


THE ROLE OF PLAY: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SKILLS IN CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigated how playful activities, carried out in a social project with children from seven to ten years old, influence skills such as empathy, civility, self-control and assertiveness. The research used observations and the Social Skills Inventory (SSRS) to map the children's competencies over five meetings. The playful activities included games and group dynamics, stimulating interaction and cooperation among the participants. The results showed that playing favors socio-emotional development, promoting self-control, empathy and assertiveness, essential for building positive relationships and resolving conflicts. It was found that playing, in addition to being a pleasurable activity, is a valuable resource for the development of social skills, contributing to the improvement of interactions in the educational and social context of children.

Keywords: Social Skills. Play. Playfulness. Child development.

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INTRODUCTION

Playing is a universal and essential behavior in childhood, promoting social skills such as sharing, mediating, tolerating frustrations, and resolving conflicts. In addition to fun, playful activities contribute to physical, sensory, and emotional development, helping children to improve motor coordination, strength, and endurance, as pointed out by Cordazzo and Vieira (2007, p. 6).

During early childhood, a period defined by the WHO as the first five years of life, playing is essential to strengthen affective bonds, improve interpersonal relationships, and reduce social isolation. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased use of technologies have negatively impacted face-to-face interaction, decreasing the transmission of social skills between adults and children.

In this context, play stands out as a powerful tool for children's global development, covering physical, cognitive, emotional, and social aspects. According to Queiroz, Maciel and Branco (2006), "the subject is constituted in relationships with others, through characteristically human activities, mediated by technical and semiotic tools".

Understanding how play influences learning and conflict resolution is essential to develop effective strategies in school and family contexts. Thus, valuing play as a primary activity can boost the development of social skills, contributing to children's quality of life.

This project was carried out at the Social Work Nossa Senhora das Graças, in Vitória-ES, an NGO that has been serving children and adolescents from 6 to 17 years old since 1969. With a pedagogical proposal based on playfulness and the guarantee of the rights of children and adolescents, the organization contributes to quality education and cultural strengthening in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is understood that, when interacting with the environment, the child observes and understands rules and consequences of behaviors, and it is essential to develop a repertoire of social skills that are fundamental for the development and learning process.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL SKILLS AND PLAY IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT: PERSPECTIVES FROM PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology seeks to understand the contributions of social interactions in the development and learning process of the human being. It is understood that when

interacting with the environment, the child observes and understands rules and consequences of behaviors, and it is essential to develop a repertoire of fundamental social skills for the development and learning process.

Social skills organize specific classes of behaviors present in the individual's repertoire. This organization of social skills allows him to deal competently with interpersonal demands, contributing to a healthy and productive relationship with other people (Del Prette and Del Prette, 2005). During childhood, social skills integrate a varied set of substantial behavioral skills for children's social and emotional development. According to Del Prette and Del Prette (2005), these skills are grouped into classes, as presented in chart 1, elaborated in this study.

Chart 1 – Description of Social Skills

Class	Description
Self-control and emotional expressiveness	It includes the ability to recognize and name emotions, deal with frustrations and express feelings appropriately.
Civility	It involves behaviors such as greeting and saying goodbye appropriately, following rules, and instructions, and accept compliments appropriately.
Empathy	Essential for the child to be able to observe, pay attention and show interest in the feelings of others. Empathy is essential for development of healthy relationships.
Assertiveness	Allows the child to express feelings, agree or disagree with opinions in an appropriate way.

Source: Del Prette and Del Prette, 2005

The development of these social skills during childhood is key to promoting academic success, emotional well-being, and building positive interpersonal relationships throughout life. This research seeks to understand how playing collaborates in the development of social skills in children from four complementary aspects:

- a) functional play for development in childhood according to the theoretical scope of psychology;
- b) implications of play in the family and educational contexts with or without the

use of technological resources; c) development of social skills in childhood mediated by play; d) playfulness to expand the repertoire of social skills in childhood.

