Subtypes and multiple types of child neglect and re-report

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 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 single and multiple subtypes of child neglect develop into re-report or recurrence. Effectively, we need to know how subtypes as well as multiple types of child neglect represent homogeneous pattern of behaviors. Previous studies also examined re-report rate (e.g., Lipien & Forthofer, 2004) than physical abuse. Several previous studies have shown that neglect as the child maltreatment type of an initial report predicts higher recurrence or 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).

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.

Results

Table 1. Characteristics of caregivers, children and cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caretaker Demographics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27,168</td>
<td>75.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>19,852</td>
<td>55.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>11,485</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>3,034</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group 1 (13-21)</td>
<td>2,513</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group 2 (21-30)</td>
<td>11,769</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group 3 (30-40)</td>
<td>12,891</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group 4 (40-50)</td>
<td>6,514</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group 5 (50 or older)</td>
<td>2,146</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent of the child</td>
<td>32,001</td>
<td>89.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative of the child</td>
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<td>5.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case characteristics</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td># of children at home (1-2)</td>
<td>22,272</td>
<td>62.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of children (3-5)</td>
<td>12,263</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of children (6 or more)</td>
<td>1,327</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allegation type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of supervision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of supervision + Environmental neglect</td>
<td>1,057</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of supervision + Substantial risk</td>
<td>1,242</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental neglect</td>
<td>3,217</td>
<td>9.0</td>
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<td>824</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical neglect</td>
<td>2,070</td>
<td>5.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substantial risk of harm</td>
<td>14,168</td>
<td>39.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>6,233</td>
<td>17.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child characteristics</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>.063</td>
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<tr>
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<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<td>Age group</td>
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<td>Caregiver characteristics</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Other ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Being relative</td>
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<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Out-of-home placement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case characteristics</td>
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<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family service receipt</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indicated</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of caregivers</td>
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<td>0.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of children</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegation type with physical abuse as a reference</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of supervision</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of supervision + Environmental neglect</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>.059</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of supervision + Substantial risk</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental neglect</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>.339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental neglect + Substantial risk</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>.017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical neglect</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>.907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantial risk of harm</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>.206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion/Conclusion

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).

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.