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“The Adverse Impacts of Instability on the Growth of Children: A Critical Analysis”

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Abstract

Today's children face a dual series of barriers to their safe growth. When they work insecure jobs, live in insecure accommodation, have unstable marriages, and cope with unstable child care plans, several parents struggle to make ends meet. Sudden shifts in the lives of families also lead to differences in both the home and out-of-home worlds. Public services that can help children and families in times of crisis, meanwhile, are inadequately financed to satisfy the demand. The uncertainty affecting too many children poses concerns about how uncertainty affects their growth and how it is possible to prevent or mitigate the consequences of instability. This investigation is vital for the potential economic well-being of the country. Early interactions with children shape who they are and impact lifetime wellbeing and learning. Children require secure and healthy homes, sufficient and nutritious food, access to preventive services, secure relationships with adult parents, nurturing and attentive parenting, and high-quality learning experiences at home, in child care environments, and in school, in order to thrive to their maximum potential.

The paper emphasises the five well-established domains of instability described in the literature: family income, parental employment, family composition, accommodation, and out-of-home school and child care contexts, and also explores some of the primary mechanisms by which growth may be influenced by instability. The paper points out directly to the underlying role of parenting, maternal mental health, and the home atmosphere in providing the need for healthy growth to provide security and protection for young children and concluded with strategy and practice guidelines to mitigate the effects of uncertainty.

Keywords: *Children, Child Care, Family, Instability, School*

INTRODUCTION

Early interactions with children shape who they are and impact lifetime wellbeing and learning. Children require healthy and secure homes, sufficient and nutritious food, access to preventive services, healthy relationships with adult parents, nurturing and attentive parenting, and high-quality learning experiences at home, in child care environments, and in school in order to thrive to their maximum potential. The Great Recession's latest financial crisis has taken a negative toll on households across the world and beyond. The security and quality of home conditions for many children and inadequate access to adequate care and nutrition have been undermined by high parental unemployment, home foreclosures, and stressed household finances. When parents struggle to provide their families financially, the chronic burden they face will make it impossible for them to provide their children with care and attention. Any children who have grown up have encountered a great deal of turmoil in their life over this time period. This loss of protection and continuity may have significant and permanent consequences on the physical, mental and cognitive growth of children.

In healthy and caring settings where they have a schedule, children excel and usually know what to expect from their everyday lives. Although certain changes in the lives of children are natural and expected, abrupt and drastic disturbances can be incredibly disruptive and impact the sense of security of children. Children learn how to deal with adversity, adjust to their climate, and control their feelings within the framework of positive interactions with adults that serve as a shield against any detrimental consequences of uncertainty. While for some communities, insecurity has been a long-standing concern, its increased occurrence throughout the recession has raised awareness of the topic. In addition

to recent developments in the study of oxidative stress and its adverse impact on infant health, there is a rising need to consider what it means for kids to encounter uncertainty and how to avoid its detrimental consequences.

Theoretical Framework

In social science analysis, the term instability is sometimes used to reflect transition or discontinuity in one's experience, but operational meanings of instability differ by area and are often defined by the evidence and measurements available for research. Although some research explores the impact of change calculated narrowly, depending on the context, change itself may have both positive and negative outcomes, including whether the change is voluntary, prepared in advance, or moving the individual or family to better conditions. Instability is better conceptualised for the purposes of this synthesis as the occurrence of sudden, involuntary, and/or harmful transition in person or family situations, which is likely to have adverse effects for the growth of children. Examples include a father losing his work and income suddenly, a residential transfer as a consequence of eviction, and the breakdown of a parental partnership. They will be less likely to assist their children in adjusting to the transition if parents lack preference or power over transition.

