Functional improvements of children referred to a school-based preventive mental health intervention: CAFAS outcomes at six months

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Study context
- State sponsored comprehensive school-based preventive mental health intervention
- Focus - amelioration of behavioral and social problems through:
  - Social skill development
  - Problems solving training
  - Individual and class wide behavior management components
  - Parent skills training and support

Background
- Range of functional problems exist
- May lead to varying degrees of successful outcome
- Could children with higher levels of impairment improve?
- Two groups
  - Those with moderate to severe functional impairment in two or more domains
  - Those without

Primary research questions
- Do children with multiple domain impairments improve functioning at six months?
- Do children without multiple domain impairments improve functioning at six months?

Methods
- Participants
  - Children referred by teachers for general behavioral and/or emotional problems
  - 418 children K-6
    - Children with moderate (20) to severe (30) functional impairment in two or more domains (n = 129)
    - Those without (n = 289)
- Data collection method
  - CAFAS completed at intake at 6 months

Sample characteristics
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>7.9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent household</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two parent household</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academically at-risk or failing in reading</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academically at-risk or failing in math</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

- Significant differences between two groups at intake
  - Children with multiple domain impairments: M = 72.50
    - 13.3% with scores > 100
    - 89.1% moderate to severe in School/Work
    - 34.9% moderate to severe in Home
    - 93.7% moderate to severe in BTO
    - 43.4% moderate to severe in Mood/Emotion
  - Children without: M = 29.76

Results (cont.)

- Both groups reduced functional impairment over 6 month period
  - Children with multiple domain impairments
    - t(127) = 7.79, p < .001, d = .80
  - Children without
    - t(288) = 4.27, p < .001, d = .26

Discussion

- Children with multiple domain impairments experienced improvement in day-to-day functioning over a six-month period
- Between 47.1% and 66.6% achieved no or mild impairment outcome indicator in school, home, interaction, and mood domains
- Absence of functional impairment in caregiver domains – may contribute to success
- Children lacked high-risk behaviors, such as runaway behavior or harm to self or others

Limitations

- Children in sample were young – could potentially outgrow problems
- No formal interrater reliability assessment
- Not an assessment of intervention effectiveness, per se
- Only two measurement points; more would be optimal
Early intervention-CAFAS outcomes at 6 months

**Implications**

- Children with multiple domain impairments could be supported within the school setting
- Clear differences in functioning at intake - caution in how services are delivered
- Review of subscales could be used to screen for specific problems
- Quickly identify and target intervention to children with functional impairments in multiple domains