

ATYPICAL SYMBOLIC PLAY DEVELOPMENT: A PREDICTOR OF AUTISM IN CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Symbolic play is an important predictor of cognitive and language development in the second year of life. Symbolic play is uniquely affected in children with autism. The children with autism significantly exhibit decreased frequency, complexity and novelty of spontaneous symbolic play behavior. Various hypothetical approaches in view of executive functioning, social learning interpretation and general cognitive maturity, have been suggested for unusual symbolic behavior in children with autism. An inter subjective development in symbolic play also suggests the participation of meat, that are the presentations and the attributes of joint attention in symbolic play in this special population. However, further research is required to investigate these constructs, due to the broad spectrum of play behavior in children with autism. Symbolic play is a significant diagnostic tool of diagnosis of autism in children, as its development is reported to be affected in the majority of children with autism. Despite of various causal factors, motivational training in symbolic play behavior has shown significant results, in promoting desirable behavior in children with autism.

Play is an important component in every child's life. A child starts his playful activities very early in infancy stage, before the development of language. Children's symbolic play represents paralinguistic skills that form a basis and support for subsequent language development. Along with prediction of language development, it signals the development of representational thoughts, which greatly increases the flexibility of the child's mental processes. During the 2nd year of life, children's play normatively moves from being explored, and object oriented to being symbolic, and pretense oriented. During the fifth or sixth sensor motor period, children's initial interactions with objects are exploratory in nature, and their schemas characterize objects (e.g., A ball), as something simply, to be physically manipulated (Piaget, 1962). However, as children begin to engage in symbolic play, they use familiar objects in new ways, for example, by pretending that a ball is an orange that they are eating.

Autism is a disorder that affects development of reciprocal social relations, communicative ability and appropriate use of objects, beginning in the first three years of life. The symbolic play of children, with Autistic Spectrum disorder has been described as simple, repetitive and stereotypical. It also has been found that, children with Autism spend less time playing functionally, than typical children. The way they play also shows less variation and repetitive use of objects. It also lacks much of the complexity and diversity that characterize the play of typical children. According to Lord et al (2000), symbolic play deficits are so widely, recognized in autism that a failure to use toys, symbolically is an item on many diagnostic systems for Autism. Many researchers have reported a relationship between language and symbolic play, in children with autism. The results of empirical studies have shown that, while only receptive language was related to play ability in normal and cognitively impaired children, both receptive and expressive language were related to the play of children, with autism.

KEYWORDS: Children, Symbolic Play Behavior, Hypothetical Approaches