

Section: EXTENSION PROJECT REPORT

Abstract: EXT-02

Application of the developmental observation protocol – family version (POD-F) for the assessment of speech and language delay in children

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INTRODUCTION: Speech corresponds to any sound production, such as crying or babbling, present from birth and essential for communication. Speech disorders can significantly affect individuals' lives; however, when diagnosed early, they allow for interventions that improve quality of life. Therefore, early diagnosis and treatment of speech delay are extremely relevant to public health. **METHOD:** A cross-sectional study was conducted using the Developmental Observation Protocol – Family Version (POD-F), applied to parents and caregivers of 88 children aged 1 to 5 years from the MeiMei daycare center in Santo André. Data were stratified by age group, tabulated, and compared with normative standards, and subsequently analyzed descriptively. **RESULT:** The results demonstrated a predominance of typical speech development, with greater concentration in quartiles Q3 (typical under monitoring) and Q4 (typical with excellent development) across all age groups. However, borderline and at-risk cases (Q2) were identified, particularly in younger ages, indicating the need for monitoring. **DISCUSSION:** Initially, it was hypothesized that, in the post-pandemic context and with the progressive increase in screen use, there would be a higher prevalence of speech development delays due to reduced in-person social interactions. However, the results did not fully support this expectation. Nevertheless, these findings may have been influenced by information bias, since part of the assessment was based on family reports, which may overestimate children's performance. Thus, the importance of combined analysis from different informants, such as parents, teachers, and healthcare professionals, is highlighted to ensure greater data reliability. **CONCLUSION:** It was concluded that early screening is essential for identifying alterations in speech development, allowing timely interventions. The use of validated protocols proved effective; however, the integration of multiple sources of assessment is crucial to minimize potential biases. Therefore, the importance of coordinated actions between education, health and family is reinforced, especially in the contemporary context, to promote adequate child development.

KEYWORDS: Speech disorders; Child; Child health; Early diagnosis.