

Increasing Interest and Motivation for Improved Participation in Pre-writing Tasks



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SETTINGS AND BACKGROUND

Setting: Southern Littles Learning Center, Donna, Texas.

Background: Motivation and pre-writing skills are essential before advancing to more complex handwriting tasks. Lacking interest and motivation may cause handwriting difficulties as writing becomes more demanding. Handwriting is a significant occupation and developmental skill to obtain for academic success and promotion in school (Skubik-Peplaski et al., 2019). Previous reviews have shown that attitudes and self-efficacy predict writing performance and that they are related (Camacho, 2021). Due to limited research, a study examining the positive associations between interest and motivation in improving participation in pre-writing tasks is needed.

PIO QUESTION

For elementary-aged children with handwriting difficulties, what approaches are effective in increasing interest and motivation for participating in pre-writing tasks for improved handwriting skills?

SIGNIFICANCE

- The significance is to explore effective approaches that encourage children to participate in pre-writing activities actively leads to improved handwriting skills and daily activities.
- Expanding opportunities to tailor interventions based on interest, motivation, and skill level for children.
- The sessions will showcase improved participation in prewriting tasks to the educators at the learning center.
- Findings will be useful to Occupational Therapists, school/learning center staff, and caregivers working with children experiencing handwriting difficulties.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Handwriting is a foundational activity of daily living skills, and practical OT intervention approaches are essential for success in school occupational performance. Studies suggest the critical role OTs can have on students' development of literacy skills/handwriting is through our art of crafting, occupation-based, and client-centered interventions (Skubik-Peplaski et al., 2021).
- Many classroom teachers feel uncomfortable teaching handwriting as they have little to no training in handwriting instruction, let alone implementing child-focused classroom activities. When teachers collaborate and engage children during classroom activities, it exposes them to various ways to enhance fine motor skills, visual motor coordination, language, executive function, and posture. As a result, students demonstrate improved occupational performance and foundational skills (Taylor et al., 2020).
- The Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) and the developmental frame of reference provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing an individual's motivation, engagement, and skill development. The Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) stresses the significance of volition, which pertains to an individual's motivation, interests, and values (Kielhofner, 1980).

METHODS

Participants: Group of 4 (2 males/2 females) 3-5-year-old preschool children, with decreased interest and motivation in handwriting tasks, per teacher report.

Design: Mixed-method (qualitative and quantitative).

