

The importance of early parenting for later child outcomes: A study with Spanish families with children with disabilities



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Introduction

Children with different disability conditions have varied developmental trajectories, which perhaps influences parent-child interaction. For these and all infants, an optimal home environment that includes good parenting and positive parent-child interactions predicts better developmental outcomes (Spiker et al., 2005). Interventions using a family-centered, parentingfocused approach result in better parenting behavior that contributes to improve early child development (Avellar & Suplee, 2013; Roggman & Cardia, 2016). Information on parent-child interaction patterns is needed to guide intervention in natural contexts of families (Fuligni & Brooks-Gunn, 2013).

Aims

To study parenting and its relation to child's developmental outcomes in mothers and fathers of the same family unit with a child with a disability.

Method

Participants:

• The sample was 44 families with a child with Intellectual Disability (ID) or with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The mothers (N = 44) were 27 to 45 years old (M = 37.2, SD = 4.2). 16% of the mothers had received only elementary schooling, 44.5% had completed high school, and 39.5% had university degree. The fathers (N = 35) were 27 to 60 years old (M = 39.4, SD = 5.6). 25% of the fathers had received only elementary schooling, 37.5% had completed high school, and 37.5% had an university degree. All families were urban and mostly were middle SES. The children (34 boys and 10 girls), aged between 23 to 47 months (M = 33.6, SD = 6.3), were recruited from eight Early Intervention Centers (EIC) in Spain. Their cognitive development age was measured with Bayley's Scales of Infant Development (BSID-III) (M = 22.11, SD = 7.53). The children degree of disability was mild (59.5%), moderate (38.1%) or severe (2.5%).

Instruments:

- The PICCOLO is a checklist of 29 observable behaviours that assess parenting interactions with children across four domains: affection, responsiveness, encouragement, and teaching (Roggman et al., 2013). Each domain includes 7-8 items, and each item is coded on a 3-point scale. We used the Spanish version of the PICCOLO (Vilaseca et al., in developing).
- Children's development was assessed with the BSID-III scales (Bayley, 2015).

Procedure:

Par 1

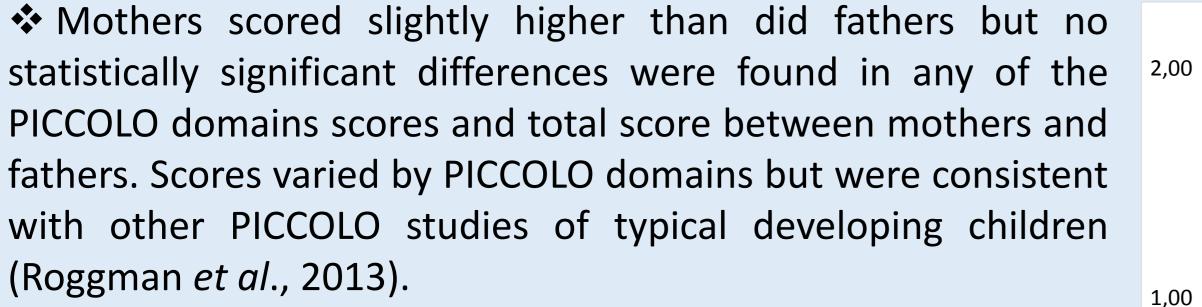
Par 3

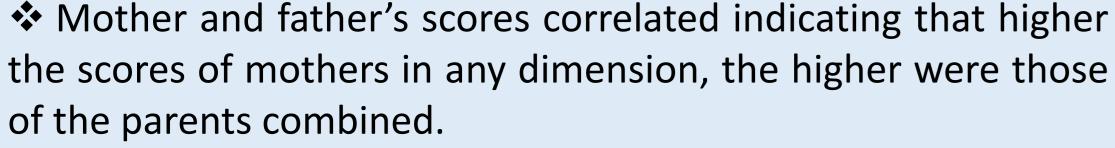
Par 4

• Mothers and fathers, separately, auto-recorded 10-minute play sessions at home. They sent the recordings by mail or we collected them at the EIC through the professionals of each family. Two independent observers coded the interactions; strong intra-class correlation coefficients were found (.82 to .97 for mothers, .77 to .89 for fathers).

