The Impact of Parent-Teacher Relationships on Student Behavior During Intervention and One Year Later

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Background
- Children with social-behavioral concerns are at high risk of developing long-term, pervasive problems.
- Interventions which aim to decrease negative behaviors and increase social and adaptive skills across both home and school settings have the potential to be particularly effective.
- However, families of students with social-behavioral problems often tend toward disengagement from, or limited connection with, schools or other service-delivery systems (Dishorn & Stromshak, 2006).
- Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC; Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2008), is a family-school partnership intervention designed to reduce child behavior problems and increase child adaptive skills.
- The quality of the parent-teacher relationship may critically influence the connection between CBC and student outcomes.

Purpose
- To evaluate whether improvement in parent-reported quality of the parent-teacher partnership moderated the long-term efficacy of CBC on parent- and teacher-reported student adaptive skills and externalizing problems.

Research Question
- Does parent-teacher partnership quality moderate the effectiveness of CBC for improving student behavior?

Significance
- This study provides important insight into the long-term implications of parent-teacher relationships on student behavior

Method
Participants:
- 132 kindergarten through 3rd grade students, their parents, and their teachers.
- Students were mostly male (78%) and Caucasian (86%).
- Parents were mostly female (89%) and Caucasian (91%).
- Teachers were predominantly female (96%) and Caucasian (100%).

Measures:
- Parent-Teacher Relationship Scale (P-RS; Vickers & Minke, 1995).
- Collected at enrollment (pre-intervention wave 1) and 12 weeks after enrollment (post-intervention wave 2).
- Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC-2; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004).
- Collected at enrollment (pre-intervention wave 1), 12 weeks after enrollment (post-intervention wave 2), fall and spring of following academic year (maintenance period/waves 3 and 4).

Research Design and Study Variables:
Teachers were randomly assigned to a treatment group (received CBC) or control group (treatment as usual), and participating students within a classroom were assigned accordingly.
- Independent Variables: Experimental condition and Time
- Dependent Variables: Student externalizing problems and adaptive skills
- Moderator Variables: Change in the parent-reported quality of parent-teacher partnership from wave 1 to wave 2 (defined as