

Head Start and Internalizing/Externalizing Behaviors

Abstract

The Head Start program's main goal is to promote social-emotional school readiness for the children enrolled. The program focuses on low income children and emphasizes the involvement of the families for improvement of social-cognitive and behavioral outcomes. Although, studies have minimized the effectiveness of reducing behavior problems in Head Start children, this study is interested in exploring the role of attendance, child temperament and ecological factors (level of parental involvement) in externalizing/internalizing behaviors of children in Head Start programs. Thus, it is expected that compared to non-Head-Start children there will be lower rates of internalizing/externalizing behavior. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that Head Start attendance will significantly reduce internalizing/externalizing behaviors above and beyond children's temperament and parental involvement. Data from the Fragile Families longitudinal study will be used to examine the hypotheses. Results will help identify and explain the impact of Head Start program on the externalizing/internalizing behaviors of children who attend. Future implications will be discussed.

Key words: Head Start, Internalizing/Externalizing Behaviors, Child Temperament, Parental Involvement.