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Co-Occurrence of Externalizing Behavior Problems and Emergent Academic Difficulties in Young High-Risk Boys: A Preliminary Evaluation of Patterns and Mechanisms

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Arnold, D.H. (1997). Co-Occurrence of Externalizing Behavior Problems and Emergent Academic Difficulties in Young High-Risk Boys: A Preliminary Evaluation of Patterns and Mechanisms. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 18(3), 317-330.

Abstract :

Study Objectives

This American study deals with co-occurrence between externalized behavioural problems and emergent academic skills. More precisely, the author tried to assess to which extent the level of aggressive and noncompliant behaviour of children can be associated with their academic development at an early age and provide a preliminary assessment of potential mechanisms involved in the relationship between externalized behaviour and academic problems.

Three hypotheses were set forth: (1) the relationship between behaviour and academic problems is stronger in older children; (2) attention problems influence this relationship, and (3) teachers engage less in teaching activities with children exhibiting externalized behavioural problems.

Methodology

The sample for this study consisted of 74 boys, aged between 36 and 74 months, and fourteen teachers from seven classrooms in a daycare centre that provided care to children from low-income families eligible for government subsidies. Some children were at a high risk of school failure and disruptive behavioural problems. This study focused only on boys because they were at much greater risk. Thus, the relationship differs across gender.

Each child in the sample was individually tested on four standardized tests of emergent academic skills including expressive vocabulary skills, receptive vocabulary skills, expressive language ability and letter recognition. In addition, each classroom was videotaped and a ten-minute segment was randomly selected for each classroom. Researchers and teachers also provided global ratings of each participant based on a scale of misbehaviour (aggressive, hostile or noncompliant acts).

Results and Conclusion

The author came upon four main findings: (1) in general, externalized behaviour disorder was related to emergent academic difficulties; (2) the relationship between externalized behavioural disorder and academic difficulties increased with age; (3) children with externalized behavioural problems received less instruction and encouragement; and (4) poor academic skills also caused disruptive behaviour, in part because it was hard for children to pay attention.

In short, this study emphasizes that co-occurrence between externalized behavioural disorders and emergent academic difficulties may begin at an early age and be reinforced over time.

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Key Words :

Behavioural Disorders, Externalized Behaviour, Misbehaviour, Academic Difficulties, Academic Skills, Family Income, Male Students, Gender, Educational Inequalities, Learning Difficulties, Quantitative Analysis, Preschool, Junior Kindergarten, Kindergarten, Primary School, Elementary School

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