

Describing the Outcomes of PODD to Support Interaction with Children: Perspectives of Professionals

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Short Abstract

This project will investigate the commonly used but under-researched communication tool, Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display Communication Books (PODD). The aim of the project is to seek and report on the use of PODD from the perspective of professionals such as speech pathologists and educators by investigating reported outcomes of its implementation.

Nineteen professionals participated in an in-depth semi-structured interview from October – November 2022. In the interviews professionals were prompted to retrospectively describe and report outcomes of a case study from their professional experience. Thematic analysis of interview data was completed.

Thematic analysis revealed two overarching themes: client communication skills and other skills. Each contained a number of subthemes. Critically, further research reporting perspectives of PODD users, and communication partners is required to gain a fuller understanding of the authentic outcomes of PODD.

Long Abstract

Background: Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD) is an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) system developed to support children with Communication Support Needs (CSN). Despite its global use, research on PODD's implementation is limited (Mirenda, 2014), reflecting broader gaps in the evidence for AAC systems more generally (Murray et al., 2020).

Aims: To explore the reported responses of professionals regarding the outcomes of PODD implementation with children who have CSN.

Method: Professionals were recruited via a nested sample from a related online survey. Those who had provided written informed consent were asked to participate in a semi-structured in-depth interview using Internet video conferencing. Interviews were conducted by both authors as well as an additional research assistant (RA), all of whom had prior experience in the implementation of PODD to children with CSN. The research team also included an advisory group, which consisted of three members with a range of stakeholder perspectives.

Informed by a qualitative descriptive approach, the first author conducted thematic analysis of the data in consultation with the rest of the research team (Sandelowski, 2000). Data was automatically transcribed in real-time by Microsoft Teams during the interviews, before being reviewed and revised then uploaded to NVivo software for management. The first author inductively generated initial codes on NVivo by systematically coding the entire data set and collating data relevant to each code, and coding was discussed and reviewed by the research team. Both authors and the RA categorized the codes into themes, meeting regularly throughout this process to ensure reliability.

Results: The majority of participants (95%, n=18) were speech pathologists and 5% (n=1) were teachers. Professionals identified multiple outcomes of PODD implementation. Using thematic analysis, these were categorised into the following themes: communication skills and other skills.

Client Communication Skills: Five subthemes were reported by professionals under this theme, including responsibility for system, expressive language, pragmatic skills, repair strategies and supports receptive language.

Other skills: Seven subthemes were described such as autonomy, behaviour, cognitive skills, education, helps communication partners to assume competence, social skills, wellbeing and mental health.

Discussion: The communicative, social and health benefits of PODD identified by professionals are reflective of the benefits of AAC in general reported in the existing literature (Ganz 2023; Murray et al., 2020). Whilst this study together with existing research has identified some potential PODD-specific outcomes (Bayldon et al., 2023; Korner et al., 2023; Moorcroft et al., 2021; Porter 2009), more information regarding the specific outcomes of PODD is required. Including quantitative effectiveness studies that follow up on the potential outcomes identified in the qualitative themes emerging in this study. Critically, further research reporting perspectives of PODD users, and communication partners is required to gain a fuller understanding of authentic outcomes of PODD.

Conclusion: This research highlights the potentially far-reaching benefits and outcomes of PODD for children with CSN, beyond specific communication outcomes. Future research investigating application of these findings more broadly is needed to support implementation of this widely used AAC system and extend our understanding of its impact.