Decision-making in child protective services: Perspectives from Israel and the U.S. LONGSCAN project

Merav Jedwab, Ph.D., MSW
School of Social Work
University of Maryland, Baltimore
April, 2015
Child Protection Services (CPS) in Israel

The decision to substantiate maltreatment by child protection social workers in Israel

Predictors of substantiated re-reports in a sample of children with initial unsubstantiated reports, based on the LONGSCAN data
Professionals and citizens have to report about any reasonable suspicion that a child has been maltreated to the police or to the CPS (1989)

Failure to do so is a criminal offense that can result in a 3 or 6 months jail sentence.
High risk

Known to the welfare system (17%)

2,682,160 children population (32%)

CHILDREN IN ISRAEL, 2014

Israeli National Council for the Child, 2014
In 2013, 12.4 per 1000 children were reported (Israel) and 28.3 per 1000 children were reported (US).

**Rise and Types of Allegations**

- **Physical abuse**: 31%
- **Neglect**: 24.1%
- **Sexual abuse**: 11.9%
- **Emotional abuse**: 11.3%

TYPES OF ALLEGATIONS OF MALTREATMENT AND AGE (%)
CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKER

- At least a Bachelor’s degree in social work
- Specific training
- Appointed by the minister of social affairs

Belief in social intervention rather than legal action
The Panel Law prohibits acts of physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect directed at minors (0-18).

Young Law (Care and Supervision) defines seven conditions in which a child may be declared by court as being a “minor in need”.
CHILD PROTECTION PROCESS

- Identification
- Report
- Intake
- Police
- Child Investigation
- Initial assessment
- Disposition
- Decision Making Committee
  Intervention Services
INTERVENTION LEVELS

• Short intervention, case manager, behind the scenes

• Referral to Committee (instead of investigation)(AR)

• Court - A protection order

• Court - A custody order

• Court - Emergency situations (7 days)
SEVEN CONDITIONS FOR “MINOR IN NEED”

1. No one is responsible for the child
2. The adult is incapable of caring for the child
3. Has committed a criminal offense but has not been prosecuted (under 12 years old)
4. Found loitering or peddling
5. Lives in a criminal environment
6. Physical or emotional well-being has been or may be impaired
7. Exposed to drugs in-utero (automatically)
CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

In home services
- Day care
- Daily foster care
- Prevention programs
- Services in the community

Out of home services
- Advocacy centers
- Residential care
- Foster care
- Adoption
QUESTIONS ASKED

- Decision making process
- Different systems
- Practice to research
Child protection decisions to substantiate hospital child protection teams’ reports of suspected maltreatment

Jedwab, Merav
Benbenishty, Rami
Chen, Wendy
Glasser, Saralee
Siegal, Gil
Lerner-Geva, Liat


Funding provided by the Israel National Institute for Health Policy Research and Haruv Institute, Israel
CHILD PROTECTION PROCESS

Identification
Reporting
Intake
Police Child Investigation
Initial assessment
Disposition
Disposition

CPS decision
Disposition

- Substantiated
  - Confirmed
  - Founded/Indicated

- Unsubstantiated
  - Unconfirmed
  - Unfound

- Ruled out

Substantiation means:
“A credible evidence of the abuse or neglect has occurred”

(ACTION for child protection, 2008)
### FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SUBSTANTIATION OF MALTREATMENT

| Social worker                  | • Age    |
|                               | • Experience |
|                               | • Attitudes |
| Allegation of maltreatment    | • Duration |
|                               | • Type of maltreatment |
|                               | • Severity |
| Environment                   | • Minority groups |
|                               | • Support |
|                               | • Services |
| Family                        | • Parent’s mental illness |
|                               | • Low income |
|                               | • Substance abuse |
| Child                         | • Age |
|                               | • Race  |
|                               | • Disability |
WHY IS THE SUBSTANTIATION DECISION SO IMPORTANT?

- Child removal from home
- Provide services for the family in the community
- Criminal charges against the family member
HOSPITAL BASED CHILD PROTECTION TEAM

- Provide preliminary protection to children
- Access to professional resources
- Opportunity for professional involvement
- Appropriate referrals to services and treatment
Hospital based Child Protection Team - CPT

- Multidisciplinary team (social worker, nurse, physician, other professionals)

- Consult, assess, provide diagnosis and decide

- Refer or report to the service in the community or to CPOs/police

- Mandatory in Israel – 1985
METHOD

- Prospective
- Six hospitals
- Follow-up Child Protection Officer (CPO) interview

**Sample:**

- Age: born-18
- Data was collected in the course of one year (2010)
- **CPT case report**
  A structured questionnaire was designed (such as: socio-demographic background, parents health and function etc.)

- **CPO case report**
  A structured interview
972
Cases referred to the CPT

549 (56%)
Cases were reported

87 (15.9%)
CPS no response

462 (84.1%)
CPS follow up

104 (22.6%)
Didn’t reach to the CPS

358 (77.4%)
CPS response

CPS feedback
FINDINGS

Child’s gender
- Male: 43.9%
- Female: 56.1%

Child’s ethnicity
- Jewish: 69.0%
- Arabs: 27.4%
- Unknown: 3.6%

Child’s place of living
- Home: 79.6%
- Other: 20.4%

Parents marital status
- Married: 58.7%
- Other: 41.3%

Child’s health problems
- No: 47.2%
- Yes: 37.4%
- Unknown: 1.4%
53.5% of the reports were substantiated
DISTRIBUTION OF THE SUBSTANTIATED CASES*

- Emotional neglect: 41.1%
- Physical neglect: 35.7%
- Emotional abuse: 25.4%
- Physical abuse: 25.4%
- Sexual abuse: 10.8%

*multiple response
### Multivariate Hierarchical Logistic Regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alleged abuse or neglect</td>
<td>1.604</td>
<td>0.696</td>
<td>4.975*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of danger-father</td>
<td>0.876</td>
<td>0.312</td>
<td>2.401**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under Age 1</td>
<td>-1.305</td>
<td>0.585</td>
<td>0.271*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish children</td>
<td>-1.787</td>
<td>0.377</td>
<td>0.167***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001
DISCUSSION

- 22.6% did not reach the CPOs
- Findings conform to professional knowledge
- Newborns were less likely to be substantiated
- Arab children were more likely to be substantiated (minority group, poverty, low SES families)
Confirmation from CPOs

Cooperation between the Health and Social Services

Structured and formal tools
FUTURE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Findings
- 10% arrived to the hospital in the past
- 25% families were known already to the CPS
- 46% were unsubstantiated

Questions
- What factors may predict re-report?
- What is the likelihood of unsubstantiated cases to be re-reported?
- Time frame

Israel
- No longitudinal data
Predictors of substantiated re-reports in a sample of children with initial unsubstantiated reports

Merav Jedwab, Ph.D., School of Social work
Donna Harrington, Ph.D., School of Social Work
Howard Dubowitz, MD, MS, FAAP, School of Medicine
University of Maryland, Baltimore
CHILDREN WHO RECEIVED AN INVESTIGATION OR AR BY DISPOSITION

- Unsubstantiated: 57.7%
- Substantiated: 17.5%
- AR: 11.6%
- No alleged maltreatment: 9.7%
- Other: 3.5%

USDHHD, 2015
How many children will be reported again and substantiated?
WHAT FACTORS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH RE-REPORT?

Child
• Age (young)
• Disability
• Gender (girls and sexual abuse)

Parent
• Substance abuse
• Stress
• Domestic violence
• Low income

Environment
• Services
• Resources
• Social support

Allegation of maltreatment
• Type (neglect, multiple)
• Severity
• History with CPS
Other studies
- Only subst. cases or all disposition’s types
- Most are based on only from one State
- Short observations

Current study
- Initially unsubstantiated
- Data from 5 sites
- 14 years of observation
Early identification of risk cases

Children may benefit from additional services

Reduce repeated reports to CPS
STUDY AIMS

- To identify patterns of maltreatment events (Estimate the amount of time to the occurrence of the event)

- To identify what factors are associated with children who were re-reported and substantiated
THE LONGSCAN DATABASE

- **Longitudinal Studies of Child Abuse & Neglect, 1989**
- Represent varying levels of exposure to maltreatment
- Five Sites (East, South, Midwest, Northwest, & Southwest)
- Common measures, coding, training, & data entry
- Age 4, 6, 8, 12, 14, 16, 18 interviews face to face
- Telephone interviews conducted every two years (3, 5...)
- Includes CPS records review
LONGSCAN ECOLOGICAL MODEL

LONGSCAN’S Ecological – Developmental Conceptual Model

Maltreatment risk or history

Child Characteristics

Family/Parent Characteristics

Parental and Family Functioning

Social supports

Community ecology

Systems of care factors

Child outcomes
LONGSCAN database
(941 cases)

Initial report was under 8 years old
(869 cases)

Reports were unsubstantiated
(410 cases)

Re-report Subst.
230 were sub later
STUDY VARIABLES

Child’s Characteristics

Parent/Caregiver Characteristics

Social Support

Allegation of Maltreatment

Outcome (re-reported substantiated)
FINDINGS (REPORTED CASES)

Child’s gender
- Male: 50.9%
- Female: 49.1%

Child’s ethnicity
- Black: 35.4%
- White: 33.4%
- Other: 31.2%

Risk Factors
- Substance abuse: 43.1%
- Mental health: 11.4%
- DV: 11.2%

Types of Allegations
- Neglect: 63.8%
- Physical: 14.6%
- Emotional: 5.6%
- Sexual: 4.6%
Analytic Techniques

- Survival analysis

- Examine the time interval between events (unsubstantiated reports → substantiated reports later)

- Cox regression (proportional hazards analysis), to identify factors that are associated with later substantiation
Children were at greatest risk of being substantiated during 3 years after the initial report.
LIFE TABLE – CHILD’S AGE
LIFE TABLE – TYPES OF ALLEGATION

Survival Function

The most severity and the type of abuse_rec
- physical
- sexual
- neglect

Cum Survival

0.4  0.5  0.6  0.7  0.8  0.9  1.0

Time

0  5  10  15  20
### COX REGRESSION HAZARD MODEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child’s age at the initial report</td>
<td>-.162</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.851**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s age at the initial report (older)</td>
<td>-.915</td>
<td>.446</td>
<td>.400**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>.497</td>
<td>.216</td>
<td>1.643**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity of the harm</td>
<td>.149</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>1.160*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, **p<.01
DISCUSSION

- More than half of the initial reports were re-reported and substantiated later.

- Most substantiations will occur within 3 years after the initial unsubstantiated report.

- Child’s age, parent’s age, marital status and the severity of the maltreatment were significantly associated with substantiation.
- Initial reports that were not sub. are in high risk to become substantiated

- Re-consider the criteria for substantiation

- Targeted services for young children and families
STRENGTHS

- Prospective
- Long follow-up
- Varying levels of exposure to maltreatment
LIMITATIONS

- Administrative data, missing data

- The current study did not include information about whether the family received any service from the community
SUMMARY

- Early identification of children
- The importance of the substantiation decision
- Cooperation between different services in the community
Thank you!
Mjedwab@ssw.umaryland.edu
QUESTIONS?