

Perspectives of children with developmental disabilities on experiences that support engagement in rehabilitation therapy;

A systematic narrative review

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Background and Rationale

- **Engagement:** A multifaceted state/process of involvement, commitment, and investment^{7, 11}
- **Developmental disabilities (DD):** A group of conditions that affect youth, due to impairments in motor, cognitive, language, learning, behaviour, and/or sensory functioning⁶
- Engagement is crucial for optimal outcomes in rehabilitation services, contributing to client enjoyment, motivation and determination¹⁰
 - Associated with sustained effort and improved rehabilitation outcomes^{7, 11}

Purpose

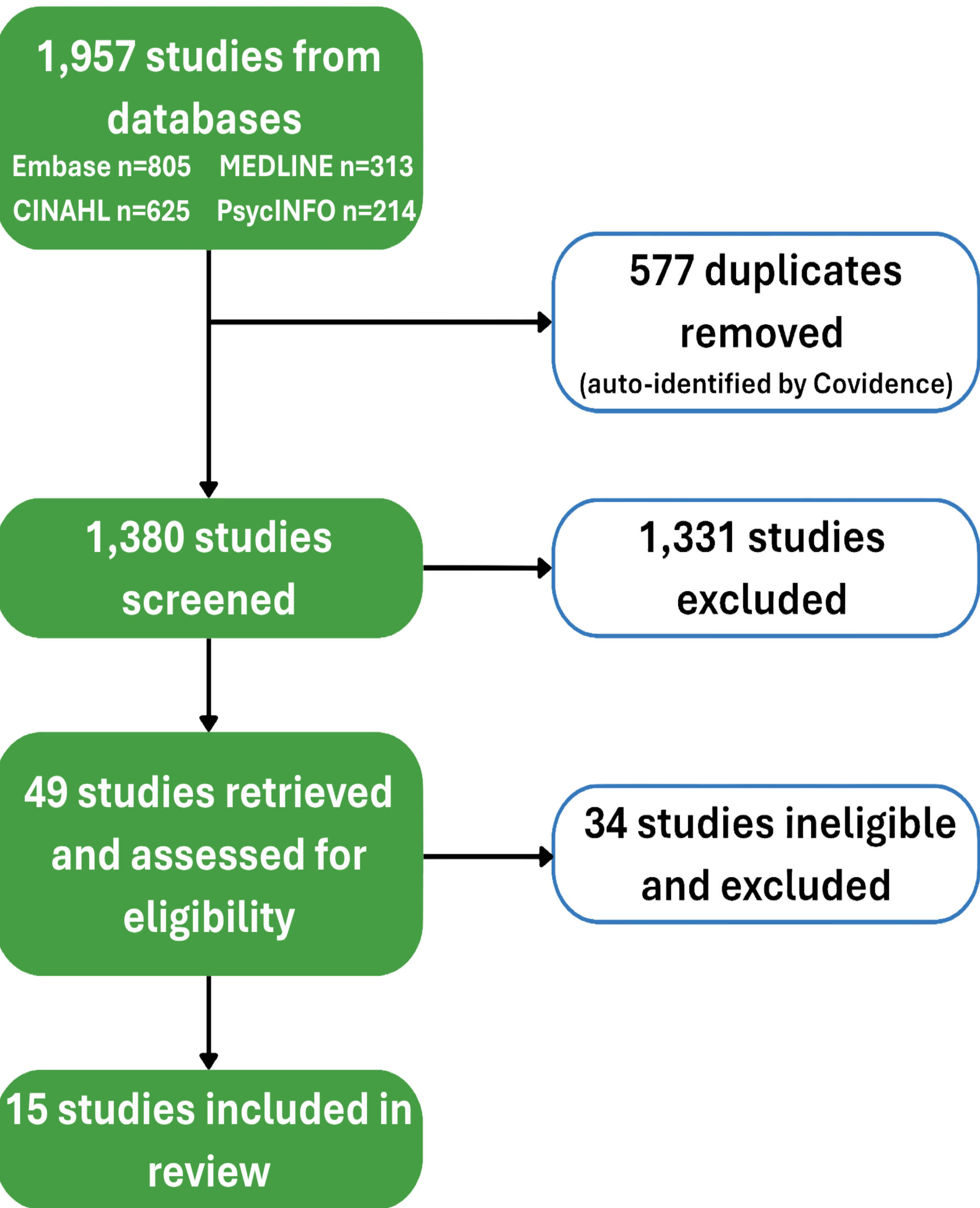
To focus solely on the perspectives of children across a diverse range of therapeutic services regarding their experiences of engagement

