

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-59276

Title: From AI Companionship to Social Scaffolding A Supervised Avatar Model for Skill Generalization in Autistic Children

Recommendation:

Accept as it is

Accept after minor revision.....

Accept after major revision ...✓.....

Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓		
Techn. Quality			✓	
Clarity			✓	
Significance			✓	

Reviewer's ID: JPR- **098**

Detailed Reviewer's Report

Decision: Accept after Major Revision

Strengthen the literature review.

The manuscript reviews recent AI-supported autism interventions, but the search strategy, databases, inclusion criteria, and exclusion criteria are not specified. Provide a transparent description of how the literature was identified and selected.

2. Clarify the research novelty.

The authors should explicitly distinguish the proposed supervised avatar model from existing AI chatbots, virtual-reality interventions, social robots, and AI-assisted behavioral intervention platforms. Clearly state the unique theoretical and practical contributions.

3. Provide a stronger theoretical foundation.

The proposed pathway from avatar rehearsal to real-world skill generalization requires a clearer theoretical explanation. Connect the model to established

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principles of behavioral skills training, stimulus generalization, prompt fading, and maintenance.

4. Define the target population more precisely.

The manuscript discusses autistic children with potentially different ages, language abilities, and communication needs. Specify the proposed eligibility criteria and explain how the model would accommodate minimally speaking children and users of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

5. Expand the proposed evaluation methodology.

The multiple-baseline design is described conceptually, but practical details remain limited. Explain participant selection, baseline stability, intervention duration, probe frequency, follow-up periods, and the criteria for demonstrating meaningful generalization.

6. Strengthen the comparative evaluation framework.

The manuscript appropriately identifies additional practice and human attention as alternative explanations. Specify how avatar-based rehearsal could be compared with equivalent-duration human-led or non-avatar practice to isolate the contribution of the technology.

7. Elaborate on AI safety and reliability.

The proposed stopping rules and human handback procedures need operational definitions. Explain how unsafe outputs, missed escalation triggers, false alarms, unexpected responses, and system failures would be tested and documented.

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8. Provide a more detailed privacy and data-governance framework.

Although consent, data minimization, and retention limits are mentioned, the manuscript should explain data storage, access permissions, security safeguards, deletion procedures, and the handling of sensitive child conversations.

9. Operationalize the outcome measures.

Define how generalization, acceptability, adverse events, implementation fidelity, and staff burden will be measured. Include a clear plan for interobserver agreement and independent assessment of children's performance in natural settings.

10. Strengthen the evidence-to-claim alignment.

The manuscript acknowledges that evidence from adolescents and adults cannot establish effectiveness in children. Verify the cited studies and their reported findings, and ensure that all claims about effectiveness, transfer, safety, and feasibility remain proportional to the available evidence.

Minor Revisions

1. Improve the abstract.

Condense the background and clarify the manuscript's principal contribution, proposed model, evaluation approach, and key limitations.

2. Refine the keywords.

Consider adding more specific terms, such as skill generalization, conversational agents, autism intervention, and human–AI interaction.

3. Improve section transitions.

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Strengthen the links between the literature review, theoretical mechanism, intervention specification, and evaluation design to improve the manuscript's overall flow.

4. Standardize terminology.

Use terms such as “AI avatar,” “conversational agent,” “rehearsal,” and “generalization” consistently, defining distinctions where necessary.

5. Improve Figure 1.

Ensure that the supervised avatar cycle clearly identifies clinician approval, child choice, rehearsal, human practice, outcome assessment, and stopping conditions.

6. Improve Figure 2.

Make the outcome domains and interpretation safeguards more readable, and ensure that the figure corresponds directly to the proposed evaluation protocol.

7. Clarify abbreviations.

Define abbreviations such as RBT and AAC at first use and maintain consistent usage throughout the manuscript.

8. Check citation and reference consistency.

Verify that every in-text citation has a corresponding reference and that author names, publication years, journal details, page ranges, and DOI links are accurate and consistently formatted.

9. Improve sentence structure.

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Edit lengthy or complex sentences for clarity, readability, and grammatical accuracy, particularly in the methodology and safety sections.

10. Refine the conclusion.

Summarize the model's principal contribution, emphasize that effectiveness remains unestablished, and identify the essential next steps for participatory feasibility testing and controlled evaluation.