

# TEACHING INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER IN A SPECIALIZED SETTING

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## INTRODUCTION

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that significantly alters social communication, behaviour and functioning. Weak communication skills as well as restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behaviour, activities and interests characterize the core symptoms of this disorder. The severity of these manifestations vary across the spectrum and is defined by the level of support required by each individual (APA, 2013). According to the most recent findings, ASD affects nearly 1% of the population (APA, 2013). Schools must thus adapt to the rising prevalence of ASD students. Often, students with ASD display comorbid disorders leading to additional challenges and needs (Simonoff et al., 2008). The complexity of ASD calls for specialized educational practices including individualization, visual aids and environmental adaptations. In Quebec, various techniques are used to meet the specific needs of this population such as inclusion in mainstream education and enrollment in specialized classrooms or schools. **This study outlines the educational practices used to address specific difficulties of adolescents with ASD in a specialized educational setting.**

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

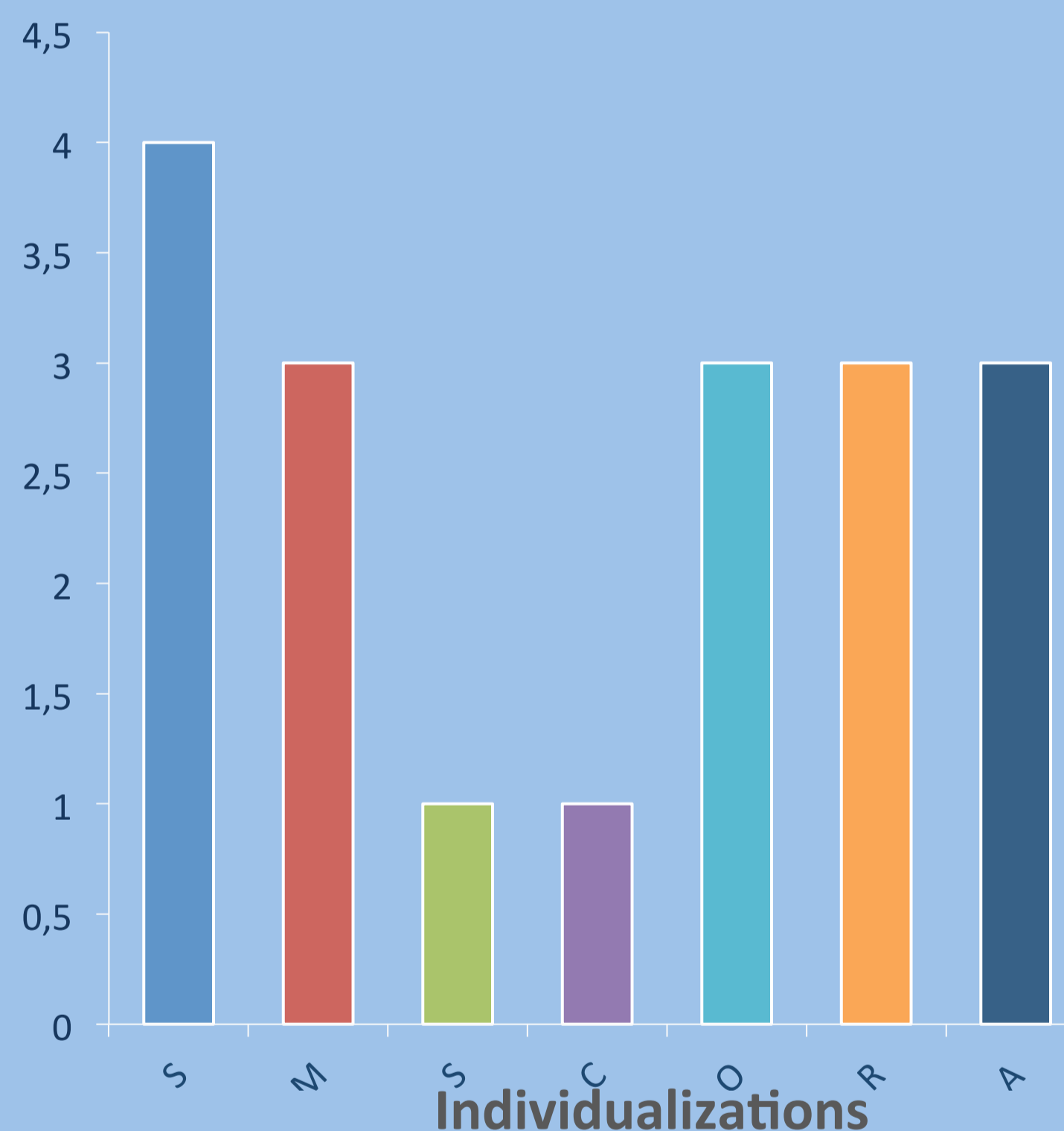
Fifteen teachers working in mainstream high schools with adolescents on the autism spectrum enrolled in a specialized program participated in this study.

