

Subtypes and multiple types of child neglect and re-report

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Background and Significance

Several previous studies have shown that neglect as the child maltreatment type of an initial report predicts higher recurrence or re-report rate (e.g. Lipien & Forthofer, 2004) than physical abuse although there was diversion in research methods (Helie & Bouchard, 2010). These studies did not consider subtypes of neglect even though subtypes of child neglect do not necessarily represent homogeneous pattern of behaviors. Previous studies also have not always differentiated single subtype and multiple subtypes of neglect. To prevent re-report or recurrence of child neglect more effectively, we need to know how subtypes as well as multiple types of child neglect develop into re-report or recurrence.

In this context, this study aims to examine 1) if children with different single and multiple subtypes of child neglect have higher risk of re-report than those with physical abuse; 2) if there are differences in the time length to the re-report among children reported with single and multiple subtypes of child neglect compared to physical abuse.

Methods

Sample: This study utilizes Illinois Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System database. The sample consists of children investigated by Illinois Child Protective Service (CPS) in 2005 for physical or neglect allegation without any previous investigation since 2000. Total of 35,862 children were identified and followed up until 2010.

Analysis: Empirically driven subcategories of single and multiple neglect subtypes include lack of supervision, lack of supervision combined with environmental neglect, lack of supervision combined with substantial risk of harm, environmental neglect alone, environmental neglect combined with substantial risk of harm, medical neglect, and substantial risk of harm. Using survival analysis and ordinary least square regression, we examined these categories' hazard ratio of and the time length to re-report in comparison to physical abuse alone as the type of an initial report. We controlled for child age, gender, ethnicity, number of children at the household, caretaker age, gender, ethnicity, number of caretakers at the household, and investigation finding, out-of-home placement, and family's service receipt.

Findings

For the question 1), if children with different single and multiple subtypes of child neglect have higher risk of re-report than those with physical abuse, only environmental neglect combined with substantial risk of harm had a higher hazard ratio (1.29, p=.017) than physical abuse alone. For the question 2), if there are differences in the time length to the re-report among children reported with single and multiple subtypes of child neglect compared to physical abuse, only environmental neglect comes 109 days earlier (p <.05).

Results

Table 1. Characteristics of caregivers, children and cases

Variables	N	%	Variables	N	%
Caretaker Demographics			Case characteristics		
Female	27,168	75.8 %	# of children at home (1~2)	22,272	62.1 %
White	19,852	55.4 %	# of children (3~5)	12,263	34.2 %
Black	11,485	32.0 %	# of children (6 or more)	1,327	3.7 %
Latino	3,034	8.5 %	Allegation type		
Age group 1 (13~21)	2,513	7.0 %	Lack of supervision	7,031	19.7 %
Age group 2 (21~30)	11,769	32.8 %	Lack of supervision + Environmental neglect	1,057	3.0 %
Age group 3 (30~40)	12,891	36.0 %	Lack of supervision + Substantial risk	1,242	3.5 %
Age group 4 (40~50)	6,514	18.2 %	Environmental neglect	3,217	9.0 %
Age group 5 (50 or older)	2,146	6.0 %	Environmental neglect + Substantial risk	824	2.3 %
Parent of the child	32,001	89.2 %	Medical neglect	2,070	5.8 %
Relative of the child	1,847	5.2 %	Substantial risk of harm	14,188	39.6 %
			Physical abuse	6,233	17.4 %
Case characteristics			Child Demographics		
Indicated	7,773	21.6 %	Female	17,296	48.2 %
Out-of-home placement	2,086	5.8 %	White	19,449	54.2 %
Family service receipt	6,460	18.0 %	Black	12,193	34.0 %
# of caretakers at home (one)	13,673	38.1 %	Latino	2,774	7.7 %
# of caretakers (two)	18,143	50.6 %	Age group 1 (0~3)	9,770	27.1 %
# of caretakers (3 or more)	4,046	11.3 %	Age group 2 (3~6)	6,544	18.3 %
			Age group 3 (6~9)	5,830	16.3 %
			Age group 4 (9~12)	4,873	13.6 %
			Age group 5 (12~15)	5,091	14.2 %
			Age group 6 (15 or older)	3,789	10.6 %

Table 2. Predictors of caregivers' social support

Variables	Risk ratio	P value
Child characteristics		
Female	0.99	.861
Black	0.77	.063
Latino	1.17	.220
Other ethnicity	1.54	.001
Age group	0.93	<.0001
Caregiver characteristics		
Female	0.81	<.0001
Black	1.06	.552
Latino	1.29	.033
Other ethnicity	1.04	.729
Age group	0.96	.086
Being parent	0.97	.728
Being relative	2.03	<.0001
Case characteristics		
Out-of-home placement	0.78	<.0001
Family service receipt	0.36	<.0001
Indicated	0.22	<.0001
# of caregivers	0.96	.187
# of children	1.18	<.0001
Allegation type with physical abuse as a reference		
Lack of supervision		
Lack of supervision + Environmental neglect	1.07	.322
Lack of supervision + Substantial risk	1.22	.059
Environmental neglect	1.16	.109
Environmental neglect + Substantial risk	1.09	.339
Medical neglect	1.29	.017
Substantial risk of harm	0.99	.907
	1.08	.206

Discussion/Conclusion

Environmental neglect includes cases where children have inadequate food, shelter, and clothing. Families of these cases are highly likely to be in severe financial difficulties and great need of material supports. Interestingly, environmental neglect alone did not predict higher rate of re-report rate. This could be interpreted that when financial difficulties are combined with other risks, the risk of re-report rate increases but not when only financial difficulties exist within a family.

However, initial environmental neglect returns to CPS system 3 months earlier than physical abuse. This might be because of unaddressed financial difficulties and actually the most frequent second allegation type was the same environmental neglect when initial environmental neglect was re-reported. The findings tell that differential response is a right direction for child welfare reform due to its enhanced tangible support provision.

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