The Effects of Peer Play Intervention on a Child with ASD and Generalization of Social Skills to Interactions with his Family: A Mother’s Perspective

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Methods Discussion

Background

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a pervasive developmental disorder in which children exhibit severe deficits in language, cognition, and social development. Impairments in social interaction affect child’s ability to: use nonverbal language, spontaneously share, develop social & emotional reciprocity, & develop peer relationships.

Social communication challenges in this population also affect family members and family functioning (Gottlieb, 1988). Peer mediation supports social skills in children with ASD; however, research needs to address maintenance and generalization of these skills (Kohler, et al., 1997; Krantz, 2000; McEvoy & Odom, 1987).

Purpose

To examine a mother’s perspective of her child with ASD’s ability to generalize the social skills learned through peer play intervention to his interactions with his younger sibling and overall family interactions following the intervention.

Results

Social Skills Subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Score and Confidence Interval</th>
<th>01234567</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Intervention</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-Intervention</td>
<td>75</td>
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</table>

Problem Behavior Subscale

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Standard Score and Confidence Interval</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Intervention</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Intervention</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Points in time

INTERVIEWS

Peer Interactions:

• Mother reports child is much more willing to be a player and a participant, wants & tries to initiate more, and participates in more pretend play.

Problem Behaviors:

• Mother reports child participates in the social rituals of dinner with the family, such as describing his day; helps get the meal ready by setting the table; & cleans up after dinner.

Self Confidence:

• Mother reports even though child is not always confident in social situations, his “safety net appears to be expanding.”

Discussion

Results indicate that the child with ASD began to engage in more socially appropriate interactions with his typically developing younger sibling and that overall family interactions improved.

Considering the short period between the first and second administration of the SSRS (i.e., 3 months), this child made notable improvements in both social skills and problem behaviors.

Home-based peer intervention led to more generalized use of social skills across social partners in the home including a younger sibling and other family members.

Pre to post-intervention, the mother reported her son demonstrated an increase in positive social interactions with his siblings and peers, less problem behaviors and greater overall self-confidence in social exchanges.

When peers are used to teach social skills to children with ASD, generalization of social skills to untrained settings and peers is more likely to occur (Rogers, 2000). This was true for this child with ASD who participated in intervention where a peer was used to teach social skills.

Limitations & Need for Further Research

• Single subject case study cannot be generalized to other children with ASD=>need for increased sample size
• Only maternal insights obtained=>need insights of generalization of social skills from other family members
• Results based on perception data=>need for videotape analysis of child’s interacting with younger sibling
• SSRS obtained at only 2 points in time=>need to administer SSRS at 8 month follow-up to determine if social skills continued to increase and problem behaviors continued to decrease

Additional thanks to the mother as this study was a result of her willingness to participate.