FUNCTIONAL PLAY FOR CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT ACCORDING TO THE THEORETICAL SCOPE OF PSYCHOLOGY

For psychology, play is functional from the moment it has significant impacts on the emotional, social and cognitive functions of the individual. In the study by Cordazzo and Vieira (Vygotsky, 2007, p. 5) it is emphasized that play creates zones of proximal development and that, with this, play becomes a transition path to higher levels of development, functioning as an intermediary activity that favors development and encourages interactions between peers. In this way, it contributes to the adequate and constructive resolution of conflicts, in addition to forming a reflective and critical individual (Cordazzo; Vieira, 2007).

According to Queiroz, Maciel and Branco (2006), this format of interaction exerts great cultural influence and is fundamental for child development, as it allows children to transform and produce new meanings, expressing their understanding of the world through actions. In addition, each social class has its own system of cultural significance, related to the characteristic practices of the group. Thus, when faced with situations involving a repertoire of social skills such as: empathy, civility, assertiveness and self-control during play, the child would be creating a repertoire of social skills that will contribute in adult life in social situations of interpersonal relationships. In the research of Cordazzo and Vieira (2007, p. 95) they state that "play is an opportunity for interaction between peers in a context in which many lessons relevant to adult life are learned", such as empathy, civility, self-control and expressiveness.

IMPLICATIONS OF PLAYING IN FAMILY AND EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS WITH OR WITHOUT THE USE OF TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The use of technology has been increasingly common in children from a very early age, whether through cell phones, *video games*, *tablets* or computers, and there is a concern among parents and health professionals about the consequences of this use in childhood. For this, it is relevant to understand the effects that screens bring, what skills this use can interfere in their development and to what extent the use of these resources

brings benefits and/or losses in the implications of playing, emphasizing that the construction of their knowledge will depend on the material conditions that this child will have access to and on their social historical context that they live.

These devices can be used for various purposes, such as cell phones, tablets" or computers, the child has access to some entertainment, such as educational games, videos, information, expansion of knowledge and contact with the virtual world. According to Moreira and Martins (2023), this practice can help in the development of cognitive skills. In addition, these resources can be used in the educational sphere, through the exposure of videos or images to students, giving access to content in a simpler and more visual way, enabling the student to receive this information in a more didactic way. This practice, according to the authors mentioned above, also provides inclusion and access to information and knowledge for all without distinction, also benefiting cognitive development, stimulating socialization, among other benefits. "This use serves as a stimulus, as it awakens creativity, communication and also exhorts children's capacity for liberation, independence" (Moreira and Martins, 2023, p. 42).

On the other hand, some authors do not agree with the use of screens, especially in children under two years of age, as it can harm their development, affecting not only their physical health, but also their mental and social health, in which the child exchanges playing with peers, practicing sports for using screens. According to research by Taborda (2019, p. 43), children who spend more than four hours a day in front of screens are prone to developing social problems, such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. The early use of these technologies without rules or limits can harm social interaction, replacing real friendships with virtual ones. This can lead to situations where the child prefers to interact with strangers on the internet, rather than dialogue with family members, negatively affecting the family bond

Regarding the consequences on physical health, the influence of technology can cause headaches, postural changes, vision impairment, bedtime impairment and obesity, according to the author, in addition to irritability, drop in school productivity and even aggressiveness. Regarding social skills, children have difficulties interacting with other children, which can cause social isolation. Studies show that the unbalanced use of digital technologies can generate an excess of information and even impair the acquisition of knowledge, due to cognitive overload (Moreira and Martins, 2023).

It is essential to evaluate the use of screens in childhood. When used in moderation, it can bring benefits, especially in the teaching and learning process. However, excessive use can harm development, replacing face-to-face play with virtual play and interfering with the development of important skills for the future.

DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SKILLS IN CHILDHOOD MEDIATED BY PLAY

Play, in addition to being a form of fun, stimulates various aspects of child development, both individually and socially, adapting to different cultures. In this context, it is important to highlight the role of play in the development of social skills and in the child's psychic evolution. For Fahel and Pinto (2017),

Play is a behavior that propels action, interaction and sociocultural insertion. When playing, the child not only reacts to situations, but also produces and innovates individually and collectively, reconstructs meanings and externalizes their own understanding of social events (Fahel and Pinto, 2017 p. 284).

When stimulated to play, the child develops physical, psychomotor, cognitive and sensory aspects, as well as empathy and sociability, learning rules of coexistence and respecting the rights of others. Another skill that can be promoted is autonomy, through psychosocial stimuli, such as self-esteem, a sense of belonging, and engagement.

About social aspects, friendly and cooperative interactions, affective bonds, apprehension of culture and rules of coexistence, empathy, inclusion strategies, leadership and caregiver posture. At the same time, it was observed that the study by Fahel and Pinto (2017, p. 291) describes that "playing reduces individual, aggressive, competitive, intolerant and undisciplined practices". That is why it is essential that the child is stimulated, from an early age, to play in order to develop the skills that can be acquired through play.

With regard to learning, using play as a resource is to take advantage of the disposition that children have for such behavior and make the learning of school content more attractive. However, according to research "the school environment is still not able to use the resource of play as a facilitator for learning" (Cordazzo; Vieira, 2007, p. 98). Many difficulties and barriers are still encountered, such as the lack of space, resources and, especially, professional qualification in play education. Overcoming these obstacles is essential to ensure that the potential of play as a pedagogical tool is fully explored, promoting more engaging and meaningful learning for children.

PLAYFULNESS TO EXPAND THE REPERTOIRE OF SOCIAL SKILLS IN CHILDHOOD

Playfulness is a concept that has the meaning of any exercise that contributes to fantasy and imagination, whether through play or games. Through this instrument, there is an important role for development in the learning process, especially in childhood, in which the child can interpret and even access more information about the world, in a natural and playful way.

For the expansion to develop playfulness, it is relevant to address psychomotricity, which, according to Moi and Mattos (2019, p. 263), etymologically comes from the Greek *psyqué* (soul/mind) and the Latin verb *moto* (to move frequently, to shake strongly) connecting body movement and its intentionality to stimulate cognitive, physical and social development. Psychomotricity is intrinsically linked to the progress of the learning processes of each child, who will be able to achieve their development through motor learning in a playful way. Chart 2 presents some games that help in the development of social skills in childhood.

Chart 2 – Games that help in the development of Social Skills

Social Skills	Suggested games	Reference
Empathy	Comic book	(Del Prette, et al. 2013)
Self-control	Memory game	(Del Prette, et al. 2013)
Emotional Expressiveness	Point out the emotions and stories of feelings.	(Del Prette, et al. 2013)
Civility	Playhouse	(Del Prette, et al. 2013)
Assertiveness	Compliment is good and I like it	(Del Prette, et al. 2017)

Source: Playing and Learning Social Skills

Play is essential for the child, because it is through it that significant aspects are developed, working on the expression of feelings, communication, among others. Through toys, children build their relationships with the object, relationships that constitute schemes that they reproduce with other objects in their future life (Poletto, 2005).

It is necessary to understand that playing goes far beyond an activity and through it the child's autonomy and creativity are built, and can have repercussions as learning for the adult phase. Therefore, even if caregivers have many tasks in their routine, such as work and chores, it is necessary to dedicate time to this moment and especially encourage the child to develop new repertoires.

METHOD

The proposed research is characterized as qualitative, seeking to understand the complexity of interpersonal relationships and repertoire mapping in social skills in children from eight to eleven years of age. The qualitative approach, according to Dalfovo (2008), allows describing and classifying dynamic processes experienced by groups, enriching the understanding of the particularities of individuals. Minayo (2009) complements by stating that this modality of research deals with beliefs, meanings and values, considering the human being as an active agent in his social reality.

