

# Psychosocial Intervention Program Promotes Autism Spectrum Disorder Students Successful Transition Into Australian Mainstream School

Wucong Zhao

*Master of Counselling, Faculty of Education, Monash University Clayton VIC 3800 Australia*  
 zhaowucong@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a significant issue in children. How ASD students are integrated into society is an important question. This study will be looking at ASD students transition from special schools to mainstream schools, I will analyze psychosocial intervention program (PSIP) as a means to help this transition. In doing so, I will recommend that it be used psychosocial intervention program can stabilizing ASD students' emotions during the transition, helps with regulate ASD student's daily behaviors and effectively practice ASD students' social interaction communication skills; in order to assist ASD students to experience transition process smoother.

**Key words:** *Autism Spectrum Disorder, Psychosocial Intervention, School*

## **1. Introduction**

ASD is a common developmental disorder, common symptoms include communication and social interaction difficulties (Tso & Strnadova, 2016). ASD as a spectrum varies widely. ASD is a lifelong disorder and happens in all economic, racial and cultural groups. ASD children are unable to control their emotions and feelings (Wittingham, Sofronoff, Sheffield & Sanders, 2009), and ASD children struggle in understanding others' perspectives and ideas (Nguyen, Leytham, Whitby & Gelfer, 2015). Such mental and psychological disabilities cause the ASD population to be isolated from regular populations. These symptoms create a bigger gap between ASD kids and other kids from their age group, creating more difficulties for ASD students to make friends. In Australia, ASD affects approximately 51 per 10,000 children (Parner et al., 2011), and the numbers have increased in recent years (Ratcliffe, Wong, Dossetor & Hayes, 2014). Nowadays, ASD students frequently transition from special schools into Australian mainstream school (Martin, Dixon, Verenikina & Costely, 2019). But ASD student's successful transition into general education classrooms is not easy (Corsland & Dunlap, 2012). The amount of time ASD students spend in regular institutions has increased from 37.93% to 41.30% (Office of Special Education Programs, 2007, 2012). It is clear that ASD students want to spend more time in regular school. But not all ASD students who will or have experienced school transition are fully prepared. Only a few ASD students have received support planning before the transition (Tso & Strnadova, 2016). As we know, school transition can be difficult for all students; it causes more challenges and stress for both ASD students and their families (Starr, Martini & Kuo, 2014), and additional

support is needed. During the transition period, ASD students, their families, special education teachers, mainstream classroom teachers, school learning support officers and school executives all need to be involved in the complex process (Martin, Dixon, Verenikina & Costely, 2019). However, the limited social support involved in the transition is not enough: psychosocial intervention is needed in order to help ASD students transition into mainstream schools.

Psychosocial intervention program refers to using therapies or actions to help people healthfully reintegrate into society; when people have been some disconnect with society (Airth, 2018), PSIP actions performed to bring changes to people. The word psychosocial "psych" refers to psychology, which explained PSIP treatment including mental statements and mental health issues. "Social" means to receive help from surrounding people. Psychosocial intervention does not involve pharmaceutical assistance, including behavioral therapies and cognitive therapies (Airth, 2018). Psychosocial intervention is often using cognitive behaviors and well-being programs, which can effectively help with the ASD population. Ever since Psychosocial intervention been discovered in 1999, PSIP became a mainstay intervention to support the ASD population (Larant & Chandhok, 2012). After the literary review, brought out the issue that the psychosocial intervention program's influence on ASD student's transition. More specifically, this article will be looking at how the psychosocial intervention program promotes Autism Spectrum Disorder students successfully transition into Australian mainstream school. The significance of this article is to help ASD students to understand that, PSIP is an important tool can be able to assist ASD student's transition into mainstream school. PSIP regulates ASD student's behavior, emotion, and communication. Furthermore, PSIP assist ASD student's families to reduce their stress and pressure to provide side

