Evaluating the Impact of Child Care Services at Home - SAFE Organization

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Social Work

By

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Date

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Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature Page</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Social and Emotional Development DRDP</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Language and Literacy Development DRDP</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Cognitive Development DRDP</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: Table: 1Social-Emotional Development, Frequencies</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E: Table 2 Language and Literacy Development, Frequencies</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F: Table 3: Cognitive Development, Frequencies</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

Evaluating the Impact of Child Care Services at Home-SAFE Organization

By

Miguel Alvarez

Master of Social Work

Purpose: To evaluate the helpfulness of Home-SAFE, child care program, on the social-emotional, cognitive, language and literacy development of children at risk for neglect.

Research Question: Does the intervention of childcare enrichment developmental activity visits associated with improved development of children?

Method: In a data analysis, this study examined the child care developmental activity visits intervention offered by Home-SAFE as measured by the child’s pre-post scores on the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) standardized scale. A Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was utilized to analyze 75 program pre-and post-test (DRDP) files; the sample included children in the age range of 0 to 3 years old that completed an intake pre-test at Home-SAFE during 2005 and then followed by a posttest in 2008. Results: Social-emotional development scores showed significant increase from entering the Home-SAFE child care program (M = -1.41, SD= .49) to three years of participation in the program (M = 3.28, SD = .45), Z=7.664b, P = .00). Language and literacy development scores indicated a significant increase from entering the Home-SAFE child care program (M = 1.20, SD = .40) to three years of participation in the program (M= 3.28,
SD = .45, Z = 8.366^b, P = .00). Cognitive development scores showed significant increase from entering the Home-SAFE child care program (M = 1.41, SD = .49) to three years of participation in the program (M = 3.38, SD = .49), Z = 8.553^b, P = .00). Discussion: The Home-SAFE child care enrichment activity program supported the social-emotional, cognitive, language and literacy development of the participating children. The sample of 75 DRDP children files showed improvement in their social-emotional, cognitive, language and literacy development. These results should be read with caution. As a pre-test post-test single group design, it is a pre-experiment and thus cannot establish cause only plausibility. It will need a random controlled trial to establish whether the program causes the changes in social-emotional, cognition, and language and literacy development.
Introduction

A child’s developmental skills are an important component that contributes to being a healthy child. How well a child develops is dependent on the type of care that they receive as they grow up. According to Sroufe, L., Egeland, B., Carlson, E. & Collins, W. (2005) a child’s development is dependent on the interaction that the child has amongst his/her environment. This includes being exposed to influential factors such as their parents, peers, family members, child care programs, school, and the community. The reason as to why so many children have delays in their development has to do with the type of care and attention that they receive as they grow up.

Naughton, A., Maguire, S., Mann, M., Lumb, R., Tempest, V., et al. (2013) states that one of the major child populations that exhibit these developmental skill delays are children who are at-risk of neglect.

When a child experiences a negative event in their life it affects his/her developmental trajectory. This can often become an issue when a child experiences neglect. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Administration for Children and Families (2006) defines child neglect as any recent act or failure to act on the part of a caregiver that can result in the child experiencing physical harm, sexual abuse, or other serious harm. There are many types of child neglect including physical, environmental, emotional, educational, inadequate supervision, and exposure to drug use. When a child’s basic needs are not being met, the child becomes a victim of neglect. Due to the consequences of neglect, the development of the child is affected. Children who are neglected usually experience impaired attachments that affect their emotional and social functioning from childhood to adulthood. According to Dubowitz
et al. (1993) “Child Neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment, accounting for over half of all reported cases to the child protective services” (p. 8). Any child can become a victim of neglect, but one of the most vulnerable populations that exhibit neglect are children in the toddler and preschool age. These specific age cohorts range from the ages of zero to six.

According to Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, and Collins (2005), a child’s toddler and preschool years are an important part of development because during this age they begin to interact with individuals outside their home environment. When doing so, they begin to build their own unique sense of self and begin to take agency over their own life. Sroufe et al. (2005) describes it as a “Time of expanding social competence and, typically, a time of broadening social relationships” (p.122). Building this agency consist of many factors such as, the child’s developmental history, the attachment with his/her caregiver and the current interactions the child experiences.

