

Church-sponsored child care: Association of regulatory level with quality for young children.

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Project Description.

The specific aims of this dissertation research are to explore the quality of church-sponsored center-based child care as observed in three levels of state child care regulation. The first objective is to determine if and how global child care quality and teacher-child interactions vary in infant classrooms and preschool classrooms across three groups of differently-regulated church-sponsored centers. The second objective is to determine if the structural characteristics of group size, adult-child ratio, caregiver education level, and caregiver age mediate the relationship between level of state regulation and child care quality. The results will support the CCDF goals of understanding variations in child care quality provided to children from low income families, and the effects of government regulation on quality, and will inform policy makers as they consider future support and regulation of child care quality.

Research questions.

- Does overall child care quality and teacher-child interaction differ in infant classrooms and preschool classrooms across the three groups of differently regulated centers?
- Do group size, adult-child ratio, caregiver education level, and caregiver age mediate the relationship between level of regulation and global quality scores?
- Do group size, adult-child ratio, caregiver education level, and caregiver age mediate the relationship between level of regulation and teacher-child interaction?

Sample. This study proposes to compare the overall quality of three groups of church-sponsored child care centers, including one randomly-selected infant classroom and one preschool classroom. The groups will differ in the level of regulation to which center adheres in their daily operations. The first group consists of 19 licensed centers. The second group

consists of 20 unlicensed registered ministry centers that have completed the state's Voluntary Certification Program (VCP) requirements, and the third group consists of 20 randomly selected unlicensed registered ministries that have not completed the VCP requirements.

Methods. The research design is a three group quasi-experimental comparison study using a matched purposeful sample. The Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R; Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 2005) and the Infant / Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ITERS-R; Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 2006) will be used to measure global child care quality in classrooms. The Caregiver Interaction Scale (CIS; Arnett, 1989) will be used to measure the quality of teacher-child interactions. An additional teacher survey will be used to collect teacher demographic information including teacher age, educational level, and degree specialization

Progress Update.

Key informants have been consulted throughout the state in order to maximize the policy-relevance of the research and its results. Data collection has been completed. Data analysis, writing and dissemination of results are ongoing.

Implications for policy/practice.

The long term goal of this study is to inform policy regarding the relationship between government child care center regulation (licensing vs. license exemption) and overall child care quality in this growing type of unlicensed child care.

Implications for research.

This research will explore for the first time quality in a large category of child care in Indiana and other

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states that serve low income families: church-sponsored license-exempt child care centers.

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