In the implementation of this research, the case study was used, which, according to Ventura (2007), is organized around questions that stimulate an in-depth analysis of the object of study. Thus, the essence of the researched context consisted of the observation of social skills of children participating in the Nossa Senhora das Graças Social Project, with parental authorization. This observation allowed us to perceive that playing can improve social skills, based on the repertoire already developed in the participants. The observation actions included activities and semi-structured dialogues that took place in five meetings with a view to achieving the objectives of this study.

To ensure ethics, the research respected the inclusion and exclusion criteria, avoiding children with neurodevelopmental disorders. Although potential risks existed, measures were taken to ensure the well-being of the participants, including referral to psychological support if necessary. With this, it aimed at benefits that contribute to knowledge in the area of psychology, especially about the psychological development of children in a technological scenario. This research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee (CEPE) of Faesa, obtaining the Certificate of Presentation of Ethical Appreciation (CAAE): 80769124.1.0000.5059 and Consubstantiated Opinion: 7.001.187, on August 12, 2024.

Data analysis was carried out using statistical tools such as Microsoft Excel and, if necessary, following the stages of ordering, classification and interpretation, according to

the proposal of Minayo (2010), to support possible social and institutional transformations. To measure the data, the SSRS Social Skills Inventory instrument was used, a tool to apply and analyze, which is valid and accurate to map academic skills, social skills and behavior. In addition, this instrument allows monitoring the effectiveness of interventions aimed at the socio-emotional development of children and adolescents, by Frank M. Gresham and Stephen N. Elliott, Brazilian adaptation: Zilda A. P. Del Prette; Lucas Cordeiro Freitas; Marina Bandeira and Almir Del Prette, available at the Faesa Psychology Clinic.

RESULTS

The data collected in this study will be organized in two tables, numbered as Table 3 and Table 4, to present the results of the activities applied to the children selected for the study.

The sample of this study was composed of 06 (six) children between eight and eleven years of age, composed of a greater number of girls and a smaller number of boys. All participants attend regular school and are in the basic education stage, in elementary school, study in the afternoon and in the after-shift, in the morning, participate in two social projects, two days at the NGO Nossa Senhora das Graças and three days in the other project.

The children were black and brown, living in the community of Romão, in the city of Vitória - ES, living in a context that involves a series of socioeconomic challenges and structural discrimination. They deal on a daily basis with economic inequalities, lack of adequate access to health, precarious school environment and, sometimes, in environments with high exposure to violence and crime.

Table 3 presents the detailed summary of the activities of the planned activities, including the observations recorded by the applicators during the meetings:

Table 3 - collective activities for parents and children

1st Meeting – Social Skill: SELF-CONTROL		Date: 05/09/2024
Objectives	Play the memory game to work situations that require self-control	Work on self-control through Chair play
Materials Used	Memory game board	Mobile phone to play the music and Chairs

Description of the activity carried out	The researchers arranged the pieces of the Description memory game on the table and guided the children about the rules of the game, which were: Each child in turn could turn over two cards, if they were the same they could play again, if they were different, the child turned over the cards and passed the turn to the next player. The child should wait his turn, without touching the cards, waiting for his turn. They were encouraged to think before acting.	The researchers placed one chair less than the number of players. The children walked around the chairs while music played. When the researcher stopped the music, everyone tried to sit down, and the child who could not sit down, lost the game and waited for his classmates to finish.
Researchers' observations	The children remained attentive and cooperative throughout the activity. At the end, the children were asked what they thought of the interaction, and they reported that they liked the games, found it fun, despite the conflicts occurred among some participants.	The children participated enthusiastically, but ended up having a disagreement, exchanging inappropriate speeches among themselves. It was necessary to interrupt the activity for a moment of conversation, after which it was possible to end the game.
2nd Meeting – Social Skill: CIVILITY		Date: 12/09/2024
Objectives	Simulate through a theater situations related to civility.	Play the "can and can't" game to work Affairs Relevant civility
Materials Used	History in comics Printed "First day at school".	Game can and can't.
Description of the activity carried out	The researchers read a comic book and approached a conversation circle on the subject. Then, the children simulated a theater that addressed topics such as ways to thank them, excuse themselves, offer help, apologize. Soon after, the children created situations in the the proposed theme was worked on.	Each child spun the roulette wheel and chose an action board that corresponded to the category indicated by the roulette wheel. If the chosen sign was "can", the player received a medal. If it was "can't", he would lose a medal. And if it's "okay", nothing would happen.
Researchers' observations	In this meeting, it was observed a good adherence to the proposed activities and little disengagement during the group moment.	The children in this game were attentive and excited, cooperating in participating in the game. They reported having I really enjoyed the meeting.
3rd Meeting – Social Skill: EMPATHY		Date: 19/09/2024
Objectives	Work through Of History in comics Affairs Relevant empathy.	Play through a theater one Scene of buying and selling a movie in theaters.