The role of the caregiver and the resources that are provided by the community are factors that greatly impact the risk trajectory of a child. Coming from a low-socio economic status can put the child at risk of being neglected. In the article, “Risk Factors for Child Neglect” by Schumacher et al. (2001), a statistical analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between socio-economic status and child neglect. The results of the study state “Being in a low-income family was a risk factor for both physical and educational neglect” (p. 235). Living in impoverished conditions can directly and indirectly affect the child through the actions of a parent. Caregivers who live in low SES conditions are less likely to provide the basic necessities for a child, which are often caused by the limited resources that their environment has available. This is
where useful resources such as child care programs must be taken into consideration.

Child care programs can provide adequate care for the child with the use of their educational programs, and therapy. By implementing child care programs that are accessible to low income families with children who at risk of neglect, then children can enhance their developmental skills.

**Background**

There are several studies that have been conducted on the effectiveness of child care programs and its correlation to child development skills. According to the Committee on Family and Work Policies (2003), in 1999, 9.8 million American children who were under the age of five years old were in child care for 40 or more hours a week. The data shows the high number of children that spend a major part of their time in child care. There is high probability that many of these children are exhibiting or are at-risk of child neglect. The reason for this is due to the inability for parents to care for their children full time because of their busy schedules and other social factors. The parent or caregiver might show signs of bad parenting when failing to execute things by themselves. This can often be seen in single parent households. A parent alone might not be able to provide appropriate care, guidance, emotional support, and warmth to his/her child while juggling work and other personal issues. When a single parent lacks emotional support, decision-making guidance, problem solving skills, and companionship, high amounts of stress can take a toll in their actions. They might experiences feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety. These potential factors can lead into the temptation of drugs as a way to escape. Garbarino (1992) states, “Drug and alcohol addiction incapacitates and isolates many family microsystems. Harsh
conditions of life in many public housing projects— including the intersection of poverty and chronic violence— lead to widespread depression amongst mothers ‘left behind’ to care for children” (p. 44). When a parent exhibits this type of behavior a child becomes at high risk of being neglected.

Naughton et al., (2013) states that “a retrospective study of 212 neglected children found that, at 4 years, impairment in receptive and expressive language, socially aggressive behavior, withdrawn behavior, and attention problems were significantly associated with several markers for neglect. Neglected children appeared to have early deficits in emotional knowledge, which persisted over time without intervention, from 4 to 5 years” (p. 772). This is largely because the caregiver-child interaction is not strong enough to help the child cope with factors outside the home such as school. Sroufe et al. (2005) states that children who have a high self-esteem were prone to be much more socially skilled, competent, independent, and empathetic later on in their life. This is where the caregiver-child interaction plays a huge role. With adequate child care programs children can benefit drastically and improve their developmental skill by interacting with well-trained caregivers that provide the necessary resources to help the child develop fully.

According to Berger (2009), a research was conducted to investigate the impact of early childhood education and care on the development of children. This study assessed the effects of care programs on children’s cognitive development. The findings indicated the vast majority of early education and care programs had only a considerably positive short term impact on a child’s cognitive development. Burger (2009) states, “NICHD Study of Early Child Care (Belsky, 2006) highlighted that lots of time spent in
any form of care – irrespective of its quality – can be related to problematic social
development in subsequent years -although the effects on cognitive outcome measures
were shown to be positive-” (p.144). This study suggests that child care does provide a
positive outcome to a child’s developmental skills but can be detrimental in following
years.

According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development a study was done on the effects of
early child care on children’s cognitive functioning (Belsky et al., 2007). This included
children in the ages of 4 years of age through the end of 6th grade. The results of the
study state, “Although parenting was a stronger and more consistent predictor of
children's development than early child-care experience, higher quality care predicted
higher vocabulary scores and more exposure to center care predicted more teacher-
reported externalizing problems”(Belsky, 2007,p.681). This study concluded that higher
quality care predicted higher developmental skills for the child.
Method

Participant characteristics

From the beginning of August 2005, 75 Desired Results Development Profile (DRDP) intake forms were filed at the Home–SAFE child care program. These DRDP files consisted of newly enrolled children who had not previously received services from a child care program. The present investigation focused on the effectiveness of the Home-Safe child care developmental activities enrichment visit intervention program through the examination of a sample of 75 DRDP files. Hispanic ethnic groups represented the whole sample. Children were between the ages of 0 to 11 months at the time of enrollment. The DRDP forms that were utilized consisted of children who are of low socioeconomic status, with no physical or learning disability. The DRDP files were divided between female and male children.

