




The Effect of Play Therapy on Sensory Processing and Distress Tolerance in Adolescents with Mild Intellectual Disabilities




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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the introduction, the sentence, "Given the profound impact of these difficulties on daily functioning and psychological well-being, effective interventions are required to enhance both sensory processing and distress tolerance in this population," lacks a specific reference to prior studies that justify why play therapy is particularly effective compared to other interventions. Including a comparative framework with other interventions, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy or occupational therapy, would strengthen the rationale.

The control group received no intervention. While this is a standard design, the study would be more rigorous if an alternative intervention (e.g., unstructured play) was used. The statement, "The control group did not receive any specific intervention but continued their routine activities," should include a justification for why this design was chosen over an active control group.

The Distress Tolerance Scale (DTS) is an appropriate tool; however, the statement, "The DTS has been widely used in clinical and research settings," should be followed by references to studies that have used it specifically in populations with intellectual disabilities to confirm its validity in this context.

The ANOVA results indicate that the interaction effect between group and time was not significant ($p = 0.123$). The phrase, "while improvements were observed, they were not significantly different between the intervention and control groups," should discuss possible reasons for this, such as the control group's natural developmental improvements.

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 are clearly presented. However, to improve clarity, the caption should explicitly state that the values represent means and standard deviations and that all differences were tested for statistical significance.

The sentence, "The Bonferroni post-hoc test confirmed significant pairwise differences between baseline and subsequent assessments," should include the adjusted p-values to indicate the strength of these differences.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The literature review presents relevant findings but does not sufficiently emphasize the research gap. The phrase, "Play therapy provides a structured yet flexible framework for engaging adolescents in activities that stimulate sensory processing while simultaneously promoting emotional resilience," could be followed by a discussion on why previous studies have not sufficiently addressed this gap in adolescents with mild intellectual disabilities.

The study includes 30 adolescents, which is a small sample size for an RCT. The sentence, "Participants were recruited from specialized educational and therapeutic centers and were randomly assigned to either the intervention group (play therapy) or the control group," should include details on how randomization was ensured (e.g., block randomization, stratification) to improve reproducibility.

The intervention protocol is well-structured, but the sentence, "Sensory-friendly materials such as textured objects, scented playdough, and soft fabrics are used to introduce sensory exploration in a non-threatening manner," would benefit from further details on how these materials were selected and whether they were customized based on individual sensory profiles.

The study utilizes the Sensory Profile Adolescent/Adult (SP-A/A). The phrase, "The SP-A/A has demonstrated strong psychometric properties," should be followed by numerical values (e.g., reliability coefficients) from previous validation studies to support its reliability in adolescents with intellectual disabilities.

The results section presents statistical significance well, but the phrase, "The results indicated a significant main effect of time for both sensory processing and distress tolerance," should be supplemented with effect sizes (e.g., partial eta squared) to indicate the magnitude of the effect.

The study reports that normality and homogeneity of variance assumptions were tested. The sentence, "The Shapiro-Wilk test for normality indicated that both sensory processing scores ($W = 0.974$, $p = 0.356$) and distress tolerance scores ($W = 0.968$, $p = 0.275$) were normally distributed," is good, but additional details on whether data transformations were considered in case of violations should be included.

The discussion does not sufficiently integrate findings with theoretical models of sensory processing and distress tolerance. The sentence, "These findings suggest that play-based interventions can be a valuable therapeutic approach," should relate these improvements to specific models, such as Dunn's Model of Sensory Processing.

The study attributes improvements to play therapy, but the sentence, "The observed improvements in distress tolerance observed in this study are in line with previous research," should discuss alternative explanations such as maturation effects or external environmental changes.

The five-month follow-up results are promising, but the statement, "The Bonferroni post-hoc test further confirmed that these improvements were sustained," would benefit from a discussion on whether retention effects may diminish over time and whether booster sessions might be needed.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.