

A Secondary Data Analysis Exploring Parent Accommodations and Child Participation in Young Children with ASD

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Background & Purpose

Past research has shown that sensory features in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have an effect on family routines, parent accommodations, & child participation, but little research has been conducted on the processes by which these phenomena play out in daily life.

This study aims to gain insight into the nature of parent accommodations & sensory features in children with ASD, & explore how child participation & engagement are subsequently impacted.

Research Question

What is the nature of the relationship between parent accommodations & child participation in the presence of differentiated sensory features?

Methods

- Secondary Data Analysis of 18 Parent Qualitative Interviews from Sensory Experiences Project (PI, Dr. Grace Baranek)
- Process of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
- Consultation with Research Instructor

References

Bagby, M. S., Dickie, V. A., & Baranek, G. T. (2012). How sensory experiences of children with and without autism affect family occupations. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 66(1), 78-86.

Baranek, G. T., David, F. J., Poe, M. D., Stone, W. L., & Watson, L. R. (2006). Sensory experiences questionnaire: Discriminating sensory features in young children with autism, developmental delays, and typical development. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 47(6), 591-601.

Findings

Child aversion is validated

"I don't think we'll take her to another fireworks display. We're not going to a big birthday party she was invited to....lots of kids, big house, it's just too much for [her]."

Child is challenged to participate

"I mean it took me a while to realize I could just dab something on her lip and get her to lick it, and then she would be like, 'Oh, well, I might try that.'"
"So I took the whole thing of play-doh and I put it in his hand and squeezed his hand around it. He threw up in his mouth."

Child continues to engage

Father: "She has arm flapping with a lot of times. Most demonstrative in water."
Mother: "I just take joy in it; that she's happy. She's overall a basically a pleasant, happy child but when I see her really enjoying something it gives me pleasure."

Child is kept safe

"If you are watching him, he will not do that. But if he is alone in the backyard, he will try to eat that. He'll pull the grass like this and then try to put it into the mouth."

Parents employ specific strategies in response to a variety of sensory features & are met with variability in child response, which impacts parents' subsequent choice of accommodation in future situations.

Discussion

Findings from this study support a transactional perspective of occupation (Dickie, Cutchin, Humphry, 2006), & suggest a more complex relationship between parent accommodations, child participation, & sensory experiences. Parents' hopes & values become evident through their choice of accommodation.

Parents seek to create positive experiences for their children through:

- validating their child's sensory aversions though creating supportive environments
- challenging their child to participate & overcome aversions or lack of engagement
- allowing their child to continue to find enjoyment in their sensory experience
- fulfilling parent role by keeping their child safe from harm

Accommodations & child behavior interact with, & are sometimes a product of, social, physical, & temporal contexts, all of which contribute to the sensory experience of the child.

Implications for OS & OT

- OTs should seek to understand & apply parents' hopes & values related to parent accommodations & child participation throughout the therapeutic intervention process in order to provide family-centered care
- OTs should assess & build upon the strengths of parent accommodations