



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Paediatrics

PERCEPTION OF PARENTS IN USING MESSY PLAY IN SENSORY BASED INTERVENTIONS

KEY WORDS: Messy play, Sensory Based Intervention, Parents Perception

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ABSTRACT

Background: The word messy is often given negative meanings and calling an important aspect of play 'messy' can lead to it being undervalued. Messy play involve children using all their senses in the process of exploration especially the sense of touch offering children plenty of opportunity to mould and manipulate materials not having a focus on making or producing something.

Objectives: To explore the perception of parents in regard to messy play questionnaire filled by Occupational Therapist who works with Parents of children having Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Study Design: Survey method

Methods: 30 Occupational Therapist who are working in an Early Intervention Centre across Delhi, have filled a questionnaire about "Perception of Parents about Messy Play in Sensory Based Programs". The questionnaire was created using Google form and its reliability and validity was tested.

Results: The results of the study suggest that parents use messy play during sensory based intervention in home programs occasionally.70 percent of parents suggest using other sensory based equipment's in comparison to messy play. 80.7 percent of the Occupational Therapist feels that only some of the parents actually do the activities related to messy play.

Conclusion: This study shows that Messy play though the cheapest form of intervention with most wide used possibilities of exploration is still not preferred by many parents. Despite all the contributions messy play can make to children's learning and development there does seem to be a reluctance to promote messy play in the home based settings, neglect of such play may be connected with other people's anxieties about children making a mess and its associations with words such as muddled, confused and shambolic. This has led to this type of play being seen as unimportant and undervalued.

INTRODUCTION

Play is a universal and innate disposition that is believed to be one of the most significant components to holistic wellbeing and development during the foundational years of childhood. Research and literature examining the topic of play in early childhood suggests that while unstructured and child directed play is valued; its existence is under threat. Instead, it is being replaced by structured, educational, and adult directed activities which aim to accelerate young children's learning. Due to these conflicting paradigms, and a lack of research exploring parental values in this area, this quantitative study examined parental perceptions towards structured and unstructured play for children under the age of three years.

While the benefits of play have been documented for some time the value of play has only relatively recently been formally recognised as being vital for a child's healthy emotional, social and intellectual development. In fact, given the strong evidence that all types of play contribute to a child's self-esteem, behaviour regulation, emotional expression, cognitive and motor skills, resilience and mental well-being, play is identified as a child's right in the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child. Risky, outdoor play—play that is challenging, thrilling, and involves some physical risk has been cited as a potential allure to engage children in physical activity, potentially increasing MVPA and improving psychological well-being.

There is also a growing body of literature examining the specific benefits of unstructured play in supporting the holistic and natural development of young children, especially during the first three years of life (Canning, 2007; Elkind, 2007; Pearce, 1992). For example, unstructured play, where children are provided with the opportunity to lead their own learning, has been linked with the development of neural connections in the brain, social skills such as perspective taking, language, physical skills, problem solving, and cognitive skills such as creative thought which can lead to later abstract thinking (Bergen, 2002; Frost, et al., 2008; Gimtrova & Gimtrov, 2003; Hamilton & McFarlane, 2005). It is

argued that this form of play supports such development by enabling children to deepen their learning through following their individual interests and agendas and becoming fully engaged in the activity as they build on their current working theories about the world around them (Canning, 2007; Jenkinson, 2001).

METHODOLOGY

30 Occupational Therapist who are working in an Early Intervention Centre across Delhi, have filled a questionnaire about perception of parents about messy play in sensory based programs. The questionnaire was created using Google form and its reliability and validity was tested.

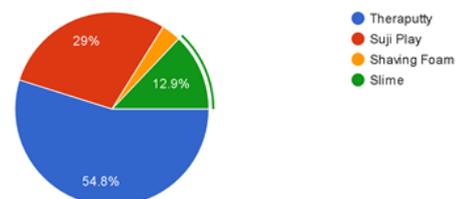
ETHICAL CLEARANCE

All the procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation (institutional and National) and with the Helsinki declaration of 1975 as revised in 2000.

