

Summary of Research Findings

The self-identified positive attributes and favourite activities of children on the autism spectrum.

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Overview

- To contrast the traditional deficit focus of disability, the current study was interested in a subjective exploration of strengths in children on the autism spectrum.
- We asked children on the autism spectrum to tell us about themselves, to understand what they perceived as their best attributes, interests and favourite activities.
- Children were able to tell us what they liked most about themselves, what they thought they were best at and what they enjoyed the most.
- Interacting with peers and being a good person and friend to others were the top themes for two of the questions which suggests that some of the children valued their role as a friend to their peers.

Why did we do this study?

- As self-report is an underrepresented methodology in autism research, children on the autism spectrum are rarely given an opportunity to report on their own feelings, perceptions and experiences in the research, with much of this information collected from their parents and teachers.

What did we do?

- Children on the autism spectrum in the LASA project aged 7 – 14 years were invited to participate in this project.
- Eighty-three children were asked the following three questions: 1) What do you like best about yourself? 2) What are you absolutely best at and 3) What do you enjoy the most?

What did we find?

- “A good friend or person to be around” and “good at particular things” were the most common responses to what children ‘liked most’ about themselves.
- Children identified that they were ‘absolutely best at’ “physical activity”, “maths” and “science”.
- “Technology and gaming” and “social interaction” were the two most common themes in response to ‘what do you enjoy the most’.

What does this mean?

- This study provides children on the autism spectrum a much-needed voice within the literature.
- Individuals on the autism spectrum are best equipped to tell us about themselves, their perceived strengths, interests and favourite activities in their own words.
- This work adds to the growing body of strengths-based autism research.
- We learnt a lot about children’s positive attributes, strengths and favourite activities, and such knowledge can help inform the development of interventions and curriculum materials to promote positive outcomes for individuals living with autism.

Where are we sharing this study?

This research has been published in *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders* and is available by putting <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2020.101512> into google.