

Introduction

Based on national data, approximately 9% of children receiving special education services through Individualized Education Programs (IEP) met criteria for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) during the 2015-2016 school year¹. Across the country, educational services vary by age, educational setting, and geographic region, and may include a range of services such as occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, paraeducator support (e.g. teacher's aides, paraprofessionals), and behavior support³. Current research in this area has examined IEP goals and services for children with ASD and their relation to child age, cognitive functioning, and education setting^{3,4}. However, little is known about the distribution of services for children with ASD based on severity of ASD symptoms. The purpose of this study was to investigate the educational services provided to eleven children with ASD (aged 5-12 years) attending public elementary or middle schools in Wisconsin and to examine the association between types of services and ASD symptom severity.

Study Aims

1. Describe the types of special education services that students with ASD receive in public school settings.
2. Examine the relation between child ASD symptom severity and the type of services received.

Methods

Sample

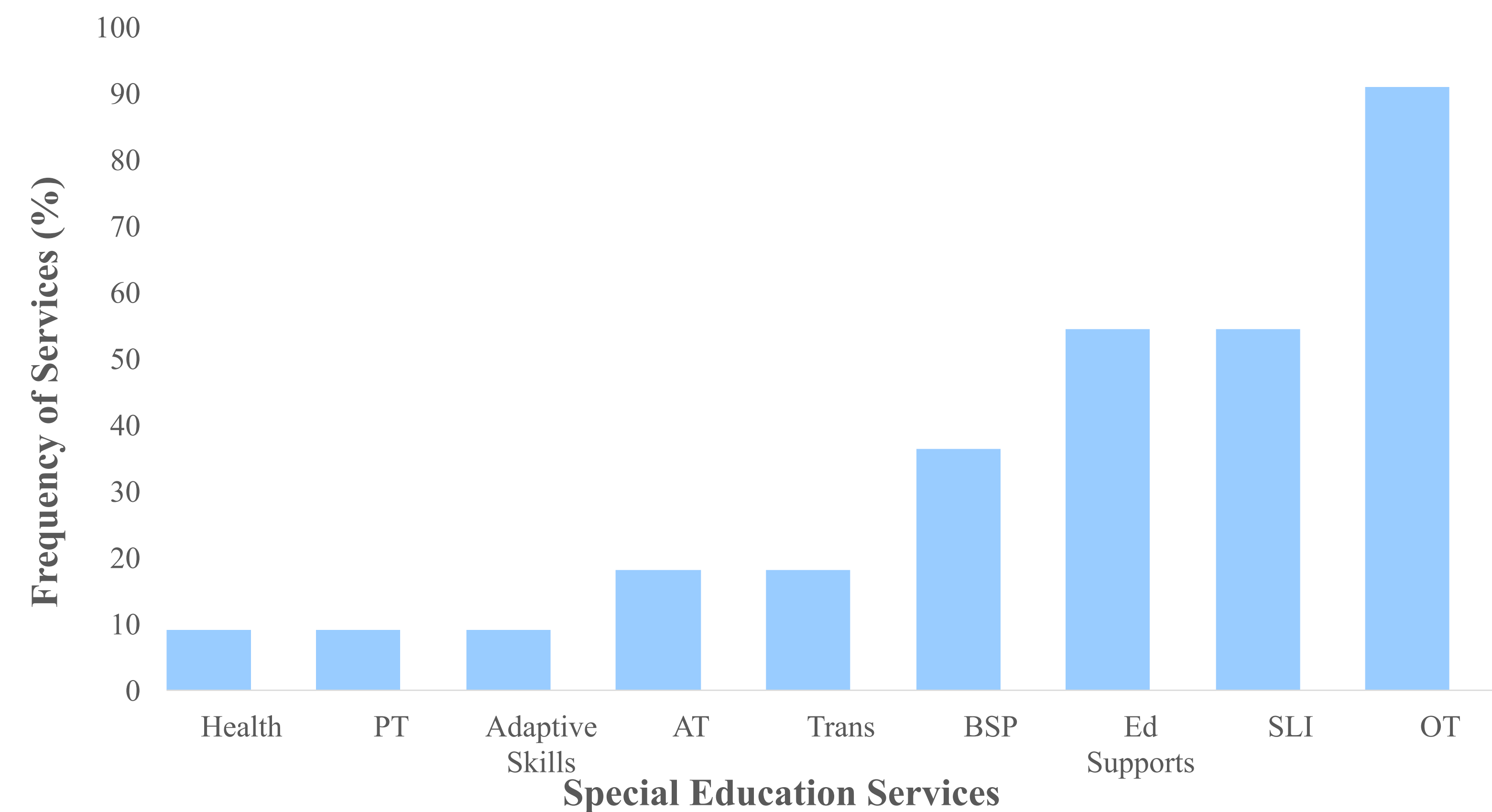
Parents	
n=22	
Age M (SD)	
Mothers	39.36 (4.65)
Fathers	41.82 (5.04)
White, Non-Hispanic N (%)	
Mothers	90.9 (1.21)
Fathers	90.9 (0.60)
Bachelor's degree or higher N (%)	
Mothers	81.8 (1.81)
Fathers	54.5 (1.83)
Household Income N (%)	
SD = 3.72	
< = \$50,000	9.1
\$50,000 to \$99,999	54.6
> = \$100,000	27.3
Children	
n=11	
Age M (SD)	9.55 (2.16)
Male N (%)	90.9 (0.30)
Intellectual Disability N (%)	45.4

Measures

- Review of Educational Records
- Social Responsiveness Scale, Second Edition (SRS-2)²

