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PSYCHOMOTOR DEVELOPMENT AMONG HOMELESS INSTITUTIONALIZED CHILDREN IN ALBANIA AND THE IMPACT OF FAMILY CONNECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Background. Children institutionalized in Foster Care Homes represent a vulnerable population with special needs. This study aims to assess the situation of psychomotor development of institutionalized children in Foster Care Home. Our key objective was to identify the most problematic developmental domains and family factors related to them. *Method.* This study was conducted among institutionalized children living in Foster Care Home in Vlora city, Albania. A total of 58 children (from 2 to 60 months) were assessed for this study. The Age&Stage Questionnaires – 3 (ASQ-3) test was used to assess their psychomotor development. Additional data on family contacts and other siblings in the institution and family status were also obtained from institutional records. *Results.* The mean ASQ-3 scoring was found to be 183.01 points, with a range from 50 to 295 points. The 12% of children presented no developmental delays and 12% had only 1 delayed area. The rest 75.9% of children were assessed with ≥ 2 delayed psychomotor areas in ASQ-3. The most affected psychomotor area was the Problem-solving domain. The relative's contacts and home visits seem to have a strong correlation with children's multiple psychomotor delays (OR=0.19, P=0.009). *Conclusion.* The institutional environment represents a negative predictor for psychomotor development and the family/relative contacts seem to have a significant impact on its improvement. The current study emphasizes the urgent need for specialized follow-up by an educator, a nurse caregiver, and/or a developmental-behavioral pediatrician and empowering the family connections.

Keywords: homelessness, children, mental health assessment, psychomotor development, Age and Stage Questionnaires-3.