SOCIO-ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE SENSORY DEVELOPMENT OF FIVE TO SIX YEAR OLD CHILDREN: THUSANO-STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The first aim of the study was to compare the sensory development of 5 to 6 year old children from poor socio-economic status (P-SES) with same aged children from a higher socio-economic status (H-SES). Secondly, this study aimed at determining the relationship between problems associated with poor SES and the sensory development of these children. A group of 20 children (12 girls and 8 boys) living in poor SES were identified according to a stratified random sample and compared with a control group (n=11) of 5 girls and 6 boys from a higher SES. All the subjects were evaluated according to the "Sensory Input Systems Screening Test" and the "Quick Neurological Screening Test II" (QNST). The children with poor SES were also evaluated by means of a questionnaire to determine aspects related to the birth process, medical history, education of the mother and other SES variables. Using Statistica, the results of t-testing (p ≤ 0.05) showed the following significant differences between the 2 groups with regard to tactile input (‘palm shape’ and ‘hand-cheek’), auditory input (‘sound’), pro-prioceptive input (‘arm-leg extension’) and vestibular input (‘finger-nose’ and ‘one-leg stand’), where the poor SES group obtained poorer results. There were, however, no significant differences between the two groups with regard to the different components of the Pyfer test. Further significant negative relationships were found by means of correlations (r) between birth weight, the age of the mother, the number of people and children in the household, as well as the period a baby was carried pick-a-back (problems associated with poor SES) and the sensory development of children. These results substantiate that the sensory development of children living in poor socio-economic conditions are hampered by their environment, and that they should receive additional attention to try to prevent deficiencies in this regard.

Keywords: children, sensory, socio-economic status