

Background

- Hanen's *More Than Words*® is a program for caregivers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or communication difficulties.
- It helps caregivers to connect with their child and support their communication.
- This was a secondary data analysis project using a survey and interviews that gathered the experiences of 21 caregivers/caregivers who had participated in the virtual *More Than Words*® program.

Research Question and Methods

Research Question: What are the main reported caregiver and child outcomes from those who participated in the virtual *More Than Words*® program?

Participants:

- 21 individuals (caregivers, grandparents, extended family) from Manitoba, Ontario, and Nova Scotia (22-58 years)
- Children ranged in age from 18 – 54 months (17 male; 4 female)
- 14 children had ASD, others had social communication concerns or suspected ASD

Analyses:

- 1. Developing initial codes.** Initial code book was developed using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) framework
- 2. Data Familiarization.** Transcripts reviewed and code book revised to capture all data
- 3. Coding.** One researcher coded all 21 interviews
- 4. Review of coding.** Multiple researchers reviewed the coded transcripts and resolved disagreements through discussion
- 5. Identifying patterns of meaning.** Outcomes primarily fell under 3 ICF categories (Activities, Participation and Environmental)

Results

Interview Outcomes:

Acquiring Basic Skills (d1550):

- **Play Skills:** Caregivers gained strategies for play time, to improve their child's communication
- **Connection Skill:** Caregivers gained strategies to better interact and connect with their child
- **Communication Skills:** Caregivers gained strategies to improve their child's language and communication

Caregiver-Child Relationship (d760a):

- Caregivers gained an ability to understand their child's form of communication

Support From Other Caregivers (e325):

- Caregivers felt supported by the other caregivers in the group

Support from SLP (e350):

- Caregivers felt supported and encouraged by their SLP

Producing Language (d330b/d335a):

- **Spoken Messages:** Children improved their spoken language abilities
- **Body Language:** Children learned to communicate through body language

Survey Results:

- 90.5% of caregivers used the communication strategies they learned with their child to a great extent
- 90.5% of caregivers said that their confidence around their ability to teach communication skills to their child increased by a great extent
- 95.2% of caregivers felt supported by their SLP to a great extent
- 57.1% of caregivers felt that the program improved their child's communication to a great extent.

"Finding things that interest him, how to do the four eyes that the book talks about, the rock, the different types of toys they recommend, how to interact with books. Just the whole interaction through the course, and how to get more interactions with my son. That part's been life changing." (P111)

"It's good to be in a place where you can hear and see other people that are in the same situation. I think it definitely made it easier to accept and deal with everything that was happening." (P105)

"It was awesome, she never made me feel stupid. She was truly a cheerleader and it was genuine. There was no other intention then for us to do well." (P120)

"She wouldn't even look at me. She didn't know existed. Keeper the pieces was big because I would put the piece in front of my face, and it would create an eye contact. Now she'll always look at me when I do it and she'll smile." (P106)

Conclusion

- Caregivers reported gaining new skills to support their child's social communication and play development
- Caregivers also reported feeling supported by other caregivers and their SLP
- Overall, caregivers reported having gained skills that are targeted in the program, despite the virtual format