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Expressive language screening of preschool children in United Arab Emirates

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Language disorders in United Arab Emirates' (UAE) children are underdiagnosed and their impact on children's behavior and emotional development is often overlooked. The aim of this study is to evaluate expressive language development in UAE pre-school children and its correlation with behavior syndromes. Total of 152 UAE toddlers (18-35 months of age) participated in the study. Two screening instruments developed by the University of Vermont were adapted linguistically and culturally before being used for data collection; (1) Language development survey for age 18-35 months; and (2) Child behavior checklist for ages 1.5-5. The informant was the mother (76%). Majority of all informants were females (53%). The mean age (SD) of the enrolled children was 25.9 (4.8) months (median 25.9). There were no significant differences in the total vocabulary scores according to the source of information ($p=0.4$). No significant difference in the total vocabulary scores (Fig.1) was found between males and females ($p=0.3$). The vocabulary count was significant higher in females at all age groups: (56.1%, $p=0.05$) for body part, (69.9%, $p=0.064$) for places and (53.9%, $p=0.08$) for clothes. Food and actions words were recorded with a higher frequency (Fig. 2). Percentage of normal vocabulary percentile score decreased with increasing age. Around 50% of children in all age group had a minimum normal vocabulary count (Table 1). Premature birth (14.9%) and a positive family history of language delay (16%) were associated with a 10% lower vocabulary score ($p=0.07$ and 0.09 , respectively). There was a significant correlation between total vocabulary scores and behavior outcomes (externalizing syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity problems, and oppositional defiant problems, $p<0.001$). Externalizing and oppositional defiant abnormalities were associated with a higher vocabulary score. This cross-sectional community-based study is the first objective assessment of UAE pre- school expressive language development.

Images

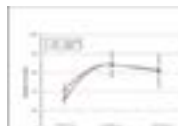


Fig.1: Males versus females of vocabulary count at age groups.

Biography

Lolowa A Al Mekaini works to integrate her professional experience to achieve evidence based best practice standards. Her mission is to meet the expectations of UAE students, patients and stakeholders in providing high quality medical care across the Emirate. This message was communicated through multiple communication forums, teaching, patient and staff education, competency development, and the engagement of workforce. Her passion focused on wellbeing of children and related research's. She holds the position of Co-Director for the Al Ain Family Medicine Residency Program (2004-2010) and Family Medicine Consultant in Pediatric department at UAE University (recently). She is practicing as a Family Medicine Consultant. She was assigned to Regional Director of Ambulatory Health Centers (2012-2014). This includes management oversight of thirteen ambulatory clinics across the Eastern region of Abu Dhabi- UAE.

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