Sampling procedures

The DRDP files were collected from the Home–SAFE center (Child Care Program) located in the Hollywood and Mid-Wilshire area. In order to meet the Home-SAFE (Child Care Program) criterion all children files were of low income, at risk of child neglect, and located within the Hollywood and Mid-Wilshire area. The child care staff pulled out the 2005 intake DRDP forms. These forms were redacted to include no identifiable data from the participants. Each set of DRDP files were assigned a unique number e.g. 001pre, 001post; 002pre, 002post, 003 pre, 003post and so on before redacted files were handed to the researcher to begin the study.
Research Design

This study was conducted with a pretest/posttest design with the use of the California department of education Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP). The DRDP is an assessment instrument that is designed for instructors to observe, document, and reflect on the learning and development of children from birth to 12 years of age who are enrolled in a child care program (California Department of Education, 2015). The DRDP consists of three domains (social and emotional development, language and literacy development, and cognitive development) that are broken down into levels of responding, exploring, building and integrating., where “responding” means low developing skills and “integrating” means strong developing skills. Levels of “exploring” fall in the low-intermediate developmental stage and “building” falls in the high-intermediate developmental stage. Each level then has a subsection that divides how advanced the child is in that particular level (earlier, later) as outlined in Appendix A, Appendix B, and Appendix C. The child is categorized into these developmental levels by clinician observation that is guided through the DRDP standards. These standards provide a brief description and examples of behavior that the clinician should be looking out for when observing the child, as shown in Appendix A, Appendix B, and Appendix C. In this particular study, a child’s development was tracked in the DRDP every 6 months until they turned three years old as indicated by the file reports. The scores indicated by the DRDP at the end of the three year old mark determined the child’s level of development.

Intervention

The intervention that is being tested is the Home-SAFE child care enrichment
activity program. According to Facilities - Vista Del Mar. (2014), the program focuses on enrichment activities such as circle time, reading books, one-to-one interaction, and play time. These activities are provided in the Home-SAFE child care on a weekly basis. All children were required to participate in these mandatory activities. The activities are broken up throughout the week so that they are distributed evenly and are conducted by trained and experienced caregivers.
Results

These results should be read with caution. As a Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test single group design, it is a pre-experiment and thus cannot establish cause only plausibility. It will need a random controlled trial to establish whether the program causes the changes in social-emotional, cognition, and language and literacy development. Data analysis of the DRDP pre-test and post-test was conducted with a Wilcoxon Test and descriptive analysis that tested the alternate hypothesis and null hypothesis. The null hypothesis stated that the Home–SAFE child care enrichment activities intervention would not improve the developmental skills of children at-risk of neglect. The alternative hypothesis stated that the Home–SAFE child care enrichment activities intervention would improve the developmental skills of children at-risk of neglect. The test was conducted to assess whether there was a significant improvement between the childrens’ DRDP file pre-test and post-test scores in sample of 75 DRDP files (N=75).

A Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the Home-SAFE child care enrichment activity program on the children’s three Desired Results Developmental Profile’ subscales: Social-emotional, cognitive, language and literacy. Social-emotional development scores showed significant increase from entering the Home-SAFE child care program (M = -1.41, SD=.49) to three years of participation in the program (M =3.28, SD =.45, Z=7.664b, P = .00). Language and literacy development scores indicated a significant increase from entering the Home-SAFE child care program (M = 1.20, SD = .40) to three years of participation in the program (M= 3.28, SD =.45, Z= 8.366b, P = .00). Cognitive development scores showed significant
increase from entering the Home-SAFE child care program (M = 1.41, SD = .49) to three years of participation in the program (M = 3.38, SD = .49), Z = 8.553b, P = .00). This means that the Home-SAFE child care enrichment activity program supported the social-emotional, language and literacy, and cognitive development of the participating children.

