Journal of Social Sciences Research & Policy (JSSRP)

GISSR Global Institute of Social Sciences Research

Improving Attention Span of Students with Mild Intellectual Disability through Fun-Based Activities

Issac Samuel[1], Khalid Mahmood Rind[2], Sidra Samuel[3], Saba Faqeer Iqbal[4]

1. Lecturer in Sociology, Govt. Islamia Arts and Commerce College and Post-Graduate Studies Centre, Sukkur, College Education Department, Sindh, Pakistan.
2. Social Case Worker, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD), Sukkur, Sindh-Pakistan.
3. (B.A RN, RM, and Post RN BScN), Specialist Nurse Al- Abeer Saudi National Hospital, Makkah, Saudi Arabia.
4. (B.A RN, RM, and Post RN BScN), Senior Nurse, Children Emergency (CHILDLIFE FOUNDATION), Chandka Medical College Hospital, Larkana, Sindh- Pakistan.

Cite This Article: Samuel, I., Rind, K. M., Samuel, S. & Iqbal, S. F. (2026). Improving Attention Span of Students with Mild Intellectual Disability through Fun-Based Activities. *Journal of Social Sciences Research & Policy. 4 (02), 156-162.*
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71327/jssrp.42.156.162

ISSN: 3006-6557 (Online)
ISSN: 3006-6549 (Print)

Vol. 4, **No.** 2 (2026)
Pages: 156-162

Key Words:
Attention Span, Mild Intellectual Disability, Fun-Based Activities, Inclusive Education, Student Engagement, Special Education

Corresponding Author:
Issac Samuel
Email: Issacsamuel2611@gmail.com

Abstract: *This study investigated the effectiveness of fun-based activities in improving the attention span and classroom engagement of students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities (MID). Attention difficulties are among the most common learning barriers faced by children with intellectual disabilities, often affecting their academic performance, participation, and social interaction. The study was conducted in an inclusive public school serving children with special needs. A total of 12 Grade 3 students aged 8–12 years diagnosed with MID participated in the research. A classroom-based action research design was used, and a 10-day intervention program consisting of fun-based activities such as coloring, matching games, puzzles, block building, clap pattern games, and Simon Says was implemented. Data were collected using an observational checklist that measured students' attention level, task completion, engagement, and social interaction. The collected data were analyzed descriptively by comparing students' performance from Day 1 to Day 10. The findings revealed significant improvement in students' attention span, classroom participation, and task completion. Students were able to maintain focus for longer periods, participate more actively, and demonstrate improved peer interaction and positive classroom behavior. The study concludes that fun-based activities provide an effective and practical strategy for enhancing attention and engagement among students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities. The research recommends integrating enjoyable and interactive learning activities into special and inclusive education classrooms to support cognitive and social development.*

Introduction

Attention span plays a crucial role in the academic success and classroom participation of children with special educational needs. Students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities (MID) often experience difficulties

in maintaining focus, following instructions, and completing academic tasks. These attention-related problems negatively affect their learning outcomes, classroom behavior, and social development.

Traditional teaching methods are often insufficient in addressing the learning needs of students with MID because such students require interactive, engaging, and multisensory learning experiences. Fun-based learning activities provide opportunities for active participation and motivation, helping students remain engaged for longer periods. Activities such as games, puzzles, role-play, and hands-on exercises can stimulate attention and improve classroom participation.

The present study aimed to investigate whether fun-based activities could improve the attention span and engagement of students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities in an inclusive classroom setting.

Background and Rationale of the Study

The researcher selected this topic after observing that students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities frequently lost focus during classroom lessons. Many students became distracted easily, showed restlessness, and struggled to complete assigned tasks. These challenges created barriers to academic learning and classroom management.

The problem was particularly evident in inclusive classrooms where students with MID often failed to engage with traditional lecture-based instruction. However, during informal classroom activities involving games, coloring, and interactive tasks, students appeared more attentive, motivated, and socially active. These observations encouraged the researcher to explore whether structured fun-based activities could systematically improve students' attention span.

