

Effects of socioeconomic variables on adaptive behavior in a sample with and without neurodevelopmental disorders

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Adaptive behavior (AB) is a construct associated with an individual's functionality, expressed through a set of conceptual, social, and practical skills in their daily lives. It also makes up an important domain of child development, related to the child's level of autonomy. The Diagnostic Adaptive Behavior Scale (DABS) is a North-American instrument developed for assessing AB, which helps diagnosing and planning interventions in neurodevelopmental disorders (ND), being divided according to the three AB domains. The development of skills related to each of these domains is directly influenced by the experiences children are exposed during their development. The ND is a group of early-onset conditions that accompany development, leading to impairments in personal, social, and academic functioning (e.g., Intellectual Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder). This study is part of a project of cross-cultural adaptation and validation of DABS for Brazil[1]. It aims to investigate the possible effects of socioeconomic variables on the AB of subjects with and without ND. We investigated AB's profile using the DABS according to the type of education, family income, and guardian's level of education. This is a cross-sectional study carried out with 471 parents/guardians of individuals between 4 and 21 years of age ($M = 10.32 \pm 4.34$), of which 285 (60%) were male. Among them, 174 (38.4%) came from families with income below the minimum wage up to 2 minimum wages, 86 (19%) between 2 and 4 minimum wages, 101 (22%) between 4 and 10 minimum wages, and 92 (20.3%) above 10 minimum wages. 257 (57.4%) came from public schools, and 191 (42.6%) came from private schools. The sample was divided into two groups: clinical ($n = 316$; 67%), composed of people with ND, and non-clinical ($n = 155$; 33%). Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests were performed to compare groups based on the DABS domains' scores. Results indicate that, for the clinical group, there are significant differences ($p < 0.001$) between the scores in the three domains of those who study in public schools, which presented a lower mean rank, and those who study in private schools, with a higher mean rank. Likewise, family income and schooling significantly ($p < 0.001$) affected the scores in the three domains, so that the higher the income and schooling, the higher the mean ranks. The non-clinical group, however, did not show significant differences ($p > 0.05$) in the scores, remaining relatively constant through all factors. The results show a greater impact of socioeconomic factors on the AB of people with ND compared with the non-clinical group, whose scores were much less affected by their socioeconomic conditions.

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