Materials Used	Printed comic "The little hero of the crosswalk".	Envelopes, counterfeit bills, movie ticket and notebook.
Description of the activity carried out	The researchers told a comic book and asked the children to participate in reporting what was said. Soon after, they produced their own stories during the dynamics on the subject related to empathy.	The researchers invited the children to an imaginative game, in which an envelope was distributed with a random amount of money and all the children bought a movie ticket. Then, a video was shown about moments when it was necessary repertoire of empathy.
Researchers' observations	Some children were scattered and verbose, so the drivers called the children to sit in a group to getting their attention.	Some participants demonstrated engagement with the proposed activities, but little adherence and dispersion were observed during the Activities
4th Meeting – Social Skills: ASSERTIVENESS		Date: 26/09/2024
Objectives	Simulate through theater situations in which we can be assertive	Play through the deck to develop skills social issues" Working Themes related to assertiveness
Materials used	History in printed comic "João's voice"	Deck of social skills in green (Solve interpersonal problems).
Description of the activity carried out	The researchers read the story "A Voz do João" to the children and addressed the explanation of the proposed theme.	Some participants showed engagement, however, two of them did not cooperate, acting aggressively and presenting disruptive behaviors. A separate moment of dialogue was held with these participants, but they continued without participating in a separate way. Proper.
5th Meeting – Social Skills: Emotional Expressiveness		Date: 03/10/2024
Objectives	Simulate through mimes and situations that work on emotional expressiveness.	Play "mimicry of emotions" to work on the ability of emotional expressiveness through the identification of different emotions through expressions facial and body language of the couples.
Materials used	Boards with different emotions for children to use during the Jokes.	Notebook, clues, printed questions and souvenir

Description of the activity carried out	The researchers played games for the children and addressed the explanation of the proposed theme.	The researchers gave instructions about the word search, in which the group located the clues and answered a question related to emotional expressiveness, bringing examples from everyday life, so that they could move on to the next clue. At the end of all the clues located and questions answered, the students received a souvenir as awards, for participation in the dynamics.
Researchers' observations	Some participants showed engagement, however, two of them did not cooperate, acting aggressively and presenting disruptive behaviors. A separate moment of dialogue was held with these participants, but they continued not to participate adequately.	

Researchers' observations: The researchers were unable to carry out the dynamics. **Source:** Survey data

The project aimed to observe different social skills in children, through playful activities. The first meeting was held with the presentation of the researchers and then addressed the theme of self-control, using the memory game and the game of chairs, in which the children actively participated. On this occasion, the Social Skills Inventory (SSRS) was applied in order to perceive which skills were already developed in the children participating in this study. The second meeting focused on addressing civility, simulating everyday situations, using the story "First day at school" and a game "you can or can't", which presents indications of situations that favor the child's judgment about their perception and civilized attitudes.

