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Cognitive development and adaptive skills of children in institutions with different social environment

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Statement of the Problem: It is well known that children who had experienced early psychosocial deprivation such as institutional care (IC) often show delays in cognitive functioning. In Russia IC placement is prevalent for orphans and vulnerable children, there are intervention programs designed to improve traditional IC and decrease child deprivation. Although empirical evidence is scarce, there are data on effectiveness of an intervention program, which varied the overall social environment in institutions. However, the long-term effects of this intervention program have not been well studied yet. The purpose of this study was to follow up the changes in traditional IC care 15 years after the intervention and to assess cognitive development and adaptive skills of children residing in two institutions with different social environment.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: We examined 31 children in the age range from 5 to 45 months who live in two types of institutions: family-like and traditional. To evaluate cognitive development of children, we used non-verbal scales of the Mullen Scales of Early Learning and Vineland Behavior Adaptive Scales to assess adaptive skills of children. We hypothesized that two groups would differ in terms of their cognitive profiles and performance on everyday tasks.

Findings: Results show that children from family-like IC outperform their peers in traditional IC on Visual Perception skills ($F=6.398$, $p=.0176$), and Daily Living skills (ANCOVA w age, $F=4.481$, $p=.0436$). Notably, there was no difference on the fine motor scale between two institutions (Fine Motor $F=1.320$, $p=.261$).

Conclusion & Significance: Both types of institutions provide children with sufficient stimulation for fine motor development. However, children from family-like IC showed significantly higher rates of adaptive functioning and visual perception, which supports the effectiveness of the intervention program.

Biography

Kolesnikova Margarita is a graduate student majoring in Developmental Psychology at Saint-Petersburg State University, Russia. Her research interests are cognitive and language development of infants and young children, the impact of early deprivation on child's development. At the Laboratory of Translational Developmental Science Margarita Kolesnikova conducts behavioral research using the Mullen Scales of Early Learning. Margarita's project "Cognitive development of children living in families and institutions with different social environment" was supported by a grant from RSCF

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