UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Risk and Protective Factors in Atypical Development

2122-1-F5104P009

Learning area

1: Psychological functioning: models and methods for assessment

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

- To identify the possible effects of different types of risk factors in children.
- To highlight the possible protective factors and their influence on children's developmental trajectories.
- To evaluate the possible outcomes of preterm birth.
- To identify risk and protective factors in atypical development (language disorders, autism spectrum disorders, genetic syndromes).

Applying knowledge and understanding

- Critical analysis of development contexts and gene – environment relationships.
- Development of observation and assessment skills.
- Ability to analyse the developmental outcome in relation to the baseline situation.
- Ability to develop screening and follow-up programs for some developmental disorders.

Contents

We will consider the risk factors (biological, perinatal, environmental, individual) that can lead to developmental disorders and their possible protective factors.

Particular attention will be given to preterm birth, language impairments, autism spectrum disorders, and genetic syndromes.

Detailed program

- Biological, perinatal and environmental risk factors.
- Preterm birth as a risk factor and possible protective factors.
- The influence of environment and individual characteristics on children's developmental trajectories.
- Biological and environmental risk factors in language impairments.
- Protective factors in language and cognitive development (environmental support, screening programs, interventions).
- Risk factors in autism spectrum disorders and possible treatments.
- Risk factors in genetic syndromes (Down syndrome, sex chromosome trisomies, rare genetic syndromes).
- The role of the environment (society, school, rehabilitation) in the development of children with genetic syndromes.

Prerequisites

Basic knowledge of Developmental psychology enables a more aware understanding of the course contents. Students lacking such basic knowledge are encouraged to report any difficulties to the teacher, to set a list of basic references.

Teaching methods

In addition to classroom lectures, part of the teaching takes place through the vision and comment of videos about the course topics and clinical case reports. Moreover, practical group activities are used to teach how to project assessment and intervention programs leading to optimal child development.
The material (slides and scientific articles) is made available on the e-learning course page so that also non-attending students can use it.

Lessons will be held in presence, unless further COVID-19 related restrictions are imposed.

Assessment methods

The exam is written with open questions. Ten questions require short answers, while one question (chosen from 3 alternatives) requires a longer and more detailed answer.

The questions aim at ascertaining the acquisition of both theoretical knowledge and the ability to apply them to real contexts.

The evaluation criteria are: the correctness of the answers, the ability to argue, synthesise, create links and analyse the different developmental contexts.

For students who request it, the exam can be completed with an oral examination on all the course topics. The oral exam can lead to an increase or decrease of up to 2 points compared to the written exam score.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

The bibliography will be given on e-learning before the start of the course.