Associations Between Nap Duration and Observed Childcare Quality Using Data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort

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Purpose
The purpose of this study is to examine if the observed quality of childcare environments is associated with two-year-olds’ nap duration utilizing the national dataset: the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B).

The Article
The abstract describes the use of the national dataset: the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) to examine whether the observed quality of childcare environments is associated with two-year-olds’ nap duration. The two-year wave of data collection was analyzed (approximately 1,000 two-year-olds). Childcare quality was measured by the Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS). Analyses used both subscale scores and the global quality rating. Additionally, childcare providers reported on children’s nap duration. Results found that the global Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS) rating is negatively related to nap duration. All subscales of the Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS) were also significantly associated with nap duration.

What this Means for the Field
Sleep plays a crucial role in development and changes dramatically over the early childhood years. Given that increasing numbers of young children are enrolled in childcare settings during this highly labile period of development, we were interested in examining what sleep looks like in the context of childcare settings. It was surprising to find a negative relationship between childcare quality and nap duration, such that two-year-olds napped for shorter durations in higher quality care. We do not believe these data suggest that high quality childcare negatively impacts nap duration. Rather, it is more likely that napping policies and afternoon schedules differ between high and low quality settings, where lower quality settings may have unrealistic or inappropriate napping expectations. A more in-depth study of napping policies and practices in high and low quality childcare settings is warranted.

Citation

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