CHAPTER V
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In sum, there are different trends in the play preferences and patterns of children with mental retardation. The absence of social play, poor understanding of rules and regulations, absence of symbolic or representational play are some of the differentiating highlights between normal children and the children with mental disabilities. Irrespective of gender, age or severity of their condition, their range of play peers varies from same age peers to younger age peers, senior citizens, pets and adults. There is also a sizeable population of children with mental retardation reported to be without playmates or left to play alone. This hints at the need to structure or supervise their play activities at home as well as in their school settings.

The following points are some of the highlights in the present study:

(i) Children of all ages irrespective of their being normal and/or mentally retarded indulge in one or the other types of play; ($x^2$: 168.43; $P < 0.001$; S)

(ii) Children with mental retardation having associated problems are found to have less play than those kids without them; ($x^2$: 116.253; $P < 0.001$; S)
(iii) Children with mental retardation as well as normal kids attending school are reported to have significantly more plays than those not attending any school ($x^2: 71.373; P: < 0.001$);

(iv) There is statistically significant difference between children with mental retardation and normal controls in their preference for use of toys. ($x^2: 150.128; P: < 0.001$)

(v) Children with problem behaviours are found to spend greater time watching television as compared to their peers without them. They are also found to be spending less time on attending therapy classes as compared to their peers without problem behaviours. ($p: < 0.03$)

(vi) Mentally retarded children without problem behaviours are found to occupy themselves for more time on some ‘other’ activities. (Mean: 131.6; SD: 22.7)

(vii) There are significant differences between male and female children with mental retardation with respect to their time spent on watching television and ablution activities. Girls with mental retardation spend more time on watching television than boys with mental retardation during a typical 24-hour cycle of a day. Likewise, girls with mental retardation appear to spend more time on washing and ablution
activities than boys with mental retardation during a typical 24-hour cycle of a day (Mean: 83.4; SD: 23.3).

(viii) Younger children in the age group of 3-6 years spend more time in bed than children in the older age group of 10-12 years and those between 7-9 years respectively. Older children with mental retardation in the age group of 10-12 years spend more time on feeding activities than children between 7-9 years and 3-6 years. Probably, increasing ages make them to dawdle more at their eating plates than when they are young and fed by others. (F: 5.375; p: < 0.006)

(ix) There are more children with mental retardation who go to school at the older age groups. Children in age group of 10-12 years spend the maximum time at school (Mean: 339; SD: 30.9) as compared to lesser time spent by children between 7-9 years and children between 3-6 years (Mean: 334.39; SD: 39.8). The younger age groups of children between 3-6 years spend more time in attending special therapies (Mean: 55.0; SD: 42.3) than their older peers in the age group of 7-9 years (Mean: 21.5; SD: 27.9) and those in the age group of 10-12 years (Mean: 11.0; SD: 21.5) respectively. The older children in age group of 10-12 years (Mean: 23.9; SD: 31.7) spend more time on other activities than children in the age group of 7-9 (Mean: 11.7; SD: 21.0) years and those in the age group of 3-6 years (Mean: 5.9; SD: 19.9) respectively.
(x) There is greater amount of time spent on home teaching for children with mild mental retardation than children with moderate mental retardation. (t: 2.848; df: 138; p: <0.01)

(xi) Children from nuclear families spend significantly more time at school every day than their counterparts from non-nuclear family backgrounds. Probably, parents from nuclear family backgrounds find it more convenient to send their kids away to school than caregivers of children with mental retardation from non-nuclear family backgrounds. (t: 1.578; df: 138; p: > 0.117)

(xii) Children with mental retardation from low SES (Mean: 100.7; SD: 55.0) spend, on average, more time in front of the television than children from middle SES (Mean: 73.9; SD: 44.6) and high SES (Mean: 75.3; SD: 43.3) respectively. Similarly, there are significant differences on the time spent by the mentally retarded children attending special therapy classes over a day for different groups of SES. The children from high SES (Mean: 39.2; SD: 42.6) appear to spend more time on special therapy classes than children from middle SES (Mean: 26.9; SD: 38.7) and those from low SES groups (Mean: 14.6; SD: 22.3) respectively (F: 3.459; P: 0.034). Obviously, affordability of these services might be possible reason for these differences between the three groups of children.
(xiii) College educated mothers take their children with mental retardation and spend more time at special therapy classes than school educated mothers. \( (t: 2.746; \text{df: } 138; p: <0.007) \)

(xiv) The children within higher age groups of mental retardation appear to have greater variety of play behaviours than the children in lower age groups. \( (X^2; 157.77; p :< 0.001; \text{HS}) \)

(xv) There are observed differences in the form, content and patterns of play behaviour in these children. The children with mild mental retardation appear to have a better variety of play behaviours as compared to the children with moderate mental retardation. \( (X^2; 204.20; p :< 0.001; \text{HS}) \). The socio-demographic variables appear to be a significant factor in influencing the form and content of patterns of play behaviour in children with mental retardation. \( (X^2; 506.45; p :< 0.001; \text{HS}) \).

In relation to family variable, there is a difference between play behaviours of children hailing from nuclear and non nuclear families. The difference is apparently more in terms of sensory, solitary and non-rule based play behaviours than the prevalence of rule-based group activities as seen in the two types of families. \( (X^2; 90.79; p :< 0.001; \text{HS}) \).

(xvi) Parent education and age also appears to be a significant variable in influencing the form and content of patterns of play behaviour in
children with mental retardation. In relation to parent education (especially mother education) there is a significant difference between play behaviours of children of school educated mothers and college educated mothers. ($X^2; 7.077; p < 0.005; S$).

(xvii) The presence or absence of problem behaviours in children with mental retardation appears to be a significant variable in influencing the form, content and patterns of their play behaviour. The mentally retarded children with behaviour problems show lesser variety of play behaviours in comparison with their peers without them. ($X^2; 196.69; p < 0.001; HS$)

(xviii) There are a variety of play peers during play as reported to be available for children with mental retardation. The range of playmates varies from same aged peers, younger peers and others to older peers and the elderly persons. There are also instances where these children are left to play with pets or all alone by themselves. ($X^2; 6.716; p < 0.05; S$). Age, SES($X^2; 11.611; p < 0.01; S$) and type of family ($X^2; 6.488; p > 0.01; HS$) appear to be a significant variable the choice of playmates. It is generally seen that there are increasing number of toys used by older children than their younger age peers($X^2; 056.203; p < 0.01; HS$). The children with mild mental retardation appear to make greater use of toys than children with moderate mental retardation($X^2; 8.237; p < 0.04; HS$).
Mothers with college education appear to show predilection to influence use of a variety of toys in their children as compared to parents with school education\( (X^2; 4.983; p:<0.026; HS) \). Children of middle aged mothers between 30-39 years appear to show greater use of a variety of toys as against younger mothers below 29 years and older mothers above 40 years\( (X^2; 179.51; p:<0.01; HS) \).

**UTILITY OF THE STUDY:**

This investigation has succeeded in throwing light on:

1. The patterns of existing play behaviors and activities in mild to moderate grades of children with mental retardation.

2. It has enabled the development of psychometrically reliable and valid tools for measurement of play behaviors and activities in children with mental retardation.

3. The developed tool could become a useful planner for enabling play based therapy for children with mental retardation in school or home settings.