



Playgroup: Building the Foundation

Promoting Social-Emotional Growth, Parent Competence, and Participation through Early Childhood Playgroups



Abstract

OBJECTIVE: The purpose of this study is to determine the efficacy and feasibility of implementing playgroups as part of comprehensive early intervention services for children and their families.

METHODS: Understanding the importance of parent competence on child social emotional growth and participation, this study examined the outcomes of an eight-week playgroup for families and their young children enrolled in early intervention. Pre and post parent and child participant outcome measures as well as both parent and playgroup provider feedback determined preliminary efficacy and feasibility.

RESULTS: Results indicate statistically significant improvements in parent sense of competence and parent child interaction (affection and responsiveness). Parents reported that playgroups were beneficial in providing developmentally appropriate engagement and social interaction opportunities for their children. Additionally, providers described increased participation during play activities, and reported increased opportunities to encourage parent-child interaction. These results suggest that playgroups should be implemented by an early intervention team as part of comprehensive family services to improve parent and child outcomes.

Background

Literature: Play is the primary occupation of children, directly impacting their social, emotional, and physical development. Participation in play activities in early childhood supports future participation, health, and wellness throughout the lifetime². Participation in playgroup can facilitate both parent-child and peer-to-peer interaction³. Using a community based model for playgroup intervention provides inclusive services to all children and families, creating a support system for families receiving services and those at risk¹. One study using a transdisciplinary approach to playgroups demonstrated that children enrolled in early intervention playgroups increased playfulness, participation and parent sense of competence⁴.

Problem: There is limited evidence and support regarding the feasibility of community based playgroups as part of early intervention services.

Purpose: This study aims to target the efficacy and feasibility of implementing community based playgroups as part of early intervention services in southwest Florida. Parent and provider feedback was used to highlight strengths as well as uncover barriers of the program.

Methods



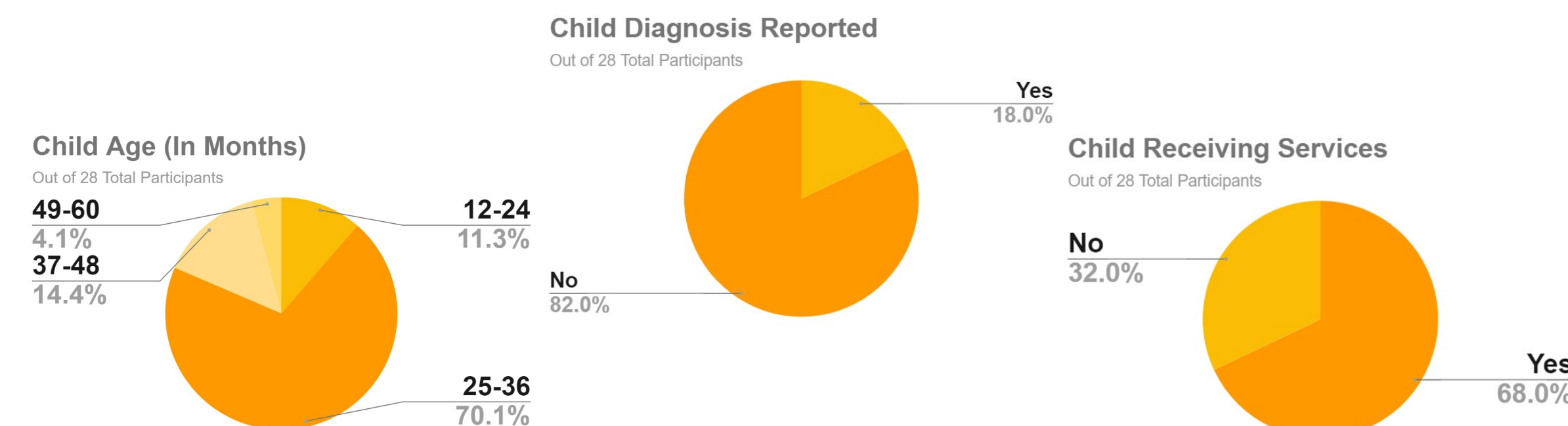
Variable	Measure	Description
Parent Competence	Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC)	Self-report consisting of 17 questions answered on a 6 point Likert scale.
Child Social-Emotional Growth	Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA)	Assessment of 27 protective factors related to resilience (initiative, self-control, and attachment) and a 10 item screen for behavioral concerns.
Parent-Child Interaction	Parenting Interactions with Children: Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes (PICCOLO)	The PICCOLO measurement tool contains subscales that measure the domains of affection, responsiveness, encouragement, and teaching. Parent and children were recorded during 10 minute play sessions. Two raters were used to analyze the video and scores were averaged.
Child Participation	Young Children's Participation and Environment Measure (YC-PEM)	Parent-completed measure that looks at the different activities of children aged 0-5 years by evaluating the level of participation and qualities of the environment in which these activities take place.
Parent/ Provider Feedback	Qualitative Questionnaire	Parents and providers completed a feedback form describing their preferred activities, challenges, strengths and adaptations required for playgroups.