In the third meeting, a simulation of movie ticket purchases was carried out, in order to observe the presence of empathy in the children, along with the story "The little hero of the crosswalk". The fourth meeting used the resource of the deck of social skills and a story "João's voice", to address assertiveness, however, it was necessary to interrupt the activities, for a moment of conversation with some participants, and unfortunately, the meeting was not completed as planned. In the fifth and last meeting, the theme of emotional expressiveness was addressed, through mime games and treasure hunts, in which the children participated in an engaged and lively way, making it possible for the researchers to explain the theme to the group very easily.

To measure the results, the guidelines of the SRSS Manual were used, which presents the scores by factors and the overall score, which guide the discussions of this study in accordance with the scientific literature. In table 4 below, we will present data collected during the meetings held. On this occasion, the Social Skills Inventory (SSRS)

was reapplied in order to perceive which skills may have been developed in the children participating in this study, at this time, some children did not attend, making it impossible to make comparisons between the first and last application. In addition, a child joined the group after the beginning of the first meeting and as it was an open group, the participation of that child was made available. It is worth mentioning that the Social Work Nossa Senhora das Graças is voluntary, allowing all children to have the opportunity to participate, whenever they seek the services offered by them. Table 4 presents the results of the Social Skills Inventory (SSRS) applied in the first and last meeting, highlighting the factors and overall score.

Table 4 – Results of the Social Skills Inventory (SSRS) applied in the first and last meeting.

CHILDREN (fictitious names, age)	APPLICATION 1 START OF THE RESEARCH					APPLICATION 2 END OF THE SURVEY				
	F11	F22	F33	F44	EG5	F1	F2	F3	F4	EG
Wanessa, 10 years old	8	3	8	6	25	9	6	8	4	27
Ricardo, 8 years old	10	10	7	5	32	10	10	9	5	34
Helena, 8 years old	9	8	10	2	29	8	7	9	3	27
Evandro, 10 years old	8	7	6	8	29					
Mariana, 9 years old	7	7	6	2	22					
Sandra, 10 years old						7	9	8	3	27

Source: survey data. **Legend:** F1: Factor 1 – Empathy and Affectivity, F2: Factor 2 – Responsibility, F3: Factor 3 – Self-Control and Civility, F4: Factor 4 – Assertiveness, EG: Overall Score

For the comparison of the overall SRSS scores of the six children, we can analyze that Wanessa and Ricardo had a 2-point increase in the overall score and Helena had a two-point reduction in the score. Evandro and Mariana did not participate in the second evaluation, finishing with 29 and 22 score points, respectively. For analysis purposes, Sandra participated only in the last meeting, resulting in 27 points in the overall score, since she started attending the meetings after the beginning of the activities.

For the analysis of Factor 1: Empathy and Affectivity, which refers to empathy and affectivity, Wanessa and Ricardo did not show changes in the applications. Helena had a setback, decreasing one point in the factor, Evandro and Mariana did not participate in the

second application, which prevents a comparative analysis of the applications. Just like Sandra, who participated only in the last application, obtaining 7 points in total in this factor.

Analyzing Factor 2: Responsibility, which addresses responsibility, we observed that Wanessa had an increase of one point, while Ricardo did not show changes and Helena regressed by one point in this factor. Evandro and Mariana obtained the same score of 7 points, while Sandra obtained 9 points in the second application.

For the analysis of Factor 3: Self-control and Civility, which refers to self-control and civility, it was observed that Wanessa maintained 8 points in the applications, while Ricardo had an increase of 2 points. On the other hand, Helena showed a return, reducing her score by 9 points in the evaluation. Evandro and Mariana obtained the same score of 6, while Sandra presented 8 points.

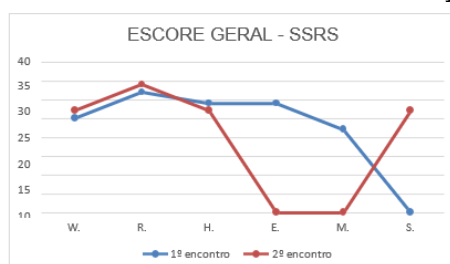
Regarding Factor 4: Assertiveness, which addresses assertiveness, Wanessa had a return of 2 points, reducing her score to 4 points. Ricardo kept the same score, while Helena showed an increase, totaling 3 points. Evandro reached 8 points and Mariana only 2 points. Finally, in the second application, Sandra presented 3 points in her score.

