Social Support, Material Hardship, Personal Control and Neglectful Parenting

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Background and significance

• Known predictors of child neglect: poverty, social support/social isolation, the number of children at home, depression, substance abuse, etc.

• However, limited understanding of whether and how social support can prevent child neglect due to the study designs

• Need prospective studies using longitudinal data

• Implication for social support interventions

• Understanding of child neglect etiology
Background and significance

- Pathway model from social support to neglectful parenting
- Material hardship, more accurate predictor of financial difficulty than income based poverty
- Using social support to handle financial difficulties (Edin & Lein, 1997; Heflin et al. 2011)
- Social support and material hardship can affect caregivers’ perception on their life situation according to the Double ABCX Model (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983)
- Personal control and child neglect (Guterman, et al. 2009)
Process Model

Perceived social support → Material Hardship → Personal Control → Neglectful Parenting

- Perceived social support decreases Material Hardship.
- Material Hardship decreases Personal Control.
- Personal Control increases Neglectful Parenting.
- Neglectful Parenting increases Material Hardship.
Hypotheses

• H 1: As perceived social support increases, material hardship will decrease.
• H2: As perceived social support increases, personal control will increase.
• H3: As material hardship increases, personal control will decrease.
• H4: As material hardship increases, neglectful parenting will increase.
• H5: As personal control increases, neglectful parenting will decrease.
Methodologies
Participants

• A subgroup of mothers participating in Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing studies.


• Three quarters of parents were unmarried at child birth; multiple waves for longitudinal data collection.

• Interviews parents at birth and again children’s ages 1, 3, and 5, plus in-home assessments of children and their home environments at ages 3 and 5.

• This study used data from all four waves.

• White, Black and Hispanic mothers only (N=2,910)
Variables

• Neglectful parenting: mothers’ responses to 5 items at children’s age 5 (yes/no)
  – “Had to leave a child home alone”
  – “Were so caught up with your own problems that you were not able to show or tell your child that you loved him/her”
  – “Were not able to make sure the child got the food he/she needed”
  – “Were not able to make sure your child got to a doctor or hospital when he/she needed it”
  – “Were so drunk or high and had a problem taking care of the child”
Variables

• Perceived social support: mothers’ responses to four items at children’s age 1 (yes/no)
  – “If you needed help during the next year, could you count on someone to loan you $200?”
  – “Is there someone you could count on to provide you with a place to live?”
  – “Is there someone you could count on to help you with emergency child care?”
  – “Is there someone you could count on to co-sign for a bank loan with you for $1,000?”
Variables

• Material Hardship: mothers’ response to five items about problems due to financial difficulties at children’s age 3 (yes/no)
  – “In the past 12 months, did you not pay the full amount of rent or mortgage payment?”
  – “Were you evicted from your home or apartment for not paying the rent or mortgage?”
  – “Did you not pay the full amount of a gas, oil, or electricity bill?”
  – “Did you stay at a shelter, in an abandoned building, an automobile even for one night?”
  – “Was there anyone in your household who needed to see a doctor but couldn’t because of the cost?”
Variables

- Personal control: mothers’ responses to 5 items about mastery at children’s age 3
- (1=strongly agree ~ 4= strongly disagree)
  - “I have little control over the things that happen to me.”
  - “There is really no way I can solve some of the problems I have.”
  - “There is little I can do to change many of the important things in my life.”
  - “I often feel helpless in dealing with problems.”
  - “Sometimes, I feel that I’m being pushed around.”
Analysis

• Structural equation modeling with Mplus 6.0
• Estimator: Weighted least squared means and variables (WLSMV)

• First, confirmatory factor analysis for latent variables
• Second, testing structural model to estimate the model fit and coefficients for relationships among variables with two half-split samples.
• Third, subgroup analysis with three racial groups -- White, Black, and Hispanic.
Findings
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% / mean (SD)</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>n</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mothers’ age</strong> at child’s birth</td>
<td>25.0 (6.02)</td>
<td>15-43</td>
<td>2,909</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>21.89%</td>
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<td>2,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>52.58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>25.53%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Married</strong> at child age 1</td>
<td>28.35%</td>
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<td>2,762</td>
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<td><strong>Unmarried</strong> at child age 1</td>
<td>71.65%</td>
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<td>2,765</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Married</strong> at child age 3</td>
<td>30.89%</td>
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<td>2,765</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unmarried</strong> at child age 3</td>
<td>69.11%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Income at child age 1</strong></td>
<td>$ 30,401.24</td>
<td>0 – 400,000</td>
<td>2,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>($ 32,454.25)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Income at child age 3</strong></td>
<td>$ 33,278.71</td>
<td>0 – 720,000</td>
<td>2,767</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>($ 38,492.65)</td>
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Process Model

Perceived social support → Material Hardship → Personal Control → Neglectful Parenting

- Perceived social support → Material Hardship
+ Material Hardship → Personal Control
- Personal Control → Neglectful Parenting
+ Neglectful Parenting → Material Hardship

Perceived social support

Material Hardship

Neglectful Parenting

Personal Control

RMSEA = .020
CFI = .964
TLI = .958

-.256***

-.143*

.119*

.208***

-.208***
Summary of Findings

• H1: As perceived social support increased, material hardship decreased.
• H2: As perceived social support increased, personal control increased.
• H3: As material hardship increased, personal control decreased.
• H4: As material hardship increased, neglectful parenting increased.
• H5: As personal control increased, neglectful parenting decreased.
Perceived social support

Material Hardship
-0.274***

Personal Control
0.112**

Neglectful Parenting
-0.096*
-0.210***

RMSEA = 0.020
CFI = 0.968
TLI = 0.963
Process Model (Hispanic; n=743)

Perceived social Support → Material Hardship

Material Hardship → Neglectful Parenting

Personal Control → Neglectful Parenting

\[-.261^{**}\] \[.386^{**}\] \[-.189^{**}\]

RMSEA=.026
CFI=.950
TLI=.943
Perceived social support

Material Hardship

Neglectful Parenting

Personal Control

-.335***

.512**

Process Model (White: n=637)
Discussion

• Findings show the process of the impact of perceived social support on neglectful parenting

• Findings show the interaction between protective factors and risk factors of neglectful parenting

• Perceived social support might have led mothers to actually utilize concrete support and reduce material hardship.

• It seems that findings support the Double ABCX Model.

• Material hardship increased neglectful parenting like poverty
Implications

• Some current child neglect interventions have components of providing concrete supports or facilitating the development of social networks and social skills.

• Current and new programs can measure/target reduced of material hardship and increased personal control as (intermediate) outcomes.

• More attention to increase caregivers’ personal control for child neglect prevention in addition to other risk factors.

• Future studies on social support (received, different types)
Limitations

• Confounding variables not controlled.
• Any changes in the variables used in the model between the waves were not controlled or considered, meaning a threat to causality.
• Perceived social support was limited to concrete support.
• Lack of a consistent pathway model across different racial/ethnic groups.
References


Thank you!!

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