Results

■ Mothers
■ Fathers





- Mothers and fathers scored highest on the affection domain, and lowest on the teaching domain. Therefore, mothers and fathers shown a similar pattern of scores in the different domains of parenting.
- Positive significant Pearson correlations were found between parenting and child's development with different patterns of father and mother domains predicting better language and cognitive outcomes.

PICC_Afe_M y PICC_Afe_F

PICC_Res_M y PICC_Res_F

PICC_Total_M y PICC_Total_F

PICC_Encou_M y PICC_Encou_F

PICC_Teach_M y PICC_Teach_F

1,00	1,59	1,52	1,31	0,98 0,93	1,34 1,30
0,00	Affection	Responsiveness	Encouragement	Teaching	Total

Figure 2. Means of PICCOLO domain scores for mothers and fathers



intellectual disabilities) and by a grant from Faculty of Education of the University of Barcelona (PADIND Group; funding for research groups_2016)

		PC	Total PC	Total PC
	Pearson Correlation	219	.019	251
PICC_Afe_M	Sig. (bilateral)	.153	.905	.159
	N	44	42	33
	Pearson Correlation	.230	.354*	.076
PICC_Res_M	Sig. (bilateral)	.133	.021	.675
	N	44	42	33
	Pearson Correlation	.107	.218	.100
PICC_Encou_M	Sig. (bilateral)	.491	.165	,579
	N	44	42	33
	Pearson Correlation	.142	.329*	.083
PICC_Teach_M	Sig. (bilateral)	.358	.034	.647
	N	44	42	33
	Pearson Correlation	.117	.297	.042
PICC_Total_M	Sig. (bilateral)	.448	.056	.818
	N	44	42	33
*. The correlation wa	as significant at the 0.05 bil	ateral level		

BAYLEY

Cogn

BAYLEY

Lang

BAYLEY

Motor

Table 1. Correlation of mother scores in PICCOLO and Bayley scores

		BAYLEY_ Cogn_ PC	BAYLEY_ Lang_ Total_PC	BAYLEY_ Motor_ Total_PC
	Pearson correlation	304	141	287
PICC_Afe_F	Sig. (bilateral) N	.076 35	.428 34	.156 26
	Pearson correlation	.288	.288	.040
PICC_Res_F	Sig. (bilateral) N	.093 35	.098 34	.845 26
	Pearson correlation	.346*	.379*	.195
PICC_Encou_F	Sig. (bilateral) N	.042 35	.027 34	.340 26
	Pearson correlation	.391*	.403*	.068
PICC_Teach_F	Sig. (bilateral) N	.020 35	.018 34	.743 26
	Pearson correlation	.273	.325	.038
PICC_Total_F	Sig. (bilateral) N	.112 35	.061 34	.855 26

Table 2. Correlation of father scores in PICCOLO and Bayley scores

Figure 1. Correlation between PICCOLO scores in fathers and mothers.

Correlation

.354*

.420*

.354*

.617*

.469*

Conclusions

Mothers and fathers of children with disabilities engage in more types of affection behaviors (warmth, closeness...) and fewer teaching behaviors (conversation, play, cognitive stimulation...), similar to younger normally developing children (Peterson et al., 2014; Roggman et al., 2013) with similar patterns in mothers and fathers.

Sig.

.037

.012

.037

.000

.004

- Most of the children have Bailey scores below their chronological age, so developmental delays may be making a difference in parenting since optimal parenting behaviors could sometimes be a challenge for families with children with disabilities (Innocenti et al., 2013).
- Positive significant Pearson correlations were found between parenting and the child's development. Our results suggest that early parenting intervention can improve developmental outcomes for children with a disability (Spiker, Hebbeler, & Malik, 2005).
- The PICCOLO can be a useful tool to support optimal parenting in families with children with disabilities. PICCOLO behaviors could help early intervention practitioners that work in collaboration with mothers and fathers, as this measure focus on parental behaviors that can be easily recognized and incorporated in intervention plans (Roggman & Cardia, 2016).
- Further analyses with larger samples of mothers and fathers with children with disabilities are needed to determine the consistency of our findings.

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