Autism and Attachment in Early Childhood Education in Brazil

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INTRODUCTION

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): a differentiated functioning with delay or impairment in social interaction, communication and behavior (APA, 2013).

- The phenomenon of attachment is *relational, historical and co-constructed* by the partners over time (FOGEL, 1995, 2000, THOMPSON, 1995, VALSINER, 2000, VILLACHAN-LYRA, 2008).

- Children with ASD have possibilities in their emotional, cognitive, socio-affective, behavioral, and communicational development, that can respect their own rhythm and particular way of being in the world.

PURPOSE OF THE CURRENT STUDY

✓ Investigate the possibility of attachment relationships for a child with ASD within the context of Early Childhood Education;
✓ Investigate the quality of socio-affective relationships established by a child with ASD with main interaction partners in the school;
✓ Reflect upon how the quality of these relationships can contribute to the inclusion of this child with ASD in the school dynamics.

METHODS

Study Design:
• Qualitative design/ A Case Study.
• Location: a private School of Early Childhood Education, in Recife-PE / Brazil.

Sample:
Four Participants:
- Child with ASD, male, 4 yrs. 10 mo. old
- Teacher (Julia)
- Itinerant Teacher (Paula)
- Intern (Mariana)

Data Collection:
• Video-taped recordings were made during five consecutive days at the child's Early Childhood Education classroom.
• A total of 15 hours and 15 minutes of classroom interactions were recorded.

Data analyses procedures:
• Analysis focused on:
  ➤ the daily school life experienced by the child with ASD
  ➤ the relationships he established during the time the records were made.

- Unit of analysis: attachment frames (video clips of the phenomenon) (FOGEL, 1993; PANTOJA, 1998, VILLACHAN-LYRA, 2008).
- The *attachment frames* were classified into one of five categories. Four categories as proposed by Villachan-Lyra (2008) including *separation frames*, *re-encounter frames*, *care frames*, and two *support frames,* both *play* and *pedagogic*, that emerged during the analysis of the videographic records.

*The study was developed following the guidelines proposed by the Ethics Committee of PPGECI/URFPE. A document of agrément to participate was signed by the child's parents, the school principals, the teachers and intern.

RESULTS

A total of 31 attachment frames were identified for the child's interactions with the Teacher, Itinerant Teacher and Intern; no attachment frames with his peers were found.
The child with ASD established a safe-based attachment relationship with the Intern:
➢ Child demonstrated elicitation and a co-regulation of attachment behavior.
➢ Co-construction of a pleasurable emotional climate, of acceptance and mutual respect, was noted in all episodes with the Intern.
➢ Child was noted to introduce something new to the plot of an episode with security and tranquility.

The child established socio-affective relations, with a positive and welcoming emotional climate, with the two Teachers.

Interactions with peers were not defined as attachment relationships, since there was no regularity and frequency in these socio-affective exchanges.

ATTACHMENT FRAMES	TEACHER	INTINERANT TEACHER	INTERN	CHILDREN
Separation	0	0	2	0
Re-encouter	2	0	5	0
Care	1	0	8	0
Support-play	0	0	11	0
Support-pedagogic	0	2	0	0
TOTAL	3	2	26	0

Table 1. Number of attachment *frames* found by relations and categorized by subject.

SUMMARY

- The establishment of the attachment relationship may favor inclusion, in view of the safe-based concept developed by Bowlby (1984), as well as the attachment relationship co-constructed by the Child with ASD and the Intern in this study.

- However, it is also possible to conclude that it is not necessarily required to have an attachment relationship in order to promote inclusion, considering the socio-affective relations co-constructed by the child with ASD and his Teachers, and the repercussion of these relationships for the child's well-being in school.

Brazil

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CONNECTION BETWEEN RESEARCH, PRACTICE AND POLICY

Public authorities through public policies could:
☐ Promote spaces for discussion and training of educators on the development stages of children with and without disabilities, with the aim that these professionals better understand the child's performances in each phase and thus be able to act with a higher level of understanding and theoretical appropriation;
☐ Guarantee meaningful time for teachers' interactions and exchange of knowledge about the teaching practice in the pedagogical work with children with ASD in Early Childhood Education;
☐ Invest in inviting researchers to investigate topics such as: teaching practices in the area of Early Childhood Education, school inclusion, learning disorders/difficulties and other deficiencies, in order to give continuous training directed to the teachers.

LIMITATIONS

- A small amount of videografic recordings to analyze (if there had been more days of recordings our analyses could have been more thorough).
- Have chosen only one methodological instrument.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- New studies may investigate which factors, in the context of Early Childhood Education, may favor the establishment of socio-affective relationships, specifically attachment relationships, built by the child with ASD in Early Childhood Education;
- Investment in the production of studies that seek to analyze the benefits of interaction among heterogeneous groups of children in Early Childhood Education.

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