

“Cross-cultural and cross-generational perceptions of play: supporting evidence-based practice in culturally diverse communities”

Kate Bullen (Aberystwyth University) & Gabi Jerzembek (Swansea University)

The main aim of the research was to specify how the perception of children’s play differs across cultures and generations. The participants were 181 individuals from Arabic, Somali, Bengali, Asian and White British backgrounds. The researchers used mixed research methods - using both qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires.

Benefits of Play and Early Years provision

Early years education and care provision supports higher levels of cognitive and language development, as well as better emotional functioning. Pretend play (ages 2-3) is a tool for expressing emotions and building a connection between thought and feeling, thereby supporting emotional development. Play promotes physical, emotional, cognitive and social development as well as perception, attention, memory, problem solving skill and general communication skills.

Cultural differences

Childrearing goals and beliefs vary across cultures. Responses to standard assessment tools differed across different Ethnic groups. Research suggests BME parent-child relationships are poorer when compared to dominant culture. Immigrant families’ children were considered to show “deficient play patterns” compared to indigenous children.

Key findings:

- The majority reported they are playing daily/sometime during the day rather than “all the time” with their children.
- “Emotional means of showing affect”, such as hugs and cuddles was found to be more important to the White British group
- Factors that predict parental involvement (frequency and level of participation) in children’s play differed between Ethnic groups

Predicting parent’s involvement in play

- **BME group:** considered stricter parenting being of more advantage to the child and had parenting goals of respect and trouble avoidance.
- **WB group:** emotional bonding and learning individually were seen as important outcomes of play; and societal integration by the child was an important parental goal.