

Household chaos and children's cognitive and socio-emotional development in early childhood: Does childcare play a buffering role?^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Full chapter PDF available for purchase^[2]

Abstract

Evidence suggests that household chaos is associated with less optimal child outcomes. Yet, there is an increasing indication that children's experiences in childcare may buffer them against the detrimental effects of such environments. Our study aims were to test: (1) whether children's experiences in childcare mitigated relations between household chaos and children's cognitive and social development, and (2) whether these (conditional) chaos effects were mediated by links between chaos and executive functioning. Using data from The Family Life Project (n = 1235)—a population-based sample of families from low-income, rural contexts—our findings indicated that household disorganization in early childhood was predictive of worse cognitive and social outcomes at approximately age five. However, these relations were substantially attenuated for children attending greater childcare hours. Subsequent models indicated that the conditional associations between household disorganization and less optimal outcomes at age five were mediated by conditional links between disorganization and less optimal executive functioning.

Highlights

- Longitudinal relations between household chaos and children's subsequent social and cognitive outcomes at age-five are conditional on early childcare exposure.
- Spending greater amounts of time in childcare attenuates the 'detrimental' association between household chaos and several social and cognitive outcomes.
- These attenuated relations may be explained by the role that childcare exposure plays in mitigating the detrimental effect of household chaos on executive functioning.
- The respective effects of caregiver responsiveness and childcare type were somewhat mixed across outcomes, yet largely consistent with the extant literature.

Region: United States^[3]

Tags: child development^[4]

child outcomes^[5]

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