References

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- Fabrizi, S., & Hubbell, K. (2017). The role of occupational therapy in promoting playfulness, parent competence, and social participation in early childhood playgroups: A pretest posttest design. *Journal of Occupational Therapy, Schools & Early Intervention*, 10(4), 346-365. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19411243.2017.1359133>

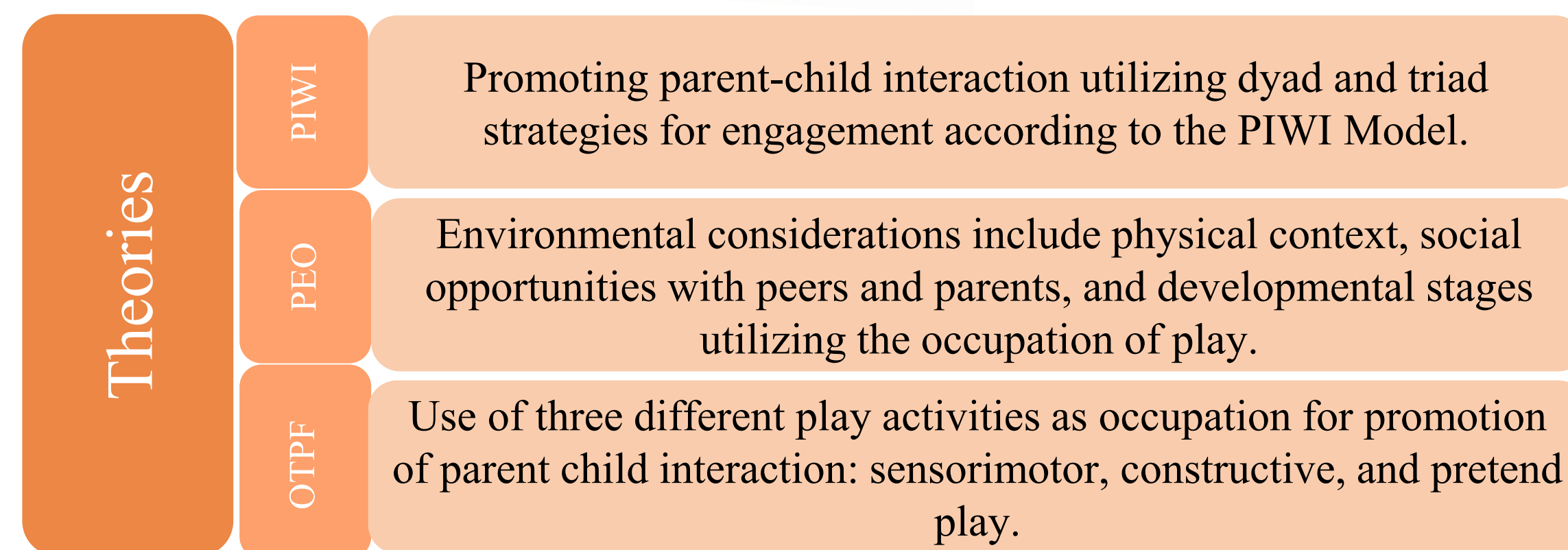
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Participants



Diagnoses reported by playgroups participants include: autism spectrum disorder, developmental delay, anxiety, sensory integration disorder, and Goldenhar Syndrome.