support for ASD student's transition. PSIP provides ASD students and their family members more effective strategies to prepare the school transition and provide instructions for mainstream school teachers. These strategies help parents and teachers calibrating with each other to provide ASD students with a better school transition outcome. And more importantly, to help ASD students build up their self-confidence during the transition because ASD students need to trust in themselves. The dictionary definition for self-confidence is a feeling of trust in one's abilities, qualities, and judgment (Oxford dictionary, 2019). The history of the word self-confidence beginning used as a religious term, attitude toward God. In 1890 well-know psychologist William James mentioned the meaning of self-confidences we understand today: "a feeling of trust in someone or something. To be self-confident is to have confidence in yourself" (Oxford Dictionary, 2019). People often like to put Self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-self-efficacy together compare and contrast, self-confidence is different from self-esteem and self-efficacy. Self-confidence is specially defined by people who believe they can be successful, which is different from self-efficacy which is evaluating an individual's worth. However, these three terms are correlated related to each other. Self-confidence emerges differently between different age groups, appear in different modality within different cultures. Self-confidence has always been a population research topic especially when study subjects are students.

After the literary review, I would like to argues that psychosocial intervention program is effective for promoting Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) students successfully transition into mainstream school. Outline for this article, first, I would present three benefits PSIP can provide for ASD students, with reasonable and reliable evidence to prove the authenticity of my argument. PSIP can improve ASD student's emotional stability during the transition period. Also, PSIP help to regulate ASD student's daily behaviors, in order to help ASD students to predict general behaviors in school. Moreover, PSIP help to improve ASD students' social communication ability, help ASD students to talk with their classmates and to make more friends in a general education setting. Second, I will bring out the implication for policymakers, ASD children, their parents, mainstream school teachers, and future research prediction. Third, conclude my assay including limitation of this research. Last, bring out references.

## **2. Psychosocial Intervention as a Primary Too**

PSIP can effectively promote ASD student's school transition, by stabilizing ASD student's emotion stability during the transition period; by using the emotional regulation (Berkovits, Eisenhower & Blacher, 2107). ASD students often associate with significant levels of emotional difficulties; up to 74% 5-16 years old ASD children are unable to control their anger, sadness, and anxiety (Thomson, Riosa & Weiss, 2015). Therefore, when ASD students start their studies in a regular education environment, unfamiliar study environments, new

classmates and teaching systems will cause ASD student's emotional problems. Especially bullying will cause more stress for ASD students (Tso & Strnadova, 2016). Emotional stability is an important element for ASD students to experience a smooth school transition. PSIP provides emotion regulation for ASD students, which helps ASD students to reduce their anxieties feeling (Starr, Martini & Kuo, 2014) during their transition process. PSIP help ASD students easier to accept other classmates in new educational settings, reduce ASD students sense of fear when talking to new people. Thomson, Riosa and Weiss' research provides evidence that PSIP can help to decrease ASD student's emotional dysregulation, including symptoms such as angry outbursts, unknown aggression towards self to others (Thomson, Riosa & Weiss, 2015). However, the effectiveness of PSIP is directed related to ASD parent's degree of significance, the parent's emotional scaffolding is directly related to ASD children's emotion regulation (Weiss, 2014). If the parents are affected by the stress of transition, it will cause a negative result of PSIP promises on ASD student's emotion stability. However, overall research shows PSIP can help ASD students to know their emotions better, help ASD students to learn emotional problem solving and emotional regulation skills (Ratcliffe, Wong, Dossetor & Hayes, 2014; Berkovits Eisenhower & Blacher, 2107); which it can help ASD students to improve their mental readiness for the transition.

