

Working Memory in Children: The Relationship with Father-Child Rough-and-Tumble Play

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Abstract : Over the last few decades, the social movement of involved fatherhood has stimulated a research focus on fathers, leading to an increase in the body of evidence into the paternal contributions to child development. Past research has suggested that rough-and-tumble play, which involves wrestling, chasing and tumbling, is the preferred play type of western fathers. This type of play remains underutilized and underrepresented in child developmental research as it's perceived to be dangerous or too aggressive. The limited research available has shown a relationship between high quality rough-and-tumble play interactions, lower childhood aggression and improved child emotional regulation. The aim of this study was to examine father-child rough-and-tumble play and assess the impact on cognitive development in children aged 4-7 years. Father-child dyads completed a 10-minute rough-and-tumble play interaction, which consisted of 2 games, at the University of Newcastle. Children then completed the Wechsler Preschool & Primary Scale of Intelligence - Fourth Edition Australian and New Zealand Standardized Edition (WPPSI-IV A&NZ). Fathers reported on their involvement in various caregiving activities and on their child's development. Analyses revealed that fathers-child play quality was positively related to working memory outcomes in children. Furthermore, the amount of rough-and-tumble play father and child did together on a regular basis was also related to working memory outcomes. While father-child play interactions remain an understudied area of research, this study outlines the importance of examining the paternal play role in children's cognitive development.

Keywords : children, development, father, executive function

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