SIGNIFICANCE OF SENSORY INTEGRATION METHOD IN MATERNAL EXPERIENCE – INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Background and aims. Sensory integration disorders (SID) affect 5-16% of children without other disorders (Walbam, 2014) and 40-80% children who have SI coexistence with other clinical diagnoses (Fox et al., 2014). The popularity of the SI method and the range of its applications (Alers, 2005) coincides with the skeptical attitude of researchers testing its effectiveness (Leong et al., 2014). International scientific committees include SI therapy to the category of Unestablished Therapies (NAC, 2015).

In view of the controversy around the SI method, we paid attention to the growing popularity of this method in Poland and the considerable expenditure that is associated with it. By perceiving this as a socially important problem, we made an attempt to identify factors explaining this phenomenon.

The aim of the study was to explore the meaning of the SI diagnosis and therapy experience.

Method. In the qualitative study based on the principles of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, 2012) we interviewed 15 mothers of children with SID.

Results. Among various reflections considering SI therapy experience, we paid attention to those indicating possible functions of the SI method:

1. Protective function: the SI method was a safe way to seek help for the child and for yourself. We also observed a specific pattern of this process: SI diagnosis was the initial stage of a long-term process, which resulted in clinical diagnosis (mainly ASD and ADHD).

2. Function of fighting with helplessness: interest in the SI method resulted from the feeling of helplessness of mothers and exhaustion of own resources, whose causes were: loneliness, lack of coherence in parental interaction with the partner or his withdrawal.

Conclusions. In the study group, the SI method paved the way for clinical diagnosis, and revealed the dynamics of a difficult partner relationship leading to its suspension or reconstruction.