The intervention program also helps regulate ASD student's behaviors during the transition process. PSIP provides particular positive attention and behavior management strategies help ASD students to control their unpredictable behaviors (Whittingham, Sofronoff, Sheffield & Sander, 2009). School transition is a complex process for ASD students and their families, therefore the transition process needs multitudes of stockholders and substantial assist (Martin, Dixon, Verenikina & Costley, 2019). Thomson, Riosa & Weiss 2015 research also mentioned that ASD students associated with dysregulation behaviors. The research pointed out ASD behavior outbursts including destroying or throwing objects (Thomson, Riosa & Weiss, 2015), lack attention during class (Ladarola et al., 2017), and not engaging in activities. PSIP can provide guidelines to help ASD students better control their behaviors. Furthermore, the program teaches ASD students to act proper under specific situations (Whittingham, Sofronoff, Sheffield & Sander, 2009). PSPI teaches ASD students to understand which action is inappropriate behavior. For example, PSIP teaches ASD do not throw stuff when feeling angry (Whittingham, Sofronoff, Sheffield & Sander, 2009). Moreover, PSIP using self-management procedure for high-function ASD in a regular school setting (Corstland & Dunlap, 2012); this procedure can increase the ASD student's academic engagement (Ladarola et al., 2017). For example, during group tasks, self-management procedures help ASD students understand how to involving in group activities. ASD students will experience many expectant situations especially during the study environment. Also, strategies promote students' independence during the classroom (Corstlan & Dunlap, 2012). However, Witmer and his colleagues argued that every student is different

each student has different needs. PSIP may unable to meet every ASD children's' needs. However, PSIP not only helps to prepare ASD students' behavior readiness, but it also helps to prepare teachers in the general education setting. After teachers have knowledge by PSIP, they can provide basic instruction to help ASD students with reading comprehension (Nguyen, Leytham, Whitby & Gelfer, 2015). Therefore, after the PSIP practice ASD students will not behave out of the blue, when the circumstance is out of their expectation. However, ASD students as an internal reason and teaching staff as external elements during the school transition period. Both internal elements and external elements need to cooperate together in order to control ASD student's unproductive behavior when enrolling in the regular school setting. However, the reliability of the research outcomes still needs to be concerned when applying to a real-world situation. The research outcome was performed in a particularly designed research setting. When bringing into a real school setting, many conditions are unable to control. Therefore, it could be difficult to apply in the regular school environment (Ladarola et al., 2018). However, PSIP decreases the number and intensity of ASD student's problem behaviors (Whittingham, Sofronoff, Sheffield & Sander, 2009), also increase ASD student's academic engagement and increasing teacher's fidelity (Ladarola et al., 2018). PSIP implementing cognitive coping strategies help ASD students to prepare school transition (Brookman-Fraze, Vismara, Drahota, Stahmer & Openden, 2009) and improve their adaptive communication and social behavior ability (Tonge, Brereton, Kiomall, Mackinnon & Rinehart, 2012). ASD is a development disorder which related to significant cognitive development delay, ASD students are having a hard time understanding other people's ideas and expectations, also having difficulties to explain their thought and understanding (Nguyen, Leytham, Whitby & Gelfer, 2015). After ASD students enroll in a regular school setting, they need to communicate with other students and teachers. PSIP help ASD students to understand background information about subjects, to help ASD students to build more general knowledge when they need to construct a conversation. The cognitive coping strategies help to create a mental image, assist ASD students link up different information during a conversation (Nguyen, Leytham, Whitby & Gelfer, 2015). Furthermore, Language difficulties is another issue for ASD student's communication, both verbal and nonverbal are all causing problems (Ho, 2014). The communication gap could cause mental distress for ASD students, decrease ASD students' self-confidence level. Therefore, earlier the intervention can apply may have a higher chance to predict positive outcomes (Karanth & Shandhok, 2013), and help ASD students to fit into the regulation education setting earlier. PSIP is a naturalistic technique, it can build into ASD student's daily routines (Ingersoll & Wainer, 2013; Brookman-Fraze, Vismara, Drahota, Stahmer & Openden, 2009). Therefore, parents can interact with their children day to day, bit by bit when follow the effective instruction to increase ASD communication skills. Besides the program help ASD students in practicing construct conversation, and

how to continue a conversation. After ASD students enrolled in a regular education setting, they can build a conversation easily, smoothly and help ASD students involved in a discussion more frequently (Nguyen, Leytham, Whitby & Gelfer, 2015). PSIP requires many elements cohere at the same time, which including parents, school environment and teaching staff. Parents are an important element of the intervention (Tonge, Brereton, Kiomall, Mackinnon & Rinehart, 2012). PSIP assists parents in using languages-based engaging to increase children's higher levels of social communication (Laurent & Gorman, 2018). However, Ingersoll and whiner's research point out that parent fidelity and child spontaneous language are correlated (Ingersoll & Wainer, 2013). If parents are highly motivated involving in the intervention, it will bring a positive result for children's' language response. If the parents are not motivated enough it could course a passive intervention result. Overall, PSIL can assist ASD students to improve their social interaction by using different strategies, but parents need to have a high involvement.

