

**Accumulated experience, quality of services,  
family characteristics and development  
of three-year-old children in various types  
of child care beginning in the first year of life**

By

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**Summary**

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## Summary

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### **Objectives**

There are three objectives to this longitudinal study:

- (1) examine the effects of three types of child care (day-care centre, home day care and parental care) initiated in the first year of life on the cognitive, motor and socio-affective development of children aged 36 months;
- (2) identify among the characteristics of the proximal family environment (parental stimulation activities), those variables that create the relationship between the distal variables of the family environment (socio-demographic status) and the child's development; and
- (3) identify the components of the quality of the child care services attended by the children that are associated with cognitive, motor and socio-affective development at the age of 36 months.

### **Findings**

The results indicate no differences among the three groups of children attending various types of child care at 36 months of age for the four dependent variables measured in this study (BSID-II cognitive and motor scores and CBCL internalized and externalized scores).

This lack of difference among the groups suggests that the use of one child care setting in particular beginning in the first year of life is not associated with higher or lower indicators of development.

Other family environment variables or bias in the selection of families may help to explain these results. On this front, we note that family variables are not associated with the type of child care used. However, certain family variables are associated with children's cognitive and socio-affective development scores (externalized scores). The frequency of reading activities, the number of books in the house, the mother's education level, and family income are associated with cognitive development scores, while the number of books in the house, the mother's education level, family income and risk level are associated with externalized CBCL scores.

Finally, we note that there is little association between the quality of the child care service attended by the children in the day-care centre and home day-care groups and

development scores. Only the quality of the structuring of activities and the number of children in the group are associated with CBCL internalized scores.

We were not expecting these results because the literature reports that children's development scores are generally associated with scores of quality. Furthermore, the high quality of the structuring of activities is associated with higher internalized scores, which can mean that children who attend good quality services may present a higher level of internalized scores. However, as we are unable to infer a causal link between these two variables, and the number of children in the group is also associated with higher internalized scores and explains a higher percentage of the variance, it is possible that children whose internalized scores are higher, without being problematic, are found in child care services with the highest level of quality.