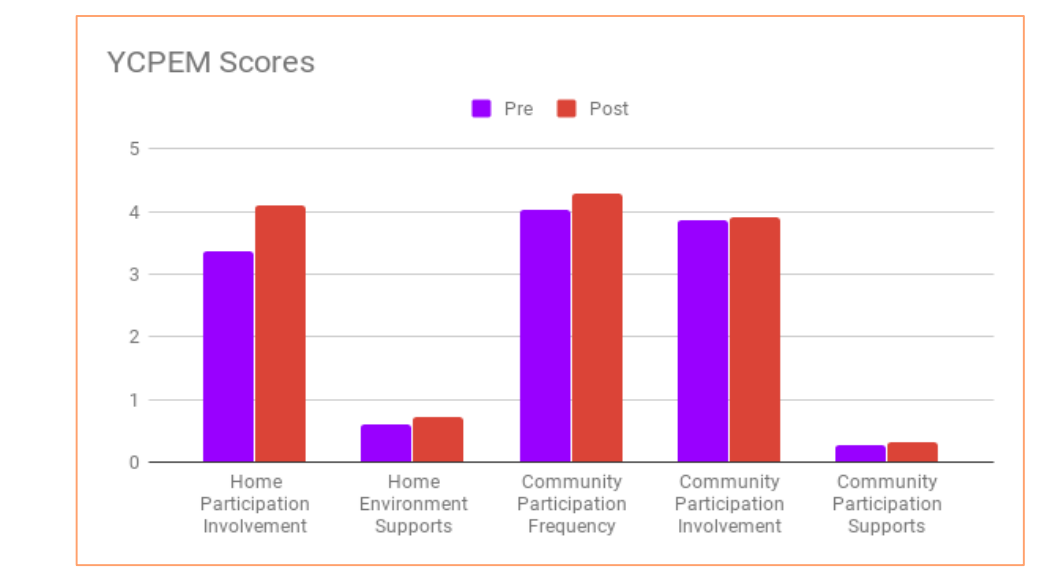
Intervention



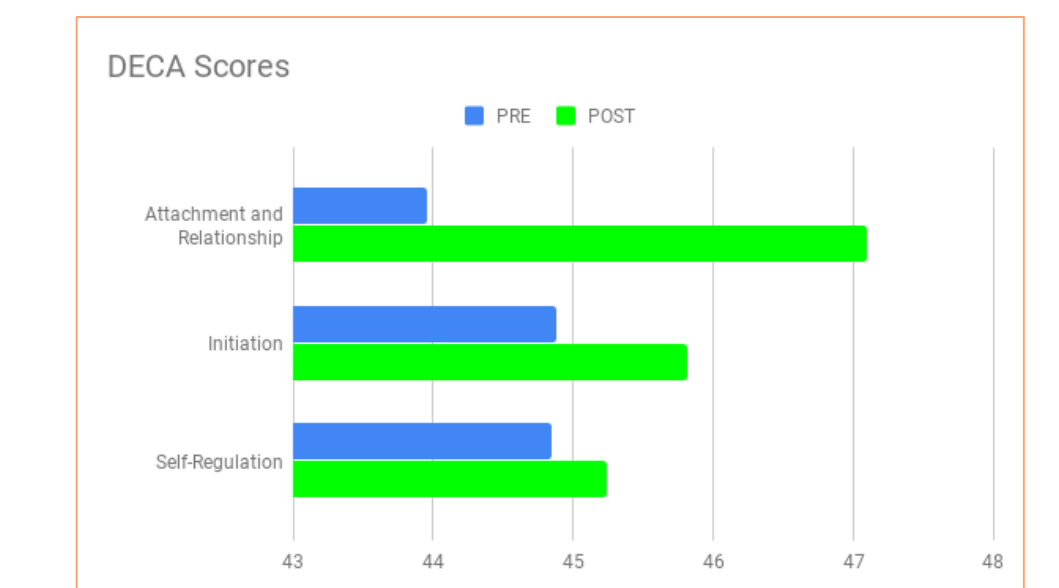
- The Occupational Therapy Student research team utilized the the Parents Interacting With Infants Model (PIWI), Person Environment Occupation Performance (PEO) Model, and the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework to guide intervention.
- Specific methods were embedded in the structure of playgroup to achieve the key outcomes of parent competence, parent-child interaction, child social-emotional growth, and participation.
- The playgroup leadership team met biweekly for ongoing collaboration and consisted of a EI/EC director, a speech language pathologist, an occupational therapist, an infant-toddler developmental specialist, and a mental health counselor.

