

Effectiveness of an Attachment-Based Intervention on Child Cognitive Development: Preliminary Analyses of a 12-Month Follow-Up

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Abstract : Introduction: Over the last decade, researchers have implemented attachment-based interventions to promote parental interactive sensitivity and child development among vulnerable families. In the context of the present study, these interventions have been shown to be effective to enhance cognitive development when child outcome was measured shortly after the intervention. Objectives: The goal of the study was to investigate the effects of an attachment-based intervention on child cognitive development one year post-intervention. Methods: Thirty-five mother-child dyads referred by Child Protective Services in the province of Québec, Canada, were included in this study: 21 dyads who received 6 to 8 intervention sessions and 14 dyads not exposed to the intervention and matched for the following variables: duration of child protective services, reason for involvement with child protection, age, sex and family status. Child cognitive development was measured using the WPPSI-IV, 12 months after the end of the intervention when the average age of children was 54 months old. Findings: An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the scores obtained on the WPPSI-IV for the two groups. In general, no differences were observed between the two groups. There was a significant difference on the fluid reasoning scale between children exposed to the intervention ($M = 95.13$, $SD = 16.67$) and children not exposed ($M = 81$, $SD = 9.90$). $T(23) = -2.657$; $p = .014$ ($IC : -25.13; 3.12$). This difference was found only for children aged between 48 and 92 months old. Other results did not show any significant difference between the two groups (Global IQ or subscales). Conclusions: This first set of analyses suggest that relatively little effects of attachment-based intervention remain on the level of cognitive functioning 12-months post-intervention. It is possible that the significant findings concerning fluid reasoning may be pertinent in that fluid reasoning is linked to the capacity to analyse, to solve problems, and remember information, which may be important for promoting school readiness. As the study is completed and as more information is gained from other assessments of cognitive and socioemotional outcome, a clearer picture of the potential moderate-term impact of attachment-based intervention will emerge.

Keywords : attachment-based intervention, child development, child protective services, cognitive development

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