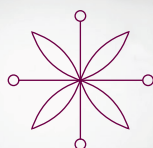


The Abstract Book of the 22nd European Conference on Developmental Psychology



August 25-29, 2025
Vilnius, Lithuania

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DEVELOPMENTAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF TODDLERS: PLAY AND SELF-REGULATION

Agnė Brandišauskienė¹, Monika Skerytė-Kazlauskienė²

¹Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania; ²Institute of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, Vilnius University, Lithuania

Monika.Skeryte-Kazlauskiene@fsf.vu.lt

Play, as the primary activity of early childhood, plays a fundamental role in various aspects of development, including cognitive, emotional, and social growth. It is also the first context in which children learn to suppress immediate impulses in an enjoyable and acceptable way. To engage in play, they must follow certain rules (Bodrova & Leong, 2015). While most research on play focuses on older preschool children (typically four or five years old), there is comparatively less research on the play of infants and toddlers (Fleer, 2009). Additionally, researchers emphasize that children's development varies, but on average, the ability to regulate actions and behavior begins to emerge around 36 months of age (McClelland, Cameron, & Dahlgren, 2018). Given that play is a critical driver of child development and learning, it is important to explore how toddlers engage in play and develop self-regulation.

This study investigates the relationship between toddlers' play and self-regulation skills. It was conducted in early childhood education institutions in Vilnius, where 19 early childhood teachers observed and assessed the play and self-regulation abilities of 70 children using *The Child's Play and Self-Regulation (CP&SR) Checklist* (Bredikyte & Brandisauskiene, 2023).

The results indicate that toddlers predominantly engage in object-oriented and action-oriented play. Their self-regulation skills in play are not yet well developed; they show interest and engage in play only episodically, with frequent interruptions due to external distractions. Additionally, adult involvement plays a crucial role in facilitating their play. However, findings also suggest that toddlers who demonstrate early symbolic play tend to have stronger self-regulation abilities within play contexts.