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Scientific Abstract

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Impact of Specialised Seating on Children with Special Needs and their Families: Caregiver's Perspective

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Although Specialised Seating (SS) is widely accepted to enable adults to participate in their daily activities, there exists a lack of understanding for the need of such assistive devices for children with special needs locally.

Objective:

This study aims to explore caregiver-perceived impact of SS on the functioning of children in Early Intervention (EI) and their families.

Methods:

To gain insights of caregivers whose children (aged 3-8 years) received a new SS, data was collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and the Family Impact of Assistive Technology Scale for Adaptive Seating (FIATS-AS). Mat assessment and Individually Prioritised Problem Assessment (IPPA) was performed as part of evaluating the seating interventions.

Results:

Seven themes were derived using thematic analysis. 1) Facilitating activity participation and family interaction, 2) Caregiver Relief, 3) Improved posture, 4) Satisfaction, 5) Misconception of SS, 6) Lack of knowledge, 7) Social stigma. The FIATS-AS Family and Social Interaction domain scores support caregivers' reports that SS facilitated children's activity participation and family interaction. Majority of the caregivers expressed improved caregiver relief, which was not reflected in the FIATS-AS Caregiver Relief and Safety domain. This may be because the children are rarely left alone.

Conclusion:

Findings indicate that SS not only prevents further deformity but also improves postural alignment. This study highlighted the importance of SS for children in EI, their families, and its' potential to improve Quality of Life. It is also crucial to address the misconception, lack of knowledge and social stigma surrounding SS for children in local context.