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A teacher-consultation approach to social skills training for pre-kindergarten children: Treatment model and short-term outcome effects

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Abstract :

Behavioural problems in children observed early remain stable or intensify as the children become older, affecting their development and chances for academic achievement. The goal of this study was to assess the efficacy of the Pre-K RECAP program (Reaching Educators, Children and Parents) with preschool children. Developed in the United States, the RECAP program inspired this study through its already proven efficacy with elementary students.

Program Description

Pre-K RECAP is a social skills training program intended for students exhibiting internalizing and externalizing behavioural problems. It is implemented in preschool classrooms by teachers, to whom consultants provide significant support. The aim of the second component of the program is to involve parents.

The goals pursued were 1) to improve children's social skills and 2) to reduce internalizing and externalizing behavioural problems.

The program includes the following elements:

- 1) Classroom-based behaviour management program focusing on social skills development;
- 2) Teacher training and consultation (training, observations, feed-back);
- 3) Parent group meetings led by consultants;
- 4) Training offered to children two to three times a week to encourage the development of social skills, problem-solving skills and relaxation strategies, among others. To do so, daily positive reinforcement, modeling, mediation of problem-solving steps and discussion of consequences of behaviour choices are encouraged.

Program Assessment

The effect of the program was assessed using pre- and post-program treatment data collected from teachers and parents at the onset and at the end of the school year. Parents completed two questionnaires, one dealing with their children's behaviour (Child Behavior Check-List (CBCL)) and the other on their social skills (Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)). Teachers also completed two questionnaires assessing both of these aspects (Caregiver-Teacher Report Form (C-TFR) and teachers' version of the SSRS).

A total of 149 children from six underprivileged elementary schools took part in the project. The program was implemented in three schools (six classes), while the three other schools were selected as the control group (six classes).

Main Results

Assessment carried out with parents revealed no significant change. However, assessment carried out with teachers highlighted significant differences between the group of program children and the control group with regard to behavioural problems and social skills.

Results obtained with the C-TFR revealed that program students exhibited less internalizing and externalizing behavioural problems. More precisely, improvement was observed regarding emotional reactivity, withdrawal and attention problems. However, no change was observed regarding anxiety/depression, somatic complaints and aggressive behaviour.

Results obtained with the SSRS revealed significant improvement in social skills, especially regarding cooperation and

assertiveness. No significant change was observed regarding self-control.

Inconsistency between results obtained from teachers and parents could be explained by the low rate of participation of the latter, with the consequence of confining the beneficial effects of the program to the school setting. The authors concluded by emphasizing the importance of assessing the outcome of the program over the longer term.

Links :

This journal is also available in electronic format.

Key Words :

Behavioural Problems, Social Skills, Behaviour Management, Classroom Intervention, Support, School-family-community Partnership, Preschool, Newsletter3

Monitored Countries :

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