Instability has been observed from different perspectives, with the common concept that these kinds of changes and changes forecast negative consequences for children at certain stages in their lives (Moore, Vandivere, and Ehrle 2000). In isolation, these improvements do not exist. A disturbance in one domain (e.g. parent employment) also creates a disturbance in a "domino effect" mode in another domain (e.g., child care). The causality of uncertainty is not one-dimensional in some situations, but is the product of a dynamic sequence of events that compound over time. In low-income or lower middle-class families who lack savings and reserves they can tap into during temporary cycles of transition, this domino effect may be more predominant (McKernan, Ratcliffe, and Vinopal 2009; Mills and Amick 2010). The interactions between multiple roles are dynamic and require a juggling act, such as cutting back or providing more to those roles to preserve the family's overall unity.

The current theoretical paradigm will help influence the manner in which we conceptualise uncertainty and its impacts on children and families. Three chosen research hypotheses each contribute to our interpretation of how environmental variables impact the interactions of young children within their communities. The first is the family stress theory (McCubbin and Patterson 1983; Patterson 2002), in the realms of family studies and psychiatry, which is also applied. This hypothesis suggests that to predict the possibility of a catastrophe or the failure to sustain equilibrium, three variables interact: a traumatic occurrence, the understanding of the stressor by a family, and the current capabilities of a family. If the family has the means to deal with the stressor's responsibility, so a disaster can be stopped. Families adopt coping mechanisms, such as appealing to their social networks and community services, to alleviate tension efficiently during stressful living circumstances. Efficient coping, or family stability, results in tolerance that can bring equilibrium to the functioning of the family. However, as they have trouble adapting and handling transition, certain households undergo a 'pile-up' of tension, which can lead to maladaptation and poor family functioning over time.

To build on that theory and explore how family functioning relates to children's outcomes, we turn to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979). According to this framework, multiple and complex layers of social contexts influence and support children's development, although "the family is the principal context in which human development takes place" (1986, p. 723). When children are engaged in positive interactions with their caregivers, children are more capable of meeting their full potential (e.g., high competence, low problem behaviors) (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci 1994). When relations are unpleasant or missing, however, then the abilities of children are not understood and they exhibit further difficulties. In this system, we can see the functions of parents as buffering their children from the negative consequences of stress and stimulating healthy growth through active involvement and responsive caregiving.

The parent investment model (Mayer 1997), a third hypothesis, more closely describes the kinds of parental investments to their offspring. According to this model, the success of children relies on the time, resources, energy and encouragement their parents spend in their "human capital." From this viewpoint, parents encourage the growth of children by providing them with a healthy and stimulating home atmosphere and by participating and encouraging them in within and outside home learning opportunities. Family wealth affects the growth of children through the decisions of parents on how to share their money. Investments that lead to better child outcomes are the resources families spend on their children, such as buying toys, books, and learning tools for the home or enrolling in higher quality child care and extracurricular activities. Another significant expenditure is the time and energy expended on youth. In other areas that may not entail extra investment, households with lower financial stability that can not physically pay for their children may be able to compensate.

Different Effects of Instability on Child Development

Economic Instability

Increased material distress is induced by the experience of economic uncertainty, especially when families lack personal properties. Low family income, even when correcting for parental characteristics, adversely influences the social-emotional, cognitive, and academic outcomes of children. The social growth of children during early childhood is more vulnerable to the low family income experience. Literature on the impact of economic insecurity on child growth is small, while literature on economic insecurity and the interaction between poverty and child growth is small.

Employment Instability

Instability of parental jobs is associated with detrimental student effects, such as grade attrition, decreased college achievement, and behaviours of internalisation and externalisation. For children with parents with a high school diploma or fewer, the impact on grade retention is greatest, and for blacks the impact on educational achievement is greater than for whites, males, and first-born girls. In dual-income families, the lack of a father's work could be more closely linked to the academic out co-education of children. In dual-income families, the work loss of a parent could be more closely linked to the academic results of children than the job loss of a mother. Job volatility leads to poor behavioural consequences for children than when a parent voluntarily switches employers, works full-time low-wage jobs, or has fluctuating working hours.

