ABSTRACT

Literature indicates a negative impact of socio-economic circumstances on gross and fine motor development of children. The aim of this study was to analyse the possible differences between physical and motor development of pre-school children within poor and higher socio-economic status (SES). A group of 67 children between 4 months and 71 months were identified according to a random stratified sample of 50 families from a poor socio-economic background and were evaluated using measurements of height, weight and skinfolds (triceps, subscapular and calf). The Peabody Developmental Motor Scales - 2 (PDMS-2) was used to determine motor developmental status. The same procedure was followed with a group of 34 pre-school children (age = 48 – 73 months) from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Co-variance of analysis, adjusted for age, showed that children from higher SES performed predominantly better regarding some motor skills compared to the children from poor SES. Statistical and practical significant differences ($p \leq 0.05, \text{Eta}^2 > 0.01$) that were found indicated poorer development in the poor SES group regarding their locomotor, visual motor and fine motor standard scores, percentiles and gradings, and regarding their gross motor quotient, although the results indicated that the gross motor development of children living in higher SES also needs attention. The balance and object control of the low SES group were however better ($p<0.05, \text{Eta}^2 > 0.01$) compared to the high SES group. These results substantiate that the motor development of children living in poor socio-economic conditions are
hampered by their environment, and that they should receive additional attention to prevent deficiencies in this regard.

**Key words:** Pre-school children; Fine motor; Gross motor; Socio-economic circumstances; Physical development.

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