

Day-care affects a child's social, emotional

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



There has been many concerns raised by the various child psychology theories from people such as Bowlby as to whether disruption in the infant-mother bond at an early age by entering into a day-care facility for effects the child ability to socially interact, be emotionally stable or their cognitive development. Much research has been conducted on this topic as it's raised a lot of concern among parents, particularly working mothers.

Concern with day-care began to emerge when woman broke free from the traditional " housewife" role and became empowered to work. With more and more children attending day-care due to the increase in women in full time employment research into day-care became more relevant to ensure that the quality of the day-care was sufficient enough for our children and to monitor any adverse effects that might be caused from disruption in the maternal bond at a young age.

When examining the effects of day-care on emotional development (i. . " learning to perceive, appraise, and express emotions accurately and appropriately, to use emotions to facilitate thinking, to understand and analyse emotions, to use emotional knowledge effectively, and to regulate one's emotions to promote both emotional and intellectual growth" (Gerrig and Zimbardo 2002), the attachment bond is examined using Ainsworth's " strange situation" technique where in which the infant and mother are situated in a room with a stranger.

A series of uncomfortable and slightly distressful episodes occur including the mother leaving the child with the stranger and shortly returning, the child's behaviour during separation and again on reunification are observed

to see whether the child is securely attached Egeland and Hiester (1995) used the strange situation technique when comparing attachment types of children who were home-reared with those who attended day-care.

They found that children who were securely attached to their mother experienced adverse effects from day-care compared to insecurely attached children who appeared to benefit. The insecurely attached children tended to show little stress and sometimes ignored their mother when she returns; it could be concluded that day-care may provide a safe, stable environment in which they miss their parents but look forward to reunification. Egeland and Hiester believed that insecurely attached children may benefit more than securely attached children.

However this study has received criticism from Belsky and Steinberg who said that the strange situation technique was not necessarily valid in determining attachment levels as it is a bizarre situation; they said that day care is totally different to this technique as the children is used to it and is less confusing for them. In 1980 Kagen et al conducted " The Boston day-care study" which aimed to examine the effects of day-care on young children.

The participants were 33 infants who attended the nursery that Kagen et al had set up themselves; the children were in the nursery from three and a half months old. The nursery had a mixed intake of children from lower to middle class families and from various ethnic groups. The staff to child ratio was low to ensure close emotional contact. There was a matched control group of children who were home reared for comparison and the children

were assessed over 2 years for attachment type, cognitive ability and general sociability.

Kagen found no consistently large difference between nursery and home reared children in any of the dependant variables but found a large variability among all children but concluded this was due to individual differences in attachment caused by temperament or home factors. Though Kagens study has contributed to the debate on whether day-care has an impact on children's development it has been criticised as the sample of infants was from a small sample in Boston and so not generalisable despite attempts by the researcher to make the sample as diverse as possible.

Many have argued that there was probably a certain element of researcher biased as they had set up the nursery and might be subjective in interpreting the results and because the nursery was run by child psychologists the quality of care may be massively different from that of a normal nursery, but it can be argued that the study has massive ecological validity as the children didn't know any different and therefore has application in today's world.

There has conflicting research on the effects of day-care on infants, for example Pennebaker et al (1981) found those children who were naturally shy & unsociable found nursery a threatening and frightening place which could have a negative effect on later years at school. However, Clarke-Stewart, Gruber & Fitzgerald (1994) looked at 150 children from Chicago aged between two and three years and from various social backgrounds.

They found that peer relationships were more advanced in children who had attended day-care as they had learnt to cope with social situations and how to negotiate with peers which proved to be useful in later life. Clarke-Stewart's study cannot really be generalised though as despite children coming from various social backgrounds, they were all from Chicago and the sample is not large enough to generalise to the population.

In 1981 Shea found that as sociability increased over the first 10 weeks in nursery, there was a decrease in the distance from the nearest child and a 17% decrease in aggression but an increase in rough and tumble play. The increase in sociability was related to the number of days attending nursery, suggesting that the more children attended nursery, the more sociable they became. As for the effects on cognitive ability, Ruhm et al carried out a huge study on 4000 infants in 2000.

They found that those who had entered nursery during their first three years shower inferior verbal skills at 3 - 4 years of age. This was probably because they are talking to other peers with equally poor verbal skills whereas at home they might have much "richer" conversations with their mother as she would talk in full sentences. They also found that there was a link between day-care in the first three years and poorer maths & verbal skills but 5-6 years old. Although this study can be generalised as the sample is very large, it only shows correlational link so we cannot infer cause and effects.

There may also be other factors that caused these results, for example it may be the quality of day-care rather than day-care itself. However in Burchinal, Lee and Ramey's cross sectional study in 1989 it was found that

those who entered day-care usually scored higher in IQ tests than those who had stayed at home, but in 1979 Tizard found that conversations between mother and child were more complex than between nursery staff and child irrespective of social class, which led to better verbal skills in those who had stayed at home.

Field (1991) used two longitudinal sets to explore the grade school performance of children who received infant day-care. Parents filled out a questionnaire packet that included the "Buck Internalizer/Externalizer Scale" and the "Behaviour Rating Scale", while the children filled out the "Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale", as well as, the children's version on the Buck Internaliser/Externaliser Scale. The amount of time spent in high quality day-care was positively related to the number of peers the child had in grade school and the number of extracurricular activities they were involved with.

The measurements revealed positive ratings from teachers and parents and the children were also observed to have a low amount of behavioural problems. This suggests that quality day-care has a positive on social and cognitive development. There is much conflicting correlational evidence supporting a case for both day care having a positive effects on a child or a negative effect though it is reasonable to assume that a child will benefit from good quality day care and that a children do not usually experience adverse effects as a result of being separated from the mother for long periods of time.

However it is also reasonable to argue that poor quality day-care could effect a child emotionally, socially and cognitively, for this very reason nursery's

are closely regulated to ensure a good standard of care and poor quality nursery's are not usually available to the majority of the public, parents should obviously inspect the establishment personally though.