The Structured Preschool Participation Observation (SPO): Development and Validation

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Introduction. Promoting participation and occupational performance (function) among children in general and in the educational environment in particular, is a central goal of occupational therapy intervention. Due to a lack of available assessment tools, a structured observation was developed to assess children's participation and function in daily activities in the preschool setting (Structured Preschool Participation Observation; SPO). The tool is based on bio-psychosocial and ecological models, and had been adapted to the ultra-orthodox population. The purpose of the study is to describe the process of developing the SPO and present its psychometric properties.

Methods and Results. First, we selected the items for the SPO and examined its content validity. Second, we examined the psychometric measures of the initial version in a pilot study that included 98 boys attending ultra-orthodox preschools. Internal consistency was found to be moderate to high. Based on the results and
conclusions, we revised the SPO and created an updated version that included 24 activities frequently performed in the preschool, and that tap into various occupation areas: daily activities, play, learning, and social participation. The activities are evaluated in-terms of frequency of participation and performance level. Next, we tested the psychometric measures of the revised version among 105 boys from the same educational settings. Internal consistency was found to be moderate to high both with respect to the Participation and to the Performance scales, for the entire SPO and for each of the areas of occupation. In addition, inter-rater reliability was found to be moderate. Finally, we used the SPO as an outcome measure to examine the effectiveness of the intervention. Results showed that the SPO distinguished between an experimental and control groups, and between groups with different intervention durations (i.e., 1 vs. 2 years). Discussion and Summary. These findings indicate that the SPO is a reliable, valid measure and suitable for use among ultra-orthodox preschoolers. It is also sensitive to change following intervention. Yet, since it has only been tested on boys in a specific educational setting, it is recommended that research on the SPO be continued in diverse populations, and that its psychometric properties be further examined.