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Early Reading Difficulties and Later Conduct Problem

File number :

CS-PC-05e

Bibliographic reference :

Fergusson, D.M., & Lynksey, M.T. (1997). Early Reading Difficulties and Later Conduct Problem, *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, 38(8), 899-907.

Abstract :

Objectives

The objective of this longitudinal study was to examine the correlation between reading problems such as reading delays, reading difficulties during childhood and behavioural problems in adolescence. The authors set forth an hypothesis to the effect that the correlation between these two variables is mitigated by a number of factors (personal, family and demographic), which had an influence on the later adjustment of students with behavioural problems independently and prior to the onset of their reading difficulties. The authors also try to validate the hypothesis to the effect that correlation between reading difficulties and behavioural problems varies depending on the context (gender, age, assessment method, and so on).

Methodology

The study consisted of a sample of 1265 New Zealander students who were assessed on a regular basis between the ages of 8 and 16 years. The reading difficulties were measured based on the Burt Word Reading Test and the behavioural problems, with three standardized questionnaires (Conners, Rutter and DISC) administered to the children, parents and teachers.

Main Results

First, in accordance with data obtained from other studies, the results have demonstrated that students who exhibited reading difficulties were at a higher risk of developing behavioural problems once they reached adolescence.

However, as indicated in the first hypothesis, the link between these two variables appeared to be mitigated by certain personal, family and demographic factors present in these students prior to the onset of reading difficulties and which contributed to behavioural problems irrespective of these reading difficulties (confounding factors). Consequently, when these factors were taken into account in analyses, the link between reading difficulties and behavioural problems was no longer as clear. Behavioural problems in childhood appeared to be an important element among these factors.

The results associated with the second hypothesis have suggested that the context effect on the relationship between reading difficulties and behavioural problems, which was observed inconsistently in several studies reviewed, would in fact be associated with the lack of control of confounding factors. When these factors were controlled, the context effect disappeared entirely.

Finally, the conclusions of this study do not support the idea to the effect that reading difficulties during childhood have a marked influence on the development of adjustment difficulties at a later date.

Links :

This journal is also available in electronic format

Key Words :

Behavioural Disorders, Learning Difficulties, Reading, Reading Delays, Longitudinal Study, Primary School, Elementary School, Secondary/High School

Monitored Countries :

New Zealand

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