In summary, the analysis obtained through the results of the Social Skills Inventory (SSRS) presents important data on the children's development, observed during the meetings. While Wanessa and Ricardo showed significant progress in some areas, Helena presented some difficulties, especially in relation to empathy and assertiveness. For this, it is important to emphasize that Helena's participation in the meetings was irregular, with several absences, which may have impacted the development and results in these areas.

The participation of Mariana and Evandro only in the first meeting also limits the comparisons, as well as the inclusion of Sandra in the last meeting.

Graph 1 presents the results of the General Score of the Social Skills Inventory (SSRS) of the two applications, which allows an interpretation of the advances in the knowledge of the Skills of the participants in this study.

Graph 1 – Results of the General Score of the Social Skills Inventory (SSRS) of the two applications.



Source: Survey data

The graph shows that there was an evolution in the development of social skills that participated in all meetings and engaged in carrying out the proposed activities, it is also possible to see that there was a drop in the result compared to the first and second application of the SSRS, among the participants who obtained low engagement and irregular attendance.

It is important to highlight that most of the data demonstrates advances in the development of social skills, these advances are significant because the children had the opportunity to hear about these skills, for a short period, five meetings. These results indicate that playfulness can contribute to the expansion of the repertoire of social skills in childhood.

DISCUSSION

Social skills are essential for the development of children, since during the observations carried out in this research, it was possible to identify the level of different social skills in the children who participated, allowing an analysis of each one of them.

According to Del Prette and Del Prette (2003, p. 93), empathy involves the ability to understand another person's emotions and put oneself in their point of view, expressing a response that demonstrates this understanding of the other. Affectivity is a skill that contributes to building authentic relationships and developing clear and healthy communication. Being able to express your own emotions in an honest and balanced way makes it easier to understand and strengthen interpersonal bonds. Based on this research, it was possible to perceive that these social skills of empathy and affection are developed in different ways among children. Although some of them are stable in this factor, one participant had the setback, while others did not participate in the first application, which makes it impossible to carry out a comparative analysis of their evolution in this aspect.

Regarding the Responsibility factor, it is the obligation that we are responsible for our conduct, recognizing the consequences that they can generate in the choice made, we observed different results among the participants. One participant showed an increase, suggesting that play may have helped reinforce the perception of this skill. The other participant showed no changes in the result, while a third showed regression, indicating that the observation had varied effects.

Self-control allows a person to manage emotional impulses and reactions, acting with awareness and thoughtfulness rather than reacting automatically and impulsively. This skill is specifically important in situations of stress and conflict, as it facilitates the choice of appropriate responses, preventing harmful behaviors and disagreements, increasing the ability to deal with challenging situations. According to Fonseca et al (2016, p. 148), civility is related to the ability to express behaviors, meeting the social norms of a certain group, praising active participation in society. In the data collection actions, it was possible to perceive that these social skills are not yet fully developed in the study participants, evidenced in the moments of necessary interruptions due to the unfeasibility of continuing with the programmed activities, perhaps because there is no clear perception in the participants that these skills are important for social coexistence.

Regarding assertiveness, Del Prette and Del Prette (2003, p. 213) state that it involves the ability to defend and assert one's own rights in an honest and direct way, expressing one's feelings and beliefs, without disrespecting the rights of others. The results of the research show that, while one child evolved in this factor, one remained stable and another returned. Despite the diversity of the results, the evolution in the assertiveness factor was not uniform among the participants, but they indicate that the observation actions performed may have favored the progress of a participant in assertiveness.

Play is essential for childhood, allowing the child to explore their world and helps their neuropsychomotor development. In this sense, it can be seen that games have evolved over time, as well as their management, for cultural and historical reasons, thus emerging new experiences that will determine how the game will be experienced and, later, remembered.