Results

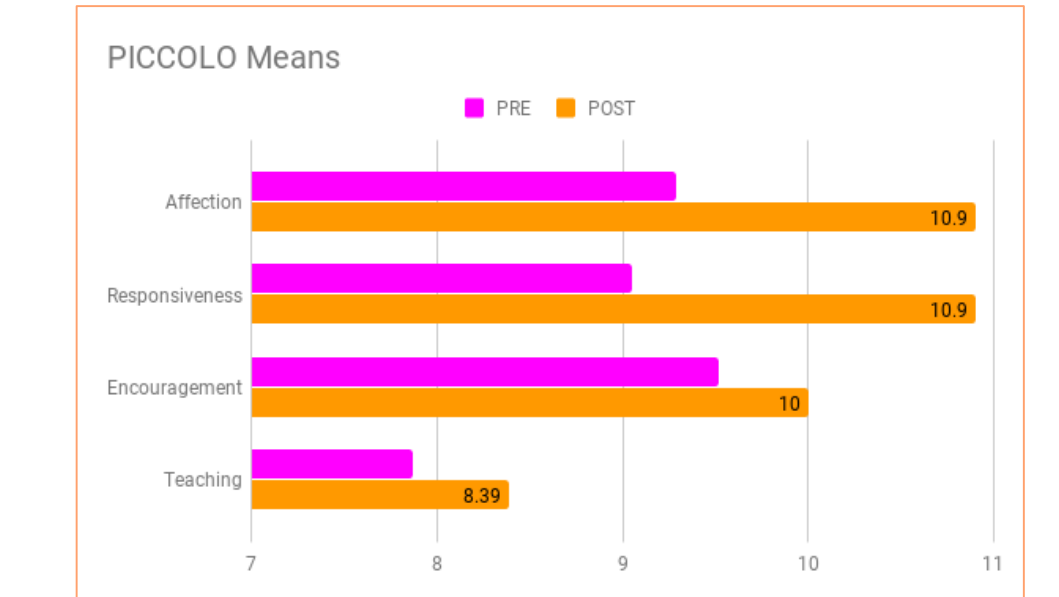
YCPEM: Increases in mean score was seen for Home Participation Involvement (3.36 PRE; 4.09 POST) and Home Environment Supports (0.60 PRE; 0.71 POST). For Community Participation there was an increase in means for Frequency (4.03 PRE; 4.29 POST), community involvement (3.87 PRE; 3.92 POST), and community participation supports (0.27 PRE; 0.31 POST).



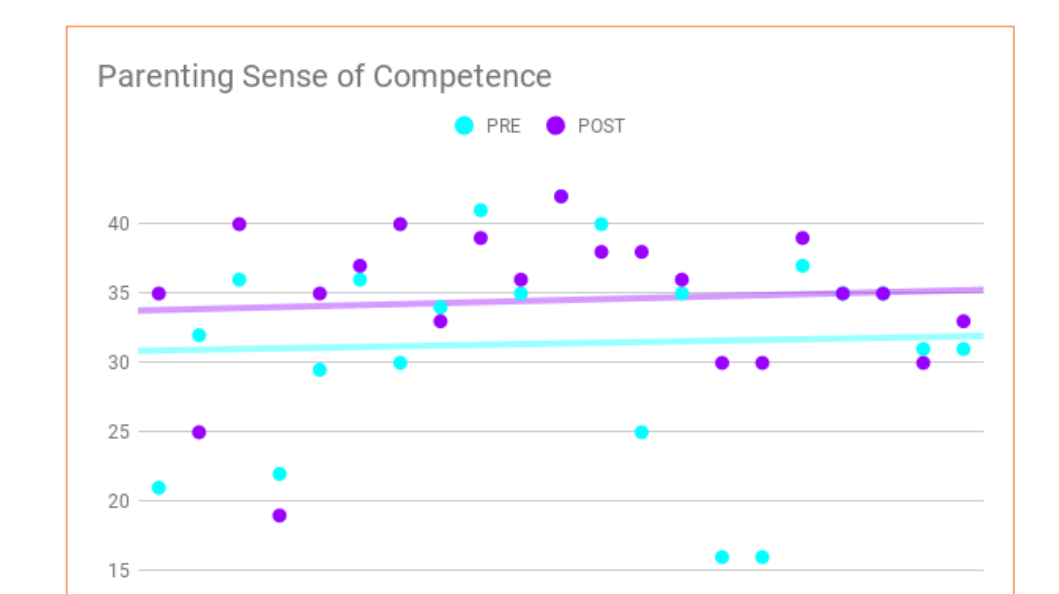
DECA: There was an increase in means for Attachment and Relationship(43.96 PRE; 47.10 POST),Initiation (44.88 PRE; 45.81 POST) and Self-Regulation (44.84 PRE; 45.24 POST)



