RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH LATENT CLASSES OF CHILD NEGLECT

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INTRODUCTION

Child neglect is the most common type of child maltreatment and the type most frequently associated with child fatality. Although neglected children typically endure multiple types of neglect (e.g., physical, emotional, educational, medical) and other forms of abuse during a single maltreatment incident, prior studies on neglect phenomenology and associated risk factors have primarily examined neglect types in isolation.

Objectives
- To advance understanding of the phenomenology of neglect incidents that more closely match the experiences of neglected children, we examined latent classes of neglect defined by co-occurring incident characteristics, including multiple neglect types and other forms of abuse.
- To inform efforts to identify families at-risk for particular classes of neglect, we also examined associations between potential risk factors and latent classes of neglect.

METHOD

Sample
- Case records for 390 substantiated neglect incidents involving children of U.S. Army service members

Procedure
- Neglect types and subtypes (x-axis, Figure 1) and incident severity were classified using the Modified Maltreatment Classification System
- Neglect incident characteristics (i.e., incident-related offender and victim substance use) and risk factors were coded using information drawn from case records

Statistical Analysis
- Latent class analysis (LCA) was used to examine patterns of co-occurring incident characteristics
- Multinomial logistic regressions were used to examine associations between potential risk factors and latent classes of neglect

RESULTS

LCA yielded 5 classes.

1. Exposure to violence-high severity (EV-high) – high probability of failure to protect from violence, emotional neglect, and high severity (35.89%)
2. Supervisory lapses-low severity (LS-low) – moderate probabilities of general lack of supervision and unsafe environment, as well as low severity (22.05%)
3. Failure to provide-high severity (FTP-high) – high probability of failure to provide shelter and hygiene, as well as high severity (18.72%)
4. Non-specific-low severity (NS-low) – moderate probabilities of failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, and healthcare; as well as low severity (12.05%)
5. Alcohol-related endangerment-high severity (ARE-high) – high probabilities of offender alcohol/drug use during the incident and moral/legal neglect, as well as high severity (11.28%)

Figure 1. Item response probabilities for latent class indicators for each latent class

Note. Item response probabilities ≥ .20 are shown. FTP, Failure to provide. n = 390

RESULTS (CONTINUED)

Risk Factors Associated with Increased Likelihood of Class Membership
- EV-high was associated with parental isolation (vs. class 5, OR=4.06), prior child maltreatment (vs. classes 1, OR=3.34), spouse abuse (vs. classes 2-5, ORs=2.53), and family conflict (vs. classes 2-5, ORs=2.68)
- LS-low was associated with prior child maltreatment (vs. class 5, OR=3.69), childcare problems (vs. class 1, OR=5.59), current deployment (vs. class 1, OR=10.07), family stress (vs. class 1, OR=5.22), and family mental health problems (vs. class 1, OR=4.36)
- FTP-high was associated with poor knowledge of child-rearing practices (vs. class 1, OR=2.62), prior child maltreatment (vs. classes 4-5, ORs=2.24), current deployment (vs. all classes, ORs=4.95), and family mental health problems (vs. class 1, OR=4.67)
- NS-low was associated with poor knowledge of child-rearing practices (vs. class 1, OR=2.68), current deployment (vs. class 1, OR=6.21), and family mental health problems (vs. class 1, OR=5.00)
- ARE-high was associated with parental history of substance use (vs. all classes, ORs=2.44)

CONCLUSION

- High and low severity classes were associated with relatively distinct risk factors, which underscores the importance of tailored prevention strategies
- High severity classes were associated with risk factors that are likely to draw the attention of law enforcement or child protective services (e.g., family conflict, prior maltreatment)
- Authorities should incorporate assessments of high-severity risk factors into existing screening protocols to identify families at risk of severe child neglect

REFERENCES


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