

# Effects of an Intervention to Promote Socioemotional Development in Terms of Attachment Security: a Study in Early Institutionalization in Chile

Felipe Lecannelier ; Jaime R. Silva ; Marianela Hoffmann ; Rolando Melo; Raquel Morales

DOI: 10.1002/imhj.21436

## Infant Mental Health Journal

Special Issue: Global Research, Practice, and Policy Issues in the Care of Infants and Young Children at Risk

**Volume 35, Issue 2, pages 151–159, March/April 2014**

### ABSTRACT

The Chilean government commissioned a quasi-experimental study with a pre-/postintervention design that had two general aims: (a) to assess infants' psychoaffective developmental levels (pre-intervention phase) and (b) to evaluate whether an intervention based on the promotion of socioemotional development modifies the infant's psychoaffective development. Sixty-two institutionalized infants and their alternative caregivers were evaluated at a pre-intervention stage. An intervention then took place, with the caregivers trained according to an "attachment sensitivity manual." Results showed normal ranges of psychomotor development (64% normal, 9% delayed) and a very high frequency of attachment insecurity, as compared to the normative population (53%). The intervention significantly improved social orientation and object orientation as well as activity and reactivity levels. We conclude that although institutionalized infants in Chile do not exhibit high levels of atypical attachment, socioemotional deterioration may lead to vulnerability in present and future development. Finally, the scope of this study affected public policies regarding children, initiating a change to a foster family system and a variety of modifications in the strategies for adopting institutionalized infants.

**Keywords:** Social development; Institutionalized persons; Psychology of movement; Infants; Caregivers