However, the advancement of technology and the increase in the use of screens in childhood have had implications for child development. Play, traditionally marked by social interaction between children, was altered, giving way to the use of technological resources, such as electronic games. These, because they do not require much neuropsychomotor effort, reduce interactions and opportunities for the development of social skills, creating new forms of relationships between peers. Therefore, it is essential to balance play and the use of technology, so that the child does not suffer negative impacts on their development.

Currently, with the growing presence of technology in children's daily lives, traditional games, which promoted social interactions, are being replaced by virtual games, social networks, and activities mediated by screens. While technology offers new ways of interacting and learning, it also limits the development of skills such as empathy, conflict resolution, emotional expression, civility, and assertiveness. Screen-mediated interactions are less rich in social stimuli, resulting in delays in psychological development and weakening of social skills, due to unlimited access to connected technological devices.

With this, it is understood that free play, although challenged by the new conditions imposed by modernity, maintains an essential element for the development of children's social repertoire, offering a space for children to experiment with roles, learn to deal with frustrations, solve problems and exercise social skills in a creative and spontaneous way.

Therefore, it will be of paramount importance to implement actions for psychosocial interventions that promote the reception of family members and children, addressing themes of social skills with psychoeducation and clinical management resources, when necessary.

In this context, psychology presents itself as an important contribution, helping to understand and improve the practices of healthier interpersonal interactions, aiming to reduce conflicts and build mutually supportive relationships, considering the skills necessary to deal with challenges in a healthy way and creating a solid foundation for development.

The connection between play and psychology is widely studied by authors in the field of psychology and education. In his work "The Social Formation of the Mind", Vygotsky explains that, when playing, the child learns to interpret roles, developing both language and self-control and empathy skills. According to him, "play creates a zone of proximal development in the child" which means that by engaging in play, he is able to perform actions that he would not perform alone, boosting his emotional and social growth (Vygotsky, 1991).

The Brazilian psychologist and educator Adriana Friedmann, in "The Art of Play", emphasizes that playing is a safe space to express and elaborate feelings, promoting the construction of a healthy self-esteem and resilience (Friedmann, 1995). Therefore, for psychology and education, playing is an essential activity that goes beyond entertainment, becoming a path to emotional development.

CONCLUSION

Social skills are fundamental for everyday life, as they are tools that facilitate effective communication and the construction of healthy relationships, allowing individuals to interact in an empathetic and assertive way, and these skills are essential for living in a group, whether in the family, school or professional environment. In addition, unfolding skills such as active listening, expression of feelings, and cooperation are crucial for the formation of support networks and the development of a harmonious social environment. In the contemporary world, where social interactions are often mediated by technology, working on skills becomes even more important to improve the quality of interpersonal relationships. The development of social skills in children and adolescents can prevent mental illness, personality disorders and other ills of our days such as intolerance and increased tensions in interpersonal relationships. Social skills such as empathy, assertiveness, and civility enable people to interact in a positive way, working to build a foundation for mental health, as they enable the creation of support networks and healthy relationships, which are fundamental for well-being and the ability to face emotional challenges. This study demonstrated that playful activities can favor the development of social skills in children, highlighting the value of play in childhood. However, for a broader impact and for future studies, the involvement of those responsible can be an important aspect to strengthen this development. Social skills need to be taught from the group in which the child is inserted, thus, the application of social skills training in the daily life of family and school contexts, where interactions are more varied and diversified, can promote a significant advance in these skills. In addition, it is important to signal the need for Psychology to act in these contexts. Professionals in the field can contribute to the development of these skills, creating new opportunities to build a favorable environment, so that children can put into practice the skills learned effectively and continuously. Psychology in the school environment and even in NGOs can promote a focused approach to the socio-emotional development of these children, enhancing the results of these activities and favoring rich and diverse learning environments. Thus, it is possible to strengthen development in a positive way, helping them in the essential skills for their future.

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