimming program produced significant improvements in aquatic readiness and emotional satisfaction for children with ID and ASD within a Sport for All setting that provides important services to children with disabilities and low socio-economic status, as in this case.*

Keywords: therapeutic swimming, autism spectrum disorders, intellectual disability, aquatic readiness, satisfaction, Sports for All

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