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 and 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.

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, future health, and wellness throughout the lifetime. Participation in playgroup can facilitate both parent-child and peer-to-peer interaction. 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 risk. One study using a transdisciplinary approach to playgroups demonstrated that children enrolled in early intervention playgroups increased playfulness, participation and parent sense of competence.

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

Parent Feedback Questionnaire: Valued engagement and skill development Engaged in 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 Parent

Provider Feedback Questionnaire:

1. Value engagement and skill development 2. Enjoyed peer interaction 3. Emotional regulation was a challenge 4. My favorite part of the playgroup is the interaction with the other children. I also loved the information I received from the leaders Parent

Variables  | Measure  | Description
---|---|---
Parent Competence  | Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC)  | Self-assessment of 17 questions answered on a 6 point Likert scale.
Child Social-Emotional Growth  | Decresen 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.
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 perceived professional activities, challenges, strengths and adaptations required for playgroups.

References

1. Kailey Barber OTS, Bethany Bell OTS, Abigail Bizub OTS, Kristen Bowen OTS, Celia Burke OTS, Emily Holcomb OTS, Sarah Fabrizi PhD, OTP/L.
5. Kailey Barber, OTS, Bethany Bell, OTS, Abigail Bizub, OTS, Kristen Bowen, OTS, Celia Burke, OTS, Emily Holcomb, OTS, Sarah Fabrizi, PhD, OTP/L.

Results

Participants

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

Intervention

Parent discussion of promoting child development and interaction in daily life

Modeling of parent for child’s participation in creative play opportunities

Facilitated environment for parent to engage child in sensory exploration

Opportunity for parent to provide scaffolded learning opportunities through play

Welcoming child and parent to playgroups and introducing the developmental topic while promoting sense of community and dyad interactions

Setting the stage for parent and peer interaction through therapeutic support of providers

Theories

Environmental considerations include physical context, social opportunities with peers and parents, and developmental stages utilizing the occupation of play

Use of three different play activities as occupation for promotion of parent-child interaction: sensorimotor, constructive, and pretend play

Therapy

Promoting parent-child interaction utilizing dyad and triad strategies for engagement according to the PIWI Model.

Discussion

Our results indicate that implementation of playgroups as part of 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.