Family Instability

Family dysfunction, also at early ages, is related to problem habits and certain academic performance. With frequent shifts in family structure, children's problem behaviours further increase. The main results tend to be family changes that begin early in the growth of infants, before age 6, and in puberty. While young children need constant caregivers with whom they can develop stable relationships, to excel, teenagers need parental support, role models, and residence stability and colleges. Children exhibit more aggressive attitudes as they lack the social and material resources they need to navigate a family adjustment smoothly at home.

Residential Instability

Children with residential dysfunction exhibit poorer academic and social effects than their residentially healthy counterparts, such as lower language abilities, problem habits, grade completion, higher drop-out rates for high schools, and lower educational performance for adults. Academically, relative to younger students, primary school children tend to be the most vulnerable to residential transition, non-school-age children and older children, however residential insecurity is associated across age classes to low social growth. The effects of residential instability on children can be affected by home and community efficiency as housing transfers contribute to improvements in children's environments.

Instability in Out-of-Home Contexts: School and Child Care

Changes in schools and plans for child care are frequent, particularly when families relocate or change occupations, but among low-income families, school mobility and child care insecurity are most prevalent. Changes in child care settings for children can lead to weak loyalty to caregivers and disruptive behaviours. Early care and education environments promote the acquisition of basic school preparation skills for pre-school children; shifts in care settings will interrupt the quality of learning. For school-age students, school reforms hinder the academic development of children and diminish social maturity. During early elementary and high school, school mobility has the greatest effect, with numerous school transitions contributing to bad outcomes.

Implications for Policy and Practice

For services that represent and help families of children, this study has significant policy ramifications. One approach for targeting new care and case management is to provide processes and procedures in place in early childhood programmes and schools to recognise families who are facing a lot of changes. Additional steps should be made to target maternal mental health and maternal capacity building, recognising the important role parents play in how children are impacted in the long term. The effect of uncertainty on children can be eased by well-designed, two-generational prevention services aimed at promoting proactive parenting, reducing parental and youth tension, and enhancing family coping mechanisms.

Although parents are largely responsible for ensuring the well-being and safe growth of their children, a wide variety of government services, notably for children in low-income communities, also play an important role. In the form of cash transfers or affordable rent, child care, or food, safety net services offer financial aid to households, both of which serve to mitigate the acute effects of instability. However, by understanding why any administrative procedures unwittingly exacerbate uncertainty, the services might do better to stabilise the situation for children. Such possible solutions are streamlined reporting processes, longer qualifying periods, and a single, standardised qualifying mechanism for different programmes.

Conclusions

Children today face a dual series of barriers to their safe growth. When they work insecure jobs, live in insecure accommodation, have unstable marriages, and cope with unstable child care plans, several parents struggle to make ends meet. Sudden shifts in the lives of families also lead to differences in both the home and out-of-home worlds. Public services that can help children and families in times of crisis, meanwhile, are inadequately financed to satisfy the demand. The uncertainty affecting too many children poses concerns about how uncertainty affects their growth and how it is possible to prevent or mitigate the consequences of instability. This inquiry is vital to the potential economic well-being of the country.

In comparison, children suffering uncertainty have findings that are as bad as, and even worse than, children's findings in healthy yet unfavourable circumstances. The results in the literature, for example, consistently illustrate the difference between two-parent and single-parent household children, although there is some evidence that children of parents who switch into and out of dysfunctional relationships

could be worse off than children in healthy, single-parent families. Similar trends are found in low-income households for parental work, in which the influence of job insecurity on child activity can be greater than that of steady, full-time employment in low-wage occupations. For adolescents, these disturbances or complicated transitions may be upsetting. Latest literature on persistent or harmful sources of stress shows that stress-induced physiological disruption can affect brain growth and cognitive and social functioning. Although this level of stress does not result in most improvements in children's lives, this growing body of research describes the fundamental biological causes for disparities in outcomes for children subject to adverse life experiences.

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