

**Effectiveness of functional**

**Critical Review:**









AAC is an effective intervention strategy in the clinical management of autism spectrum disorders.

*Future research considerations:*

It is recommended that further research be conducted to provide additional information regarding the impact of FCT/AAC interventions on challenging behavior. In future studies of challenging behaviour interventions, the following recommendations should be considered to strengthen the level of evidence:

- a) Future research studies should involve more than one participant and include participants of different ages, cultural backgrounds, and severity of autism.
- b) Future studies should examine the effects of FCT using AAC on individuals other than those with developmental disabilities, including adults with degenerative illnesses, traumatic brain injuries and individuals with sensory-motivated behaviours.
- c) Researchers should utilize both statistical analyses and visual interpretations of graphed results to compensate for limitations of both types of analysis.
- d) Studies should investigate the procedures for selecting FCT/AAC techniques that improve response recognisability as well as the techniques for instruction and for responding to challenging behaviour that occurs during instruction.
- e) Studies should investigate the impact of teaching generic messages versus specific messages on speed of acquisition, caregiver responsiveness, generalization across settings and communication partners, and maintenance.
- f) Future research should develop outcome

These may include: the effect on language and social skills, the effect on vocabulary development, the effect on peer interactions, the effect on participation in integrated activities, and participant quality-of-life measures.

**Conclusion**

The development of intervention strategies to manage challenging behaviours is a high priority in the management of autism spectrum disorders. The

evidence of intervention targeting this area is compelling. The literature is suggestive that functional communication training using AAC results in a decrease in the challenging behaviours of children with autism. These results support the need for communication to be considered a primary goal for children with challenging behaviour.

**Clinical Implications**

Behaviours serve a communication function and are, therefore, an important area of concern for a speech-language pathologist. Children with autism often exhibit maladaptive or challenging behaviours to communicate. SLPs need to be prepared to address challenging behaviours. The articles in this review provided a moderate level of evidence as well as important findings for which to direct future research. Based on the findings of this review, FCT using AAC can be applied to clinical practice and should be one of the first interventions used for children with autism who exhibit challenging behaviour.

While the current critical review did not identify one effective teaching strategy or AAC device for all challenging behaviour, clinicians must consider the heterogeneity of the disorder. Therefore, an individualized intervention approach must be used. Speech-language pathologists must familiarize themselves with the assessment and intervention strategies of FCT using AAC in order to achieve more positive outcomes. Based on the potential impact of challenging behaviour on quality of life, it is imperative to continue studying treatment effectiveness, generalization and maintenance.

**References**

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