Furthermore, most participating students belonged to lower-middle-class families with limited educational support at home. Therefore, the classroom became the primary environment for cognitive stimulation and skill development. The study aimed to identify a practical, low-cost, and engaging teaching strategy that could support both academic and social growth among students with MID.

Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To improve the attention span of students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities through fun-based activities.
2. To increase classroom engagement and participation among students with MID.
3. To examine the effectiveness of interactive learning activities in improving task completion and social interaction.

Research Questions

1. Can fun-based activities improve the attention span of students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities?
2. Do fun-based activities increase classroom engagement and participation?
3. Can enjoyable classroom activities improve task completion and social interaction among students with MID?

Literature Review

Research indicates that children with Mild Intellectual Disabilities often experience short attention spans and difficulties maintaining focus during classroom instruction (Smith et al., 2016). According to Jones and Roberts (2018), structured and engaging activities are essential for improving concentration among students with intellectual disabilities.

Fun-based learning activities have been widely recognized as effective instructional strategies in special education. Brown and Harris (2019) found that interactive games and hands-on activities improve student motivation, engagement, and task completion. Similarly, Kelly et al. (2017) emphasized that enjoyable learning experiences enhance students' willingness to participate in classroom activities.

Positive reinforcement also plays a significant role in maintaining students' attention and motivation. Gorman (2015) reported that praise and reward systems increase classroom participation and confidence among students with disabilities. Additionally, multisensory learning approaches involving visual, auditory, and tactile elements improve attention and comprehension in students with intellectual disabilities (Thomas & Freeman, 2016).

Peer interaction and collaborative learning further support cognitive and social development. Miller and Jones (2017) concluded that group-based activities encourage communication, teamwork, and sustained engagement among students with MID.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed an action research design to investigate the impact of fun-based activities on students' attention span and engagement.

Participants

The participants included 12 Grade 3 students aged 8–12 years diagnosed with Mild Intellectual Disabilities. The students were selected based on teachers' observations regarding difficulties in attention and classroom participation.

Research Setting

The study was conducted in a public inclusive school that provides educational services for children with special needs.

Intervention Plan

A 10-day intervention program was designed using fun-based activities, including:

- Coloring
- Matching games
- Puzzle solving
- Find the hidden object
- Block building
- Clap pattern games
- Ball passing games
- Shape identification
- Simon Says
- Revision and assessment activities

Each activity was designed to be interactive, enjoyable, and appropriate to the cognitive abilities of the students.

Data Collection Tool

An observational checklist was used to collect data regarding:

- Attention level
- Task completion
- Engagement
- Social interaction
- Time spent on task

The checklist used a three-point Likert scale:

1 = Not Engaged

2 = Minimally Engaged

3 = Fully Engaged

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed descriptively by comparing students' performance and behavioral changes from Day 1 to Day 10 of the intervention.

Findings

The study findings demonstrated that fun-based activities positively affected students' attention span and classroom engagement.

Improvement in Attention Span

Students showed a noticeable increase in their ability to remain focused during classroom activities. By Day 10, most students could sustain attention for approximately 15–20 minutes compared to only a few minutes on Day 1.

Increased Engagement

Participation in classroom activities improved significantly. Students became more active and motivated during activities such as puzzles, block building, and Simon Says.

Better Task Completion

Students demonstrated improved independence and were able to complete assigned activities with less teacher assistance by the end of the intervention.

Enhanced Social Interaction

Group-based activities encouraged peer interaction, cooperation, and communication among students.

Positive Classroom Behavior

Students displayed improved patience, cooperation, and compliance during classroom tasks.

Discussion

The findings support previous research indicating that interactive and multisensory learning activities improve attention and engagement among students with intellectual disabilities. Fun-based activities reduced boredom and increased students' willingness to participate in classroom tasks.

The use of positive reinforcement further strengthened students' confidence and motivation. Additionally, group activities created opportunities for collaborative learning and social development. The study demonstrates that enjoyable learning environments can significantly improve both academic engagement and behavioral outcomes in students with MID.

Conclusion

The study concludes that fun-based activities are effective in improving the attention span, engagement, and classroom participation of students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities. Interactive learning experiences helped students remain focused for longer periods, complete tasks independently, and interact positively with peers.

