The Effectiveness of Drama Techniques in increasing awareness of Child Sexual Abuse Prevention in Children with Down Syndrome

W.M.V.Y.L. Wanasinghe*, G.R.K. Dissanayake

University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya, 20400, Sri Lanka
**a17721@arts.pdn.ac.lk*

Children with disabilities have a higher risk of becoming victims of sexual abuse (SA) than children without disabilities due to a lack of knowledge regarding sexual health and preventive measures. Children with Down Syndrome (DS), with their limited capacity for understanding, comprehension, social maturity, body awareness, and boundaries exposure to multiple adults and caregivers increased their vulnerability. Education on sexual health and abuse prevention is effective in the prevention of SA among risk populations. Although a variety of resources have been created to help improve the sexual health of people with disabilities, one area that is seriously lacking is effective methods in teaching DS children about sexual health and abuse prevention. Thus, the present study aimed to examine whether drama techniques can be used effectively to increase the awareness of how to prevent and protect from SA among DS children while testing the hypothesis that drama techniques are effective in increasing awareness of the prevention of sexual abuse in children with DS. A purposive sample of 30 DS children with mild to moderate levels of severity was selected from two special education institutes in Kandy, Sri Lanka. Pre-existing categorization within the institution was used for sampling. The study used a within-group pre-test post-test experimental research design with the Be Safe Tool designed and adapted to Sri Lanka by Pathirana (2004) with the Canadian Red Cross. The tool consisted of items assessing the awareness of good and bad touch, secrets, and primary prevention strategies. Five intervention programs using drama techniques including puppets, role play and story-telling were conducted over three weeks. Collected quantitative data was analyzed using a paired sample T-test with SPSS. The results from the pre-test (M=13.5) and post-test (M=21.6) indicate that drama techniques have significantly impacted increasing the awareness of child sexual abuse prevention in children with DS, t (29) =-11.0, p<.001.

Key words: Child sexual abuse, Down syndrome, Drama techniques, Puppets