Identifying Modifiable Factors Linking Parenting and Sleep in Racial/Ethnic Minority Children

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Young children from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds are at risk for poor sleep, yet few studies have tested behavioral interventions in diverse samples. This study tests factors that could contribute to associations between parenting skills and child sleep to inform interventions for children at risk of poor sleep outcomes. Specifically, we examined household chaos, caregiver sleep knowledge, and caregiver sleep quality as putative mediators that may be relevant to interventions seeking to improve child sleep. Caregivers (M age 31.83 years; 46.2% African American; 52.1% Hispanic/Latinx, 95% female) of 119 1- to 5-year-old children (M age 3.99 years; 43.7% African American; 42.0% Hispanic/Latinx, 14.3% biracial; 51.3% female) completed measures of parenting practices, child and caregiver sleep, household chaos, and sleep knowledge. Indices of pediatric insomnia symptoms (difficulty falling/remaining asleep) and sleep health (sleep duration/hygiene) were constructed based on previous research. Parallel mediation models were conducted using ordinary least squares path analysis. Lower household chaos significantly attenuated the relationship between positive parenting skills and better child sleep health, suggesting chaos may serve as a potential mediator. There were no significant contributing factors in the pediatric insomnia model. Sleep knowledge was related to sleep health and caregiver sleep quality was related to pediatric insomnia, independent of parenting skills. Interventions to improve sleep in early childhood may be enhanced by targeting parenting skills and household routines to reduce chaos. Future longitudinal research is needed to test household chaos and other potential mediators of child sleep outcomes over time.

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