The findings suggest that teachers in special and inclusive education settings should incorporate fun-based instructional strategies into daily classroom practices to support students' cognitive, academic, and social development.

Recommendations

1. Teachers should regularly use fun-based activities in special and inclusive classrooms.
2. Schools should provide training for teachers on interactive and multisensory teaching methods.
3. Positive reinforcement strategies should be integrated into classroom instruction.
4. Future research should be conducted with larger sample sizes and longer intervention periods.
5. Parents should also be encouraged to use interactive learning activities at home.

References

Brown, A., & Harris, J. (2019). The impact of interactive learning strategies in special education. Educational Publishers.

Gorman, R. (2015). Positive reinforcement and classroom management techniques. Psychology Press.

Jones, L., & Roberts, C. (2018). The effects of fun-based activities on students with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Special Education, 23*(4), 45–52.

Kelly, M., Lee, A., & Taylor, S. (2017). Fun and learning: Using play-based strategies in special education. Springer.

Miller, K., & Jones, P. (2017). Social skills development for students with intellectual disabilities: A group intervention model. *Educational Psychology, 19*(3), 210–220.

Riley, J., McLoughlin, T., & Thomas, L. (2018). The role of visual aids in improving focus for children with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 35*(2), 101–110.

Smith, J., Thompson, B., & Patel, R. (2016). Cognitive behavior and attention span in children with intellectual disabilities. *Cognitive Development Journal, 27*(1), 15–25.

Sohlberg, M., & Mateer, C. (2019). Cognitive rehabilitation: Theories and practices in enhancing attention span. Academic Press.

Thomas, R., & Freeman, D. (2016). Multisensory learning approaches and their impact on children with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Special Education and Practice, 22*(4), 30–38.

Observation Checklist Tool for Data Collection

Title of the Tool

Observational Checklist for Measuring Attention Span and Engagement of Students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities (MID) during Fun-Based Activities

Purpose of the Tool

This observational checklist was developed to collect data regarding the attention span, engagement, task completion, and social interaction of students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities (MID) during fun-based classroom activities. The tool helped the researcher systematically observe behavioral changes and improvements throughout the 10-day intervention program.

Observation Checklist

Student Name: _____

Age: _____

Grade: _____

Date: _____

Activity Name: _____

Observer Name: _____

Instructions for the Observer

Observe the student carefully during the activity and mark the appropriate rating based on the student's performance and behavior.

Rating Scale

Rating	Description
1	Not Engaged / Poor Attention

Rating	Description
2	Minimally Engaged / Partial Attention
3	Fully Engaged / Good Attention

Observation Checklist Table

Sr. No	Observation Indicators	1	2	3	Remarks
1	Student remained focused during the activity	☐	☐	☐	_____
2	Student followed instructions properly	☐	☐	☐	_____
3	Student completed the assigned task within given time	☐	☐	☐	_____
4	Student participated actively in the activity	☐	☐	☐	_____
5	Student showed interest and motivation	☐	☐	☐	_____
6	Student avoided distractions during the task	☐	☐	☐	_____
7	Student interacted positively with peers	☐	☐	☐	_____
8	Student responded positively to teacher guidance	☐	☐	☐	_____
9	Student remained seated/calm during activity	☐	☐	☐	_____
10	Student completed the activity independently	☐	☐	☐	_____

Time on Task Record

Observation Area	Duration
Total time student remained focused	_____ minutes
Number of times student got distracted	_____ minutes
Number of teacher prompts required	_____ minutes

Overall Performance

Criteria	Rating
Attention Span	_____
Engagement Level	_____
Task Completion	_____
Social Interaction	_____

Observer's Comments

Reliability and Validity of the Tool

- The checklist was developed according to the objectives of the research study.
- The tool was reviewed by the supervisor to ensure content validity.
- A trial observation was conducted before final implementation to improve reliability and clarity.

Use of the Tool in the Study

This observational checklist was used daily during the 10-day intervention program involving fun-based activities such as:

- Coloring
- Matching games
- Puzzle solving
- Simon Says
- Ball passing game
- Block building
- Shape identification

The tool enabled the researcher to compare students' performance from Day 1 to Day 10 and evaluate improvements in attention span and classroom engagement.