RESULTS

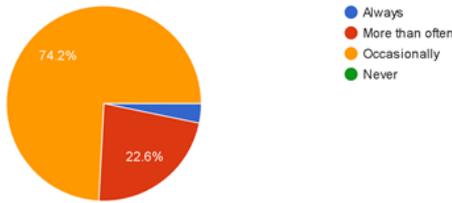
The results of the study suggest that parents use messy play during sensory based intervention in home programs occasionally.70 percent of parents suggest using other sensory based equipment's in comparison to messy play. 80.7 percent of the Occupational Therapist feels that only some of the parents actually do the activities related to messy play.

1. What does parents prefer when they have to give Tactile Inputs to a child?
31 responses



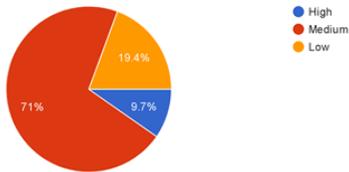
Inference- Only 3.3 % of parents prefer shaving foam as compare to theraputty which is 54.8%.

2. What is the frequency of using messy play in children by their parents ?
31 responses



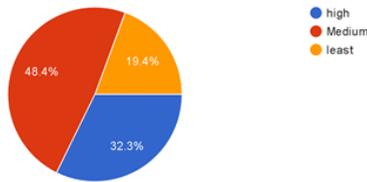
Inference – 74.2% of parents prefer messy play – “occasionally”.

3. What is the level of engagement of parents while playing with Children in messy play?
31 responses



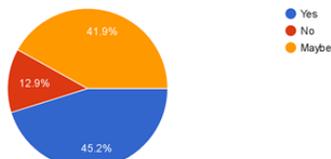
Inference – level of engagement among parents were found to be medium i.e 70%.

4. What is the level of effort required by parents to introduce messy play to a child ?
31 responses



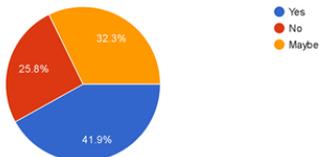
Inference- High Level (32.3%) of effort required by parents to introduce messy play to a child

5. Do you think the term 'Messy' evokes some feeling of mess - discomfort inside parents ?
31 responses



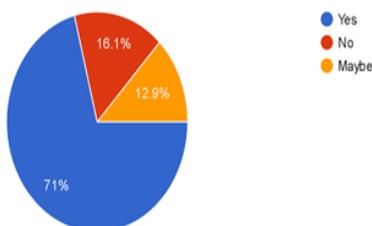
Inference- Messy play evokes feeling of mess 45.2 % responses were supporting it.

6. Do you think Parents feel there is no end product in messy play unlike other sensory games ?
31 responses



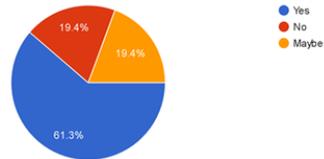
Inference- 41.9 % responses were in favour of that in messy play there is no end product according to parents.

7. Do you think that messy play requires extra amount of supervision by parents ?
31 responses



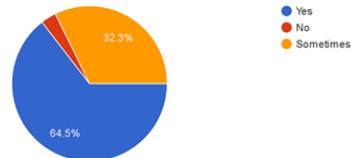
Inference – 71% of the responses were in favour of messy play requires an extra amount of supervision.

8. Do you think parents feel extra cautious with their clothes getting dirty while introducing messy play to a child ?
31 responses



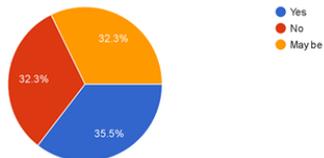
Inference – 61.3 % responses were supporting that parents are also extra cautious with their clothes getting dirty, while playing messy play.

