Adaptative Behaviors of Children Experiencing Different Types of Childcare since Their First Year of Life

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HIC, January 7-10, 2010, Honolulu, Hawaii

INTRODUCTION

❖ Maladaptation to the environment has been identified as a precursor to behavior problems (De Schipper & al., 2004; Thomas & Chess, 1996) and such problems are affecting the future social and academic achievement of an individual.
❖ Attending a good quality daycare early in life could possibly promote the child's development by fostering the learning of better behaviors, specifically for children at risk of maladaptation in their home environment (Ryan, Fauth & Brooks-Gunn, 2006).
❖ In Quebec (Canada), the government has created in 1997 a network of nonprofits educational daycares offering a good quality of care to all preschoolers.
❖ Yet, few studies have investigated the effects of Quebecer's childcare services on the adaptation of young children.

OBJECTIVE

This longitudinal study investigates the effects of exposure to three types of childcare (daycare center, family daycare or parental care) since the first year of life on the child's adaptative behaviors.

METHOD

Sample
136 infants (67 girls) distributed in 3 unequal groups
1) Daycare center (n=47; 22 girls);
2) Family daycare (n= 29; 14 girls);
3) Parental care (n = 60; 31 girls).

Procedures
❖ Recruitment from 2004 to 2006 in Montreal & Montérégie (QC, Canada)
❖ 4 home visits to measure the child's adaptation
   T1) Upon entry (X=10 months)
   T2) 15 months
   T3) 18 months
   T4) 24 months

Measures
Standardized test
Behavior Rating Scale of Bayley Scales of Infant Development-II (BRS, BSID-II)
❖ While the infant performs motor and cognitive tasks, his adaptation to novelty is observed to complete the BRS.
   o Higher score = better adaptative behaviors
   o Negative skewness of scores= logarithmic transformation

RESULTS

Adaptation score by group and time
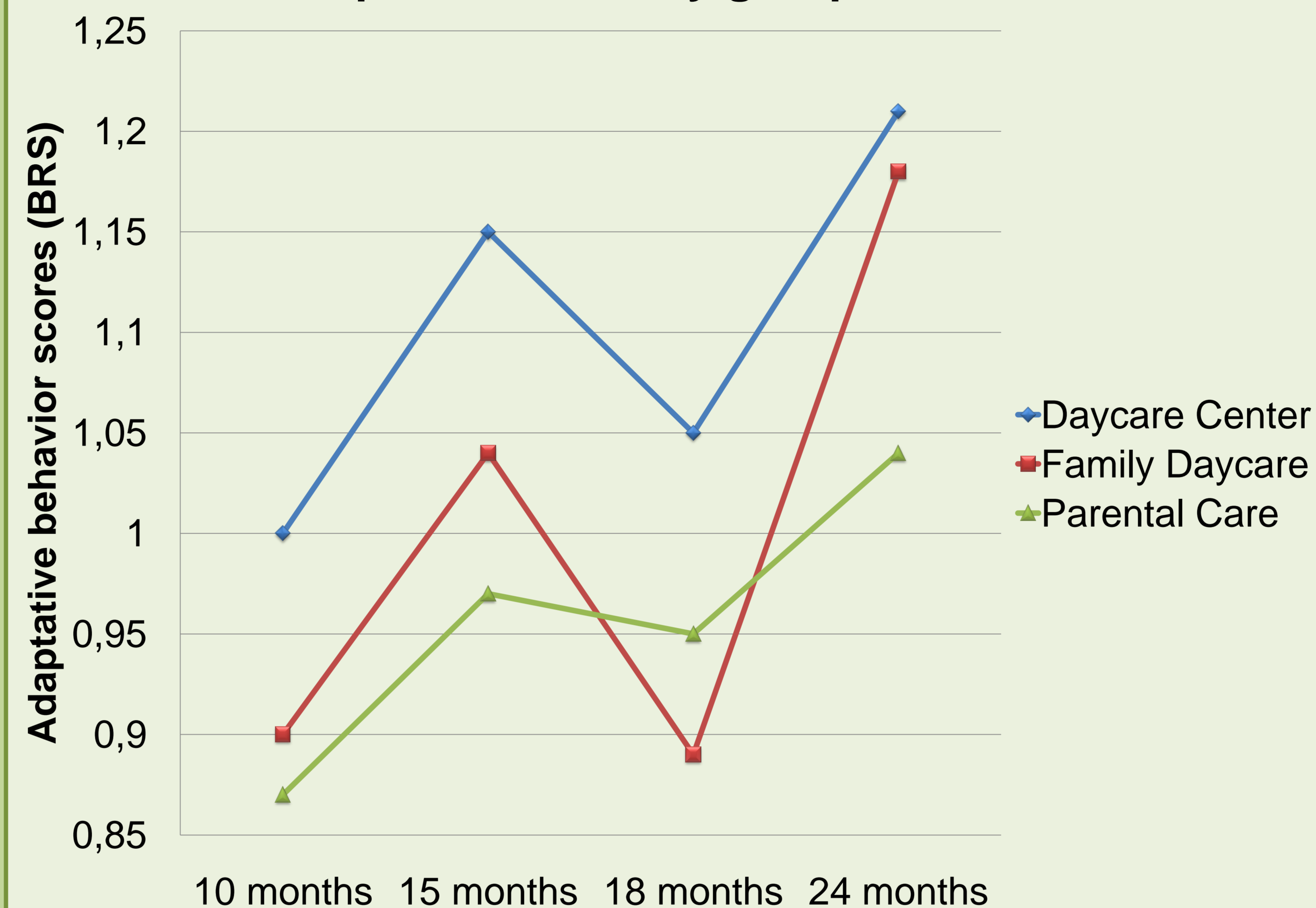
Repeated measures ANOVA
❖ Only the main effect of time was significant, $F_{(1,133)} = 6.39$, $p = .01$

Post-hoc analysis
❖ Significant difference between the first and the fourth measurement ($t = -3.14$, $p = .01$)
❖ Significant difference between the third and the fourth measurements ($t = -3.12$, $p = .01$).

In other words, all group of children showed better adaptative behaviors at 24 months than at 10 and 18 months.

CONCLUSION

Time effect
❖ This study suggests that adaptative behaviors appear to become more positive as the child grows older.
   o Children are probably learning better adaptative strategies to cope with unfamiliar and stressing situations as they grow.
❖ Nevertheless, at 18 months, all scores drop, which could indicate the beginning of the "terrible two's " period. However, the drop appears steeper for infants in daycare compare to infants in parental care .
   o Caring for a single infant going through that developmental cornerstone might be easier.
   o Further research might help enlighten home and daycare characteristics associated with an easier transition throughout this period (from 15 to 24 months).

Group difference
❖ The absence of group difference might be explained by the relative homogeneity of the sample, counting only a small number of high risks families.
❖ Moreover, the interval of 14 months between the first and last measurement may have been too short to reveal any cumulative effect of childcare experience.

In sum, adaptative behavior during the first two years of life does not appear to be modulated by the type of care the child experienced. However, several variables known in the literature could help explaining this relation more precisely by mediation or a moderation process (temperament, parenting, poverty, quality of care, etc.). More research taking those variables into account is needed. Beside, more time could be necessary to reveal the cumulative effect of childcare. Despite of that, a special attention should be given to the socioemotional development of 18 months old infant since their adaptation appears to be laborious.

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