

Children with sensory seeking behaviour, challenges and use of proprioceptive/tactile stimulating vests

By Ann Natasja Nielsen, MSc in Health, Occupational Therapy. From the Faculty of Health Sciences at the National Institute of Public Health Denmark.

Introduction: This study examined challenges of primary school children with sensory integration difficulties and sensory seeking behaviour (SSB), and potential effects of systematic use of proprioceptive/tactile stimulating vests as assessed by the children's parents and teachers.

Method: Parents (n=131) and teachers (n=140) to 147 children (6-12 years) with SSB responded to surveys containing items from "The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire" (SDQ) and "Five to Fifteen" (FTF). To examine potential effects of 90 minutes systematic use of the vest during school attendance, parents (n=62) and teachers (n=49) to 67 children who used the vest for three-weeks, answered follow up surveys. Multinomial logistic regression analysis was used to examine association between amount of use of the vest and possible effects assessed on the FTF.

Results: Children exhibiting SSB were reported to have challenges that interfered with their learning (68.7%) and with them forming friendships (52.7%). 78.7% had challenges with attention/being easily distracted. After use of the vest 39% of parents found that the children had improved attention, 34% that they had better body perception and 33% that the pupils had improved regarding hyperactivity and impulsivity. Children who used the vest more than the recommended 90 minutes had a better assessed progress than children not using the vest as recommended (OR=1.44, p=0.04).

Implications for Occupational Science: Examining challenges and interventions to support children exhibiting SSB to participate in important everyday occupations such as school can provide insight to inform practice and further research.

Keywords: Sensory integration, school participation, primary school learning.