



# UNDERSTANDING SWIMMING INSTRUCTORS' KNOWLEDGE GROWTH IN TEACHING SWIMMING TO CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

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## ABSTRACT

Autism is a neurodiversity that leads to physical, psychosocial, health, mental and cognitive challenges. Children with autism are proposed to take up swimming as it is claimed to improve their social integration and physical strength besides preventing them from drowning fatalities. However, many swimming instructors remain hesitant in teaching autistic children as they claim that they lack training and teaching experiences. Thus, there is a need to investigate how swimming instructors develop their knowledge to teach children with autism so that this can be shared with other future swimming instructors who will work with autistic children. Based on purposeful sampling, three swimming instructors were chosen to be involved in this qualitative case study. Data collection involved a demographic questionnaire, observations, and semi-structured interviews. Braun & Clarke's (2006) guide was used for thematic analysis. Findings indicate that swimming instructors' knowledge growth involves learning from more skillful mentors, having parent-teacher conversations, and marrying basic knowledge gained from formal education with own experiences. It is suggested that special education programmes integrate this information in their curriculum to prepare future swimming instructors for children with autism in meeting the needs of this population.

**Keywords:** *Autism; Swimming Instructor Knowledge Growth; Swimming Instructor Training; Mentor; Parent-Teacher Conversations; Experiences; Trust*