Cross-setting consistent and setting specific strength behaviors in preschoolers: Influence on reported concerns

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Introduction

- Preschool children with behavior problems are at increased risk for future difficulties
- Problem behaviors occurring across settings are typically more of a concern
- Risk of more serious problems - higher when problems exhibit cross-setting consistency

Parent-teacher Agreement

- Most correspondence research has focused on the magnitude of agreement of problems
- Research found greater agreement on positive behaviors
- Recent research found higher rates of co-identified strength than co-identified problem behaviors

Hypotheses

- Above average behavior concerns → fewer strengths
- Average or below average behavior concerns → more strengths
- Cross-setting strengths > setting specific strengths on level of concern

Sample

- 1595 preschool children, 2-5 year olds
- 793 boys and 802 girls
- Over 30 Head Start and state-funded preschool programs
- Each child had both teacher and parent ratings

Measure - DECA

- 10 problem behaviors - behavioral concerns
- 27 strength behaviors - three subscales: initiative, self-control, and attachment
- normed on 2000 2-5 year olds: good discriminant, predictive, and construct validity
- Internal reliability: .76-.88 across 4 subscales
Method/Procedure

- Strength items ratings dichotomized for “frequently” or “very frequently”
  - Cross-setting = present in both settings
  - Setting specific = present in one setting
- Behavior concern levels
  - Above Average (T-score > 60)
  - Average (T-score between 60 - 40)
  - Below Average (T-score < 40)

Results

- Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) revealed significant effect of strength behaviors on the levels of both:
  - Teacher-reported behavior concerns $[F(12, 3048) = 59.33, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .19]$
  - Parent-reported behavior concerns $[F(12, 3110) = 16.54, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06]$

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F-score range</th>
<th>$\eta_p^2$ range</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher report</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cross-setting</td>
<td>56.4 – 187.2</td>
<td>.07 - .20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Setting specific</td>
<td>6.4 – 57.7</td>
<td>.01 - .07</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parent report</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cross-setting</td>
<td>26.1 – 68.6</td>
<td>.03 - .08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Setting specific</td>
<td>.3 – 7.7</td>
<td>.01</td>
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</tbody>
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Conclusions

Higher levels of concern $\rightarrow$ lower strengths (regardless if strengths found in one setting or both settings)

However...

magnitude of difference (effect sizes and F-scores) was $>$ for strength behaviors found in both settings

Implications

- Enhancing cross-setting strengths may be more likely to reduce behavior concerns
- Focus on parents and teachers working together
  - Sharing assessment information
  - Jointly developing strategies
  - Reinforcing behaviors across settings

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