

RISK AND PROTECTION IN THE EMOCIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN: MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH, SOCIAL SUPPORT AND PARENTING

Maria Fernanda Cid, Thelma Matsukura

Universidade Federal de São Carlos, São Carlos, Brazil

Studies indicate that some family characteristics, such as poverty and parents' low education, low levels of social support, high levels of marital discord, parents' depression and parents' mental disorders are risk factors that influence children development. It is observed that among those characteristics, the parents' mental disorder has been considered a relevant vulnerability factor influencing children's development. The purposes of this study were: identifying and comparing parenting and social support levels of mothers who are healthy with those who suffer from mental disorders and verifying possible indicators of correlations with their children's social-emotional development levels. The participants were ten children aged between 7 and 12 years old and their mothers: five children of mothers with mental disorders and five children of mothers without mental disorders, who composed the control group. The instruments which were used in the data collect were: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), which evaluated the children's social-emotional development; Parenting Style Inventory (IEP), that aimed to identify the mothers' parenting in their children's education and the Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ), which evaluated the social support provided to the mothers. The data analyses were carried out through statistic studies. The results indicate that the mothers who suffer from humor disorders are less satisfied with the social support that is provided to them. Also, they punish their children in a less consistent way when compared with mothers from the control group. Moreover, it was identified in mothers with mental disorders a risky parenting that can contribute to the development of anti-social behaviors in their children. Concerning the children's social-emotional development, the results did not reveal significant differences between the groups, so that the maternal humor disorders do not seem to influence directly the children's social-emotional development. The main results have all been discussed, based on the literature about risk and protection factors and children mental health. This study provides resources for the development of new investigations and possible intervention plannings towards mothers and children who are directly and indirecly involved in this process.