ABSTRACT

This analysis investigated the efficacy of sensory integration training for children with disabilities. Sensory integration has emerged as a possible bona fide intervention for children with disabilities, even though prior research has yielded equivocal and inconsistent findings about efficacy. Consequently, further examination seems warranted to address the ambiguity that exists in the sensory integration literature. A description of sensory integration theory, dysfunction, and intervention establishes the foundation for inquiry into this topic. This analysis reviewed previously published and unpublished literature on the efficacy of sensory integration training using meta-analytic techniques. The research sample consisted of sensory integration efficacy studies that implemented a two-group experimental design. A total of 47 studies met inclusion criteria, yielding a sample of 2,176 subjects and 550 effect size measurements. The overall mean effect size indicated only modest gains and would be termed small. The accumulated studies that met inclusion criteria for this meta-analysis were also divided according to comparison types. The two groups of comparison studies were classified as sensory integration training versus no treatment (SIT/NT) and sensory integration training versus alternative treatment (SIT/ALT). In both cases, the mean effect sizes only suggested a minimal to modest positive skew. Each of the calculated mean effect sizes were accompanied with a substantial degree of variability, thus decreasing the confidence that could be inferred by these findings. This investigation provides supporting evidence on the need for this study, a review of sensory integration literature, its purpose, methodology, findings, and recommendation for further research.