### 3. Discussion

This study has implications for policy makers, ASD students and their families, school staff, and global institutions. While PSIP effectively supports school transition for ASD students, low SES ASD students may not have enough time and money to utilize this support. For policymakers, more relevant policies need to be applied for different SES ASD students, so that they can have equal access to PSIP treatment. Second, each education district should provide clear instructions and policies to assist ASD students to transition into mainstream schools. Third, local councils and schools should build support counseling centers to help ASD students and their families receive long term support. For ASD students and their families, it may be more helpful for their school transition by understanding preparation before the transition. Parents need to build high motivation when involving the intervention. The research can be considered more for education staff. Teacher should prepare the class for ASD students; having ASD background knowledge in order to better control class when ASD students enroll in a regular class setting. And be prepared for unexpected situations, decrease the possibility for class bullying. According to this research outcome, the school should be given more attention by involving PSIP into school, which may provide a smooth transition for ASD students. Also based on the research school should be welcome ASD student's transition; furthermore, schools should print out handbooks with ASD knowledge, handouts for teachers and students to knowledge people what should they do when they are facing ASD students, also may decrease the discrimination for dysregulated population. Based on the research outcome, future research could be looking at PSIP promotes ASD student's school transition internationally. ASD happens in all different social-economic classes. This research only has looked at PSIP assist ASD students' well-being in developed countries. For a developing country, 75-85% neurodevelopment disorder

population having difficult receiving any version of intervention (Reichow, Servili, Yasamy, Barbui & Saxena, 2013). Globally ASD students to receive PSIP treatment has been a huge problem, the stumbling block including program funding, culture issue, etc. Further research should look more on how PSIP can be provided quickly, easily and can be provided world wide for all different ASD populations. For developing countries, ASD students also need to transition into a general education environment, they maybe need to face more challenges. Therefore, this future research is defiantly needed and needed as an urgent situation.

#### 4. Limitation

There are a few limitations to this study. This research results are unable to be generalized for the whole ASD student population transition problems. This research only focused on looking at the Australia ASD population. ASD is a world wide spectrum, ASD symptoms will following all different age and cultural groups lifelong. Different cultural may have different perspective for ASD population. Also, the study only focused on primary school age, participant's age group in this research was too limited. Besides, this research did not focus on different SES groups. The different SES group will have a different perspective on PSIP. People who live in the low social economic group could be having more issues to interact with PSIP or they may not believe in PSIP effectiveness.

#### 5. Conclusion

The finding of the article supports that, the psychosocial intervention program is effective for promoting Autism Spectrum Disorder students successfully transition into mainstream school. The evidence proved the psychosocial intervention can help ASD transition into mainstream school, by preparing ASD students' mental and physical readiness. Additionally, PSIP help ASD students to reduce their anxiety and stress during the transition by proving effective emotional regulation strategies and provide instruction for ASD students. PSIP also teaches ASD student's parents and teaching staff by using self-management skills to minted and to regulate their daily behaviors. Furthermore, PSIP help ASD students to build a strong communication structure foundation by practicing their cognitive coping capacity. Help ASD to be able to talk with others and easier to make friends. However, the continue support needed after enrollment (Karanth & Chandhok, 2013), in order to meantime ASD student's wellbeing. For ASD students to experience a smooth school transition, ASD students need self-motivation on the transition. Besides their parents and teachers in regular education settings and school exhibits all need to put a lot effort into this transition to work it out. After conducting this research, the main goal is to understand this intervention can inspire ASD student's self-confidence. All

research outcomes are using to help ASD kids to believe in themselves when facing all life challenges. After ASD improved their self-confidence, they will be able to know how to behave and control themselves during regular school setting, and be more papered for other life challenges.

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