PICCOLO: There was significant increase in affection pre/post ($t(21)=-2.63, p=.016$) and responsiveness pre/post ($t(21)=-3.37, p=.003$) during a paired samples t-test. Increase in means in encouragement (9.52 PRE; 10 POST) and teaching (7.87 PRE; 8.39 POST)

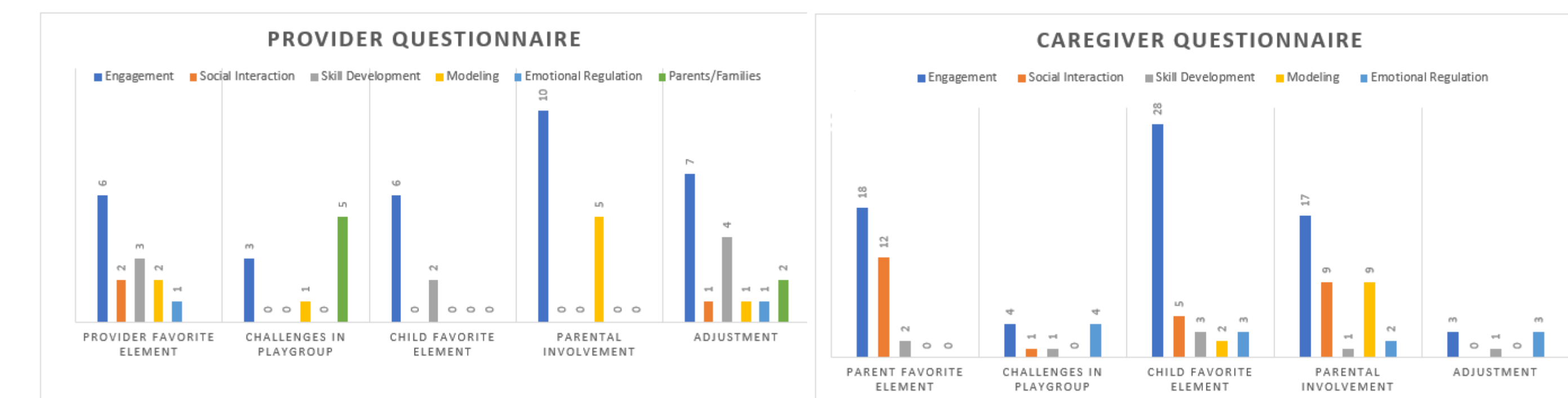


PSOC: There was a significant increase in parenting sense of competence: ($t(21)=-2.29, p=.033$) during a paired samples t-test.



- Provider Feedback Questionnaire:**
- Valued engagement and skill development
 - Engagement was a challenge at times
 - Adjusted activities to find just right challenge
 - “Story was too long for all children too long for all children to engage, so having them turn pages and bringing the picture book closer to them to look and point helped” - Provider

- Parent Feedback Questionnaire:**
- Loved activities
 - Enjoyed peer interaction
 - Emotional regulation was a challenge
 - “My favorite part of the playgroup is the interaction with the other children. I also loved the information I received from the leaders” -Parent



Discussion

- Our results indicate that implementation of playgroups as part of an early intervention may improve parent sense of competence and parent child interaction, while increasing child's social emotional growth and participation.
- Strengths of a PIWI playgroup model for parents and providers were developmentally appropriate activities, developing emotional regulation and promoting peer and parent engagement. Challenges included attendance, engagement and emotional regulation.
- To make this study feasible, the following parameters had to be considered: collaboration with community programs, providers and locations, working as a transdisciplinary team, recruitment of families, execution of procedures, and collection of measurements.
- A continuation of research regarding the implementation of playgroups is needed to further provide evidence suggesting beneficial outcomes for parent sense of competence, social-emotional growth, and participation.