9. Have you ever get a feedback from parents that children enjoys messy play more than other tactile inputs ?
31 responses



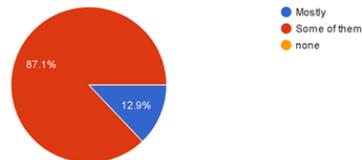
Inference – 64.5% of the responses were supporting that parents give OTs feedback that their children enjoys messy play more than other tactile inputs.

10. Do you think Parents feel messy play should be only done in a therapeutic settings like in OT gym ?
31 responses



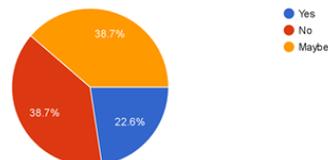
Inference – 35.5 % of the responses were in favour that parent's feel messy play should only be done in a therapeutic setting like OT gym.

11. If given for home based programs , How many actually do the activities related to messy play?
31 responses



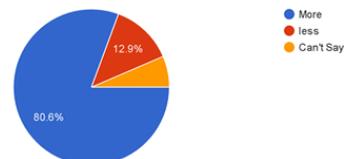
Inference – The responses were suggesting that if given for home based programs only 12.9% actually does it at home.

12. Do you think Parents know that messy play can be the cheapest way to introduce a tactile input?
31 responses



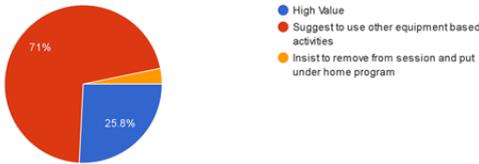
Inference - only 22.6 % of the responses were in favour of that parents know that messy play is the cheapest form of tactile input.

13. According to you , Exploration in messy play is
31 responses



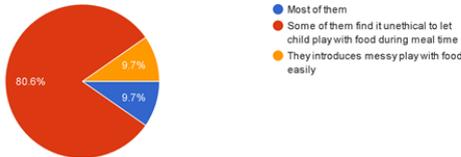
Inference -80.6 % of the responses of OTist were in favour of that exploration in messy play is more.

14. What value do parents attribute to messy play as a part of their formal OT/ST session ?
31 responses



Inference – 71 % of the responses were in favour of that parents attribute regarding messy play that they would suggest some other equipment based activities rather messy play.

15. How many parents are aware that meal time in their children can be introduced for messy play ?
31 responses



Inference – 80.6% of responses were in favour of meal time it becomes difficult for parents to introduce messy play as they find it unethical to play with food.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study shows that Messy play though the cheapest form of intervention with most wide used possibilities of exploration is still not preferred by many parents. Despite all the contributions messy play can make to children's learning and development there does seem to be a reluctance to promote messy play in the home based settings, neglect of such play may be connected with other people's anxieties about children making a mess and its associations with words such as muddled, confused and shambolic. This has led to this type of play being seen as unimportant and undervalued.

According to Vygotsky, among the most important aspects in educational and child psychology is creativity and its importance in the development and maturity of children. Through play, we can recognize the creative process in children at a very initial stage. Play is not just a reapplication of what they experienced, but it is also the outcome of their creativity and imagination. Children integrate the elements and adopt them to form their own new facts of existence to fulfill their wish and requirements. Children's drawings and Stories are basically their wish represented by imagination during the play.

Despite all the benefits, parents find it hard to acknowledge the benefit of messy play and only look at it as undervalued play and in fact prefer some equipment based protocols in home programs. The results of the above study suggest that there is something about messy play which makes it the lesser valued or least preferred among parents due to the "mess" it creates or the extra amount of caution required for this type of play.

The obvious limitation of the following study was the small sample size, so the results concluded cannot be generalized this study however it does gives us a reason to dig deep in understanding the aspects of this type of play, owing to it so much benefit and available so easily and economically a very good option for parents to do it still perceived as "useless" or creating "mess".

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