The subscale frequencies for social-emotional development showed an increase in development scores form the pretest (Responding =44, Exploring=31) to post-test (Building=54; Integrating=21). Please see Appendix D

The subscale frequencies for Language and Literacy development showed an increase in development scores form the pretest (Responding =60, Exploring=15) to post-test (Building=54; Integrating=21). Please see Appendix E

The subscale frequencies for cognitive development showed an increase in development scores form the pretest (Responding =44, Exploring=31) to post-test (Building=46; Integrating=29). Please see Appendix F.
Discussion

Data collected during the project *Evaluating the Impact of Child Care Services at Home*-SAFE Organization indicated that the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was significant for social-emotional, cognitive, and literature and literacy development. This data was collected by using a quantitative approach with the use of the DRDP. The sample of 75 DRDP children files showed improvement in their social-emotional, cognitive, language and literacy development. According to the DRDP results all children made drastic improvements in their developing stages from having scores in the “Responding” and “Exploring” levels during the pretest and falling under the category of “building” and “integrating” at the time of the post-test. The DRDP scores were categorized through the caregivers’ observation of the child. How the caregiver categorized the child’s development was through the use of the DRDP standards as shown in Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C. These standards include the responding, exploring, building, and integrating stages. Take note that is pre-experiment and does not fully indicate if the intervention improved the childrens’ social-emotional, language and literacy, and cognitive development.

Meaning

The *Evaluating the Impact of Child Care Services at Home*-SAFE Organization project assessed whether the intervention Home-SAFE Child Care enrichment activity program had a positive effect on improving children’s development. Pre-test and post-test scores indicated that there was an improvement in children’s social-emotional, cognitive, language and literacy development skills. Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, and Collins, (2005), indicate that a child’s toddlers years play an enormous part of
development because the child is able interact with individuals outside their home environment. If this interaction is positive then they begin to build adequate developing skills that help them take agency over their own life. Through the study we are able to see that effective caregivers that operate these child care activities can make an impact on a child’s development.

**Implication of Social Work**

Social workers need to be aware of the effectiveness that childcare programs have on a child’s development. Having this knowledge can help reduce the amount of children who grow up having poor development skills. This study showed that children can benefit drastically and improve their developmental skills by interacting with well-trained caregivers that provide the necessary resources for the children to develop fully. Acquiring this knowledge can help for social workers to link children who are in need of these child day care services.

**Limitations**

The *Evaluating the Impact of Child Care Services at Home-SAFE Organization* results were significant and the children showed improvement in their social, cognitive, language and literacy development DRDP scores; however due to sample bias the population examined was all Hispanic. This means that the finding may not apply to other ethnic populations. Although there is this selection bias, the study did indicate a significant improvement in social-emotional, cognitive, language and literacy development skills of 75 DRDP children files. Observation bias may also be a limitation for this study, therefore that the DRDP files are solely based on caregiver observation.
Conclusion

In conclusion, the intervention of child care enrichment activities improved the developmental skills of children. The intervention was able to increase children’s social-emotional, cognitive, and literature and literacy development as shown by the DRDP score improvement. Providing adequate child care activities that fully engage the child can impact their overall developmental skills. Social workers who are aware of the effects of child care on children development can begin to refer children in need of help to these services.

Future Research

Research that is centered on the impacts that child care has on child development is limited in the field of social work, especially when there are a vast of environmental and social factors that can play a role in determining how the child develops. Future research should focus on assessing the impact of child care programs with children in the age range of 0 to 3 from different populations of people, and gathering other influential information such as gender, and race. Research should also have a follow up of the children’s development after they have exceeded the three year old mark. This is important in order to validate whether the child has continued to have improvements in their development after they have ended services with child care.
References


# Appendix A

## Social and Emotional Development Subscale of the DRDP

### SED 2: Social and Emotional Understanding

Child shows developing understanding of people's behaviors, feelings, thoughts, and individual characteristics.