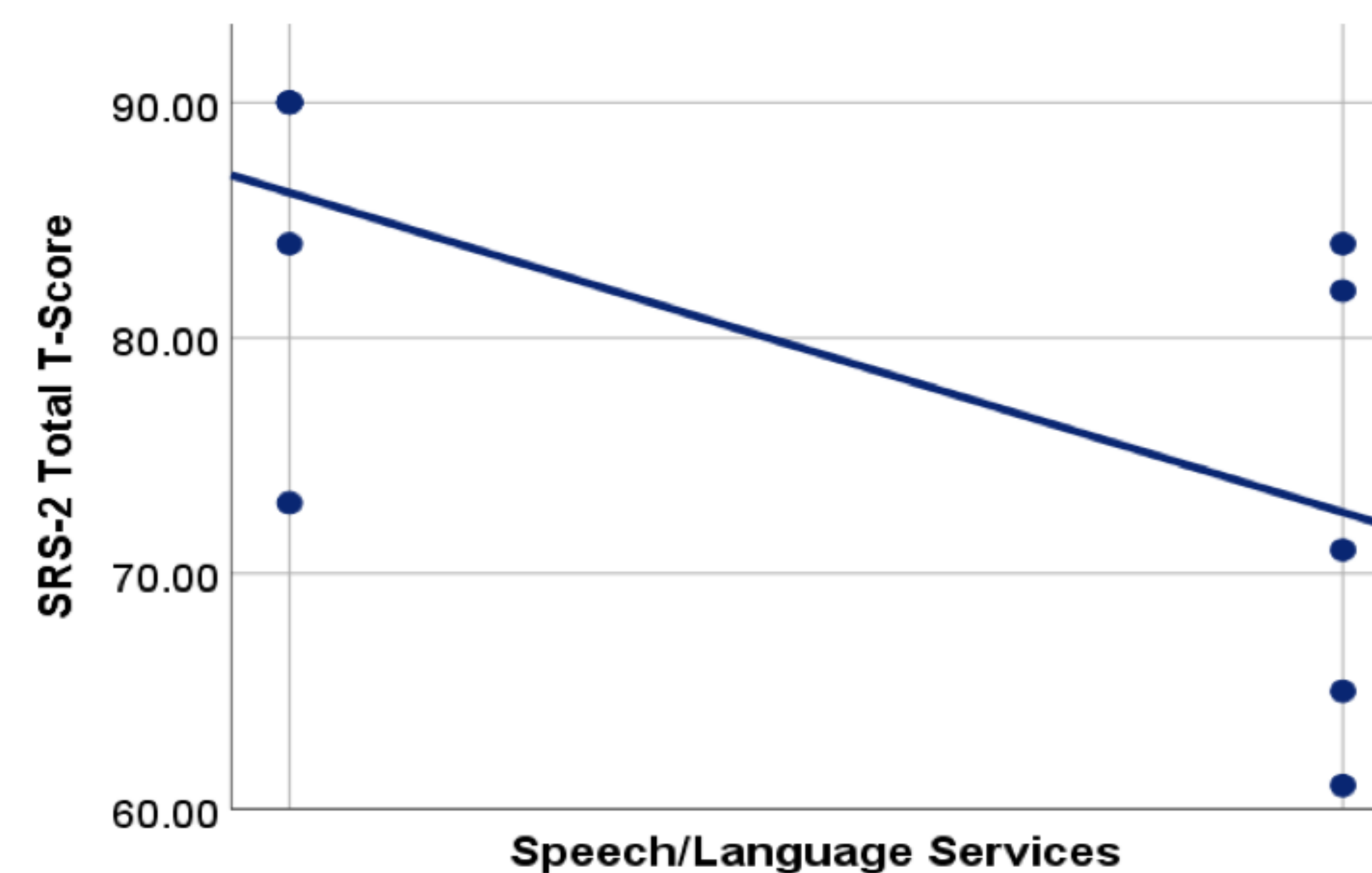
Results

Special Education Service Frequency



Relationship between ASD Symptoms Severity and Special Education Services

Overall Severity of ASD symptoms and Receipt of Speech/Language Services



SRS-2 Total T Score		
	r value	p value
Occupational Therapy (OT)	0.31	0.36
Speech and Language (SLI)	-0.66	0.03*
Academic Support (Ed Supports)	-0.41	0.21
Behavioral/Social Supports (BSP)	0.19	0.59
Specialized Transportation Services (Trans)	-0.32	0.33
Assistive Technology (AT)	-0.18	0.59
Physical Therapy (PT)	-0.31	0.39
Individualized Health Services (Health)	-0.31	0.36

*= significant

Findings

- Occupational therapy (90.1%), speech and language services (54.5%) and academic support (54.5%) were the most frequently received special education services.
- There was a significant positive correlation between receipt of speech and language services and severity of ASD symptoms. This indicates that children with more severe ASD symptoms were more likely to receive speech and language services.
- No other significant associations were found between receipt of other types of special education services and severity of ASD symptoms.

Discussion

Based on our sample, children with ASD most commonly received occupational therapy followed by speech and language services and academic support. These findings are consistent with previous research on educational services for children with ASD. While the severity of ASD symptoms were found to be associated with speech and language services, no other significant associations were found between receipt of other types of special education services and severity of ASD symptoms. These findings suggest that more research is needed to understand the relationship between ASD and special education services. Other features associated with ASD such as intellectual functioning or co-occurring physical and/or behavior problems should be investigated, as they may better explain the distribution of special education services for this population.

Future Implications

- Future studies should investigate the relationship between ASD symptoms and special education services using a larger sample.
- More research is needed to appropriately identify services that target educational and behavioral needs of children with ASD in school settings.
- These findings have implications for understanding special education service needs for students with ASD.

Acknowledgements

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References

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2. Constantino J.N., & Gruber, C.P. (2012). *Social Responsiveness Scale, Second Edition (SRS-2)*. Los Angeles: Western Psychological Services.
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