Research Question

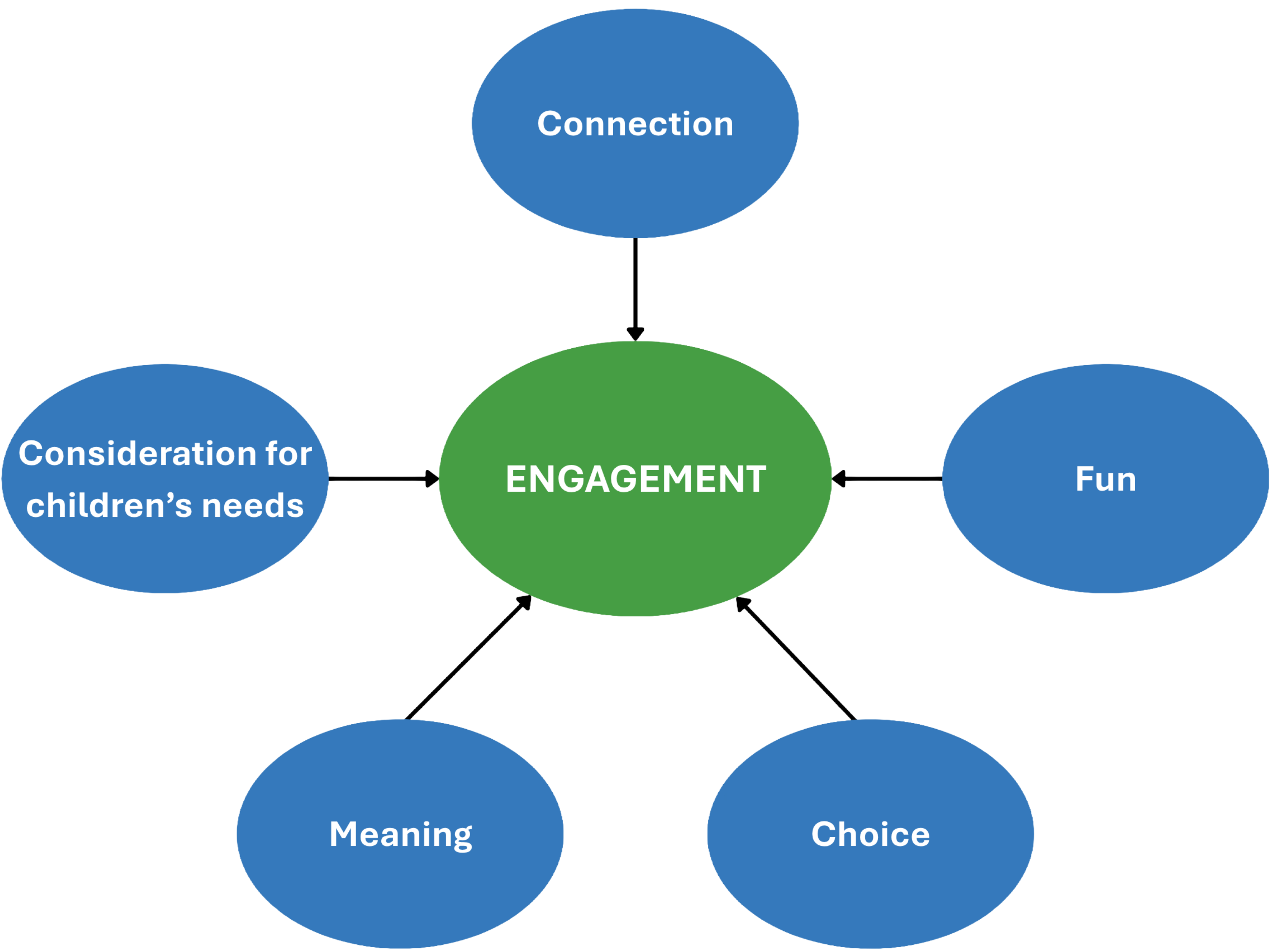
What experiences do children with developmental disabilities describe as supporting their engagement in rehabilitation therapy?

Methods and Data Analysis

- **Methodology:** Systematic narrative review²⁰
- **Data Analysis:** Thomas & Harden's thematic analysis¹⁹



Children with developmental disabilities believed that **connection, fun, meaning and choice** promoted engagement... However, **a lack of consideration for the children's needs** was disengaging!



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References



Results

Included Articles:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| [1] Andersen & Dolva, 2015 | [10] King et al., 2022 |
| [2] Armstrong et al., 2022 | [12] McLean et al., 2019 |
| [3] Bowman et al., 2023 | [13] Merrick & Roulstone, 2011 |
| [4] Bradbury & Tierney, 2024 | [14] Phelan et al., 2015 |
| [5] Butchart et al., 2021 | [15] Rapson et al., 2025 |
| [8] Gilmore et al., 2010 | [16] Ryan et al., 2024 |
| [9] Kahlon et al., 2019 | [17] Smart et al., 2017 |
| | [20] Van Poucke et al., 2025 |

Themes:

- 1 Connection and support from therapists, parents and peers
- 2 Personally relevant and enjoyable therapy experiences
- 3 Understanding the intervention's purpose and experiences of success
- 4 Experiences of making choices and taking control
- 5 Lack of fit between the child's needs and intervention's activities

Relevance to Holland Bloorview

- Findings highlight areas that may be targeted to better help children engage, which may positively impact their success in rehabilitation
- Thus, service providers may enhance engagement by giving children opportunities to...
 - 🤝 Connect with their service providers
 - 😊 Have fun in their programs
 - 📖 Learn about their disabilities/interventions
 - 🎯 Make decisions and set goals
 - 🚶 Experience challenge and variety that is appropriate for their ability level

Conclusions and Next Steps

- Children's engagement appears to be shaped by **interpersonal** and **intrapersonal** factors
- Future research should aim to implement these findings by exploring service-specific approaches to fostering engagement in these domains

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