### Instruments

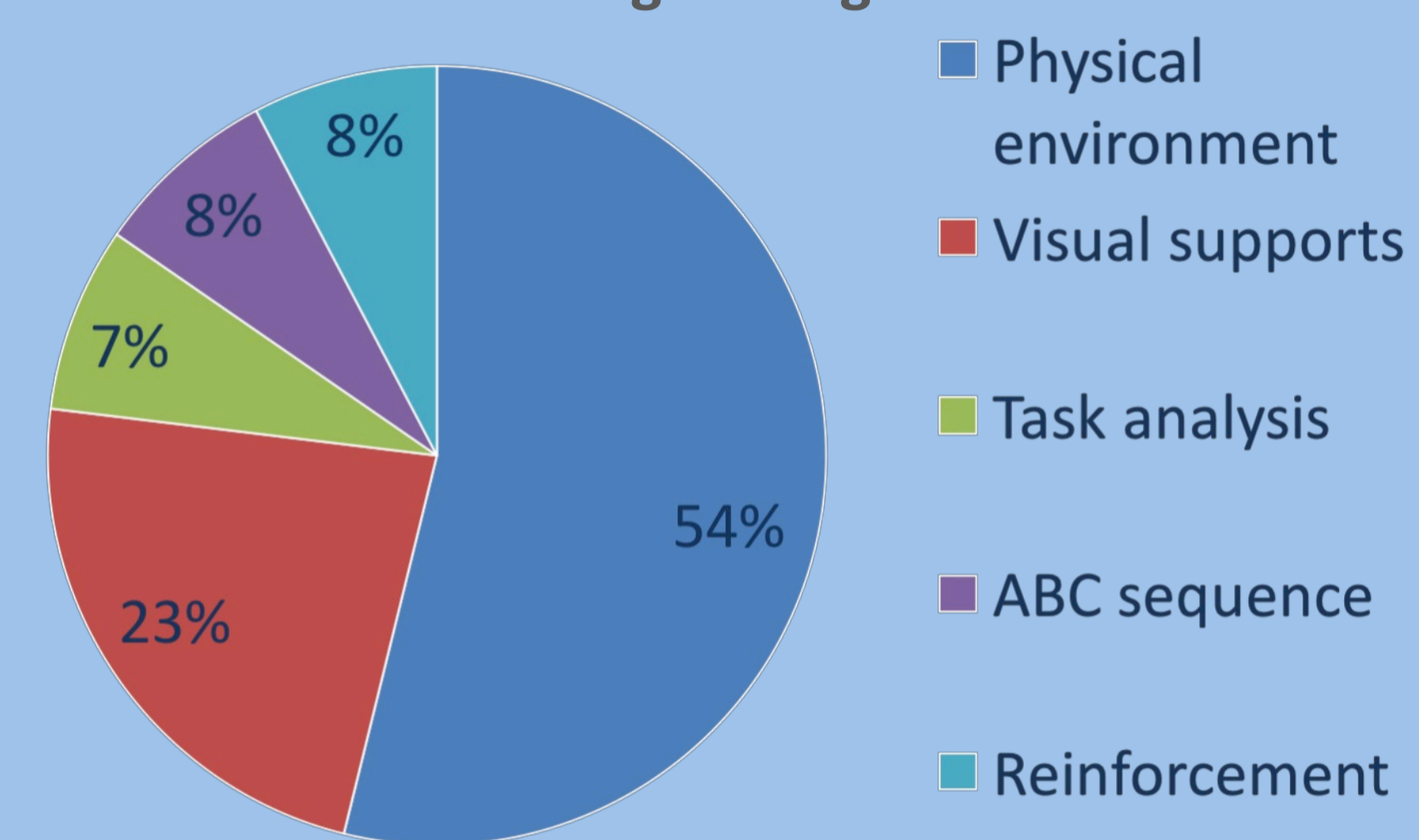
- Sociodemographic questionnaire
- Semi-structured interview protocol

## RESULTS

### Students' difficulties



### Teaching strategies



## DISCUSSION

Most teachers employ the regular education program and use various techniques to teach students with ASD. Although Applied Behavioural Analysis, task analysis, visual support and video modeling have proven effective with students with ASD (Bond et al., 2016), a small number of teachers favor these techniques in their classes. Finally, few resources are available to effectively guide teachers in their educational practices. Nonetheless, evidenced-based intervention strategies are strongly recommended to foster the educational success of students with ASD.

### Adaptations (n = 15)

- Task structure
- Simplifying directions
- Extra time
- Technological tools

### Modifications (n = 9)

- Mathematics
- French

### REFERENCES

- American Psychiatric Association (APA). (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC.
- Bond, C., Symes, W., Hebron, J., Humphrey, N., Morewood, G., & Woods, K. (2016). Educational interventions for children with ASD: A systematic literature review 2008–2013. *School Psychology International*, 1-18.
- Simonoff, E., Pickles, A., Charman, T., Chandler, S., Loucas, T., & Baird, G. (2008). Psychiatric disorders in children with autism spectrum disorders: prevalence, comorbidity, and associated factors in a population-derived sample. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 47(8), 921–929.