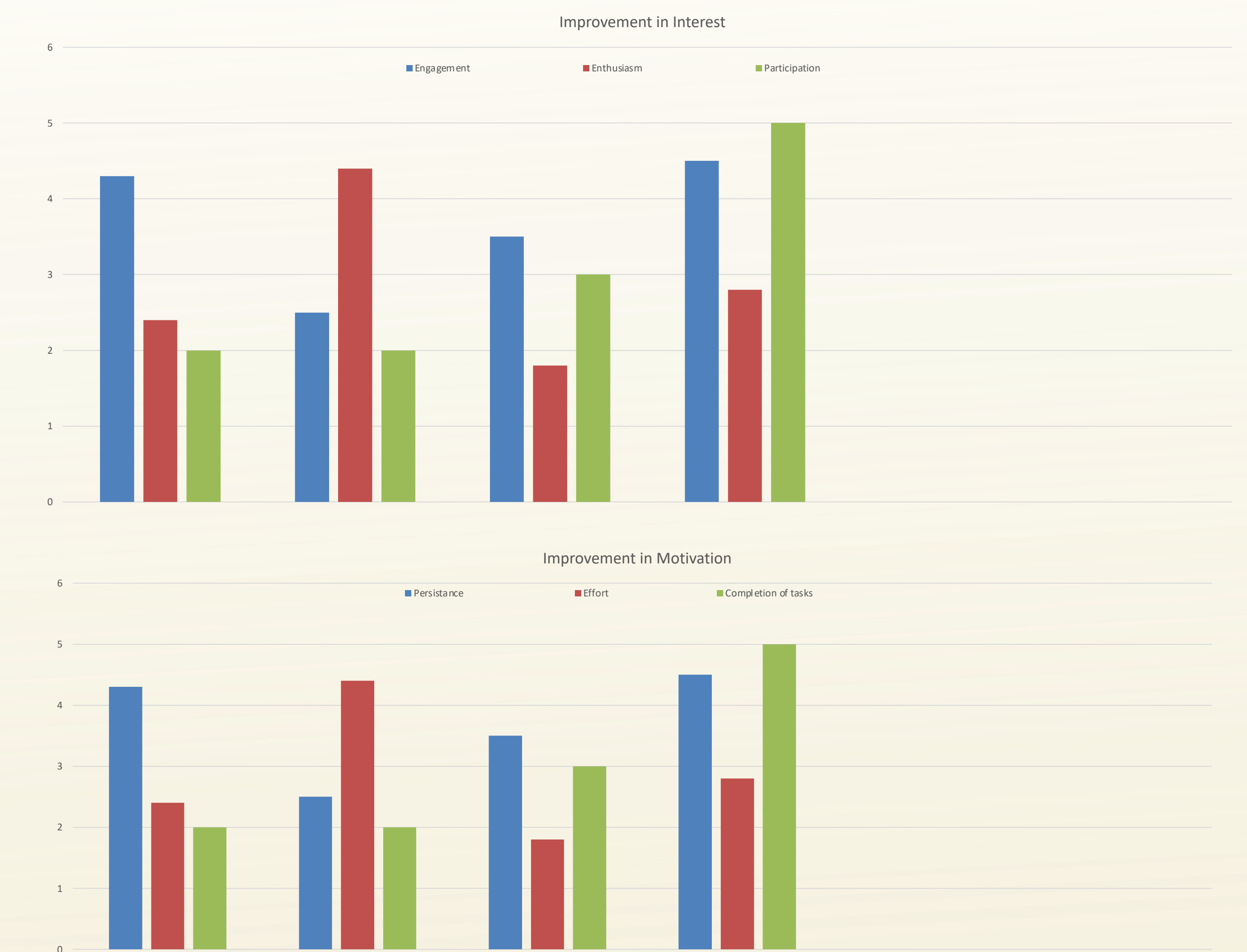
- 7 Closed-ended (two-choice selection: Happy and Sad) questionnaire investigating how the child feels about Coloring/Drawing for fun at home, during free time, during summer vacation, instead of playing, in school, during free time, and when it's time at school. Self-report questionnaires were established and modified to measure a young child's perspective.
- 5 Closed-ended (three-choice selection: Significant Improvement, Slight Improvement, and No Improvement) asking the teacher for her subjective feedback on changes in interest and motivation.
- Qualitative data from observations were analyzed by identifying common themes related to interest and motivation levels during pre-writing tasks, such as engaging in preparatory activities, such as shaving cream, playdough, kinetic sand, and various fine motor manipulatives.
- **Procedures:** The classroom teacher recommended participants based on handwriting difficulties and level of participation. Interest and motivation in pre-writing tasks were measured via pictorial self-reports by participants at the beginning of the project and after the implementation sessions.
- **Capstone sessions:** Four group sessions, 30 minutes each.

RESULTS

- 75% of participants reported **Significant** or **Slight Improvement** in interest.
- 75% of participants reported **Significant** or **Slight Improvement** in Motivation.
- 100% reported **Significant Improvement** in participation in prewriting skills.
- 25% of participants reported feeling **Happy** when engaged in coloring/drawing for fun at home, in school, or when it was time for writing at school.
- 0% of participants reported feeling **Happy** when engaged in coloring/drawing during free time, vacation, instead of playing.
- 100% of participants reported feeling **Sad** about spending free time coloring/drawing.
- Qualitative results from teacher self-reports suggest that the capstone project sessions positively influenced participants' writing motivation and interest.

LIMITATIONS

- Small sample size
- Scales in the capstone project only measured whether motivation and interest levels increased rather than why they would increase.
- Participant absences.



SUMMARY

The capstone project results suggest that using necessary tools and strategies significantly increases the level of interest and motivation among preschool children to engage in pre-writing tasks. Various methodologies are currently being explored to help enhance interest and motivation. The capstone project focused on identifying effective approaches that encouraged participants to actively participate in pre-writing activities, ultimately leading to improved handwriting and daily living skills. The insights and findings gathered from this capstone project may be of immense value to therapists, school/learning center staff, and caregivers who work with children experiencing decreased interest and motivation in handwriting tasks. By understanding the participant's level of interest and motivation, educators and occupational therapists can design tailored pre-writing activities that foster engagement and enhance the learning experience. Pre-writing skills are foundational before advancing to handwriting tasks, and a lack of interest and motivation may cause handwriting difficulties as writing becomes more demanding.

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