Mark the latest developmental level the child has mastered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Responding</th>
<th>Exploring</th>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Integrating</th>
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<tr>
<td>Later</td>
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Possible Examples:

- **Responding:**
  - Shows awareness of what to expect from familiar people by responding to or anticipating their actions.
  - Seeks when an adult continues after pausing during a game of patty-cake.
  - Looks toward the location of where an adult's face will appear during a game of peek-a-boo.
  - Looks in a mirror or adjusts body when a familiar adult is present.
- **Exploring:**
  - Adjusts behavior in response to emotional expressions of familiar people, especially in novel or uncertain situations.
  - May turn toward a familiar adult's facial expression when an unfamiliar person enters the room.
  - Pauses when playing, looks up, and then smiles when hearing a familiar adult's laughter.
  - Starts to climb on a table, but pauses in response to an adult's caution.
  - Adjusts behavior in response to emotional expressions of people who are less familiar.
  - Moves or looks toward a familiar adult when a less familiar adult enters the room.
  - Passes after reaching toward a peer and thenvee to check on the child's response.
  - Steps into a swing or a child on it.
  - Identifies own or others' feelings.
  - Communicates, "I don't like that," and shows a picture or emotion card while looking at it.
- **Building:**
  - Communicates with adult assistance, about feelings that caused own behavior or others' behavior.
  - "Why do you feel sad?"
  - Communicates about why one has a feeling or what will happen as a result of a feeling.
  - Communicates, "I don't like that," and shows a picture or emotion card while looking at it.
- **Integrating:**
  - Communicates ideas about how own or another's personality affects one's thinking, feels, and acts.
  - Communicates ideas about how own or another's personality affects one's thinking, feels, and acts.

- **Child is emerging to the next developmental level:**
  - Child is emerging to the next developmental level.

- **Unable to rate this measure due to extended absence:**
  - Unable to rate this measure due to extended absence.

---

DRDP (2017): A Developmental continuum from Early Infancy to Kindergarten Entry – Preschool Year – August 1, 2017 © 2017–2019 California Department of Education – All rights reserved.
# Developmental Domain: LLD — Language and Literacy Development

## LLD 1: Understanding of Language (Receptive)

Child understands increasingly complex communication and language.

Mark the latest developmental level the child has mastered:

<table>
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<th>Exploring</th>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Integrating</th>
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<td>Earlier</td>
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<td>Later</td>
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</table>

### Possible Examples

- **Turns head toward, or looks in the direction of, the voice of an adult.**
- **Makes eye contact with a familiar adult.**
- **Quiets or orients in the direction of a sound, touch, or gesture.**
- Smiles or gurgles in response to a familiar adult's voice or simple gestures.
- Makes a sound similar to "Mmmmm" during a social interaction with a familiar adult.
- Acts upset to distance from a social interaction with an adult.
- Waves, "bye-bye," after an adult communicates, "Good-bye."
- Looks to the wagon after an adult refers to the wagon.
- Points to pictures of a bird, a tree, and a house, as an adult says the name of each, while looking at a book together.
- Gets jacket after an adult communicates, "Get your jacket. It's time to go outside."
- Moves to the sink after an adult communicates, "Time to wash hands."
- Pours milk at snack time after an adult communicates, "Please pass the milk."
- Adds blocks to a tower after a peer says, "Let's make our skyscraper taller!"
- Pretends to be a character in a story after a read-aloud of the story.
- Draws a picture about the changing seasons, after an adult talks about why the weather has changed.
- Selects materials that float, while making a float, after hearing an adult talk about materials that float or sink.

○ Child is emerging to the next developmental level
○ Unable to rate this measure due to extended absence

---

Understanding of Language (Receptive)

DRDP (2015): A Developmental Continuum from Early Infancy to Kindergarten Entry — Preschool View — August 1, 2015 © 2015-2019 California Department of Education — All rights reserved

Page 11 of 67
### Cognitive Development Subscale of the DRDP

This subscale assesses a child's cognitive development, including problem-solving, reasoning, and understanding of their environment. It's divided into four levels: Earlier, Exploring, Building, and Integrating, with specific indicators for each category.

#### Mark the latest developmental level the child has mastered:

<table>
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- **Possible Examples**
  - **Exploring**
    - Watches wheels roll into a ball if blocked, and then drops it from a block.
    - Watches a ball roll into a ball if blocked, and then drops it from a block.
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Table 1: Social-Emotional Development: Frequencies

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Appendix E

Table 2: Language and Literacy Development: Frequencies

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Table 3: Cognitive: Frequencies

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