

Parents and educators infant day care centers: Impact of attachment and unresolved trauma experiences for institutional care of infants

Brisch KH, Menken V, Forstner B, Kern C, Quehenberger J

Department of Pediatric Psychosomatic Medicine and Psychotherapy

Introduction:

The development of infant day care units will expand in Germany within the next years. Empirical data suggests (Ahnert, 2008), that the relationship between educators and children features important characteristics of an attachment relationship and that a secure educators-child-attachment can promote social and educational development of children (e.g. Howes et al., 1998). A group training program for educators SAFE® (Safe Attachment Formation



for Educators) was implemented in 12 day care units in the city of Munich. The training is targeted on the modulation of behavior that leads to a secure attachment relationship between educators and children as well as parents and their children.

Sample and Methods:

Before day care entry (T1) N = 26 children's (M = 15,1; SD = 4,41; range 10-25 months) attachment behavior with parent is measured in Ainsworth's strange situation (Ainsworth et al., 1978). N = 21 educator's (M = 34,7; SD = 9,89; range 19-52 years) attachment representation is tested with the *Adult Attachment Projective* (AAP; George et al., 1997). Additionally their traumatic life events are measured in the *Posttraumatic Stress Diagnostic Scales* (PDS; Ehlers et al., 1996).

Limitations & Discussion:

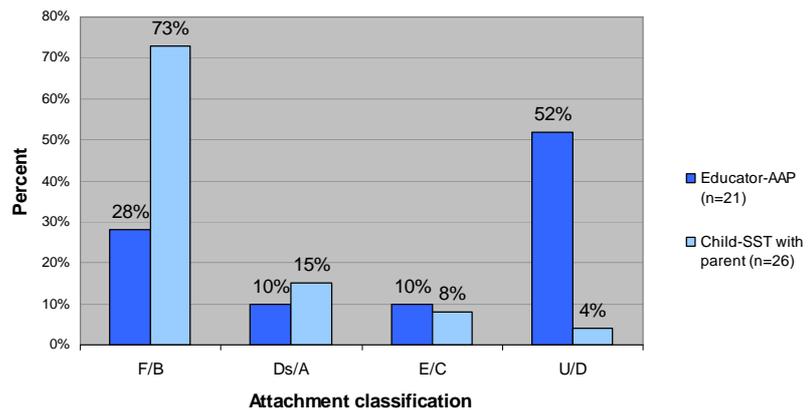
These preliminary findings (study ongoing) show that in contrary to our expectation, a high percentage of educators displayed the category for unresolved status of attachment representation and PTSD whereas children's attachment to their parent before entering day care is in 73% of all cases secure. Limitation of this study is the small sample size. Next step of this study will be the assessment and analysis of educators-child-attachment one year after day care entry.

Correspondence:

Karl Heinz Brisch, M.D.,
LMU München, Pädiatrische Psychosomatik und Psychotherapie
Pettenkofenstr. 8a, 80336 München, Germany
Email: Karl-Heinz.Brisch@med.uni-muenchen.de

Results:

52% of the educators displayed the U category in the AAP predominantly in the cemetery story dealing with stories about death and loss. 96% of the babies (n = 26) assessed with the parent in Ainsworth's strange situation showed an organized attachment quality, actually 73% showed secure attachment behavior. 24% of the educators meet the criteria of PTSD. We found 36% of educators with PTSD with an U category in the AAP.



References:

- Ahnert, L. (Ed.). (2008). *Frühe Bindung. Entstehung und Entwicklung*. Munich: Reinhardt.
Ainsworth, M.D.S., Blehar, M.C., Waters, E. & Wall, S. (1978). Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
Ehlers, A., Steil, R., Winter, H. & Foa, E. B. (1996). *German Translation of the Posttraumatic Diagnostic Scale (PDS)*. Oxford: University, Warneford Hospital.
George, C., West, M. & Pettem, O. (1997). *Adult attachment projective: Protocol and classification scoring system*. Oakland CA (Mills College). Unpublished Manuscript.
Howes, C. (1998). Hamilton, C.E., & Philipsen, L.C. (1998). Stability and continuity of child-caregiver and child-peer relationships. *Child development*, 418-426.