

Influence of family environment on playing development of children in social vulnerability condition

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INTRODUCTION: Poor children, who have only their mother to look after them, are exposed to risks factors and vulnerability which can have negative effects on their appropriate development. Recent studies have reported how important home stimuli, the role of family, material situation, and family dynamics are for child development. **OBJECTIVES:** To analyze the influence of family environment on children's playing development in three different groups that experience social vulnerability **MATERIAL AND METHODS:** It was a transversal study with 30 children between 3 and 6 years old; the father of eight of the children were in prison (group 1), 8 children were from nuclear families living in the same city (group 2) and 14 children were from nuclear families living in a city with higher rate of human development (group 3). The Family Environmental Resource Inventory (FER) and Knox's Pre-School Entertainment Scale - reviewed and transculturally adapted for Brazilian people were used. The Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test and Dunn's post test were applied to verify the differences between the groups. Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to correlate evaluations. The software used was SAS 9.0. The Research Ethics Committee approved this study. **RESULTS:** There were no significant differences between groups 1 and 2 in relation to FER, but family environment stimuli in those groups were significantly different from group 3 ($p < 0.001$). In relation to playing development, there were significant differences between only groups 1 and 3 ($p < 0.001$). The two evaluations were moderately correlated (Spearman correlation coefficient IC 95% - 0.61 - 0.35:0.87). **CONCLUSION:** The lack of family stimuli can partially explain the influence of the environment (family resources and presence and activities performed) on playing repertoire. Having an absent father could contribute to a worse performance of group 1 on playing evaluation. **CONTRIBUTIONS FOR OT:** Playing is the main child occupational role and one of the sections of OT; an unfavorable context where the child is has a direct influence on playing. The occupational therapist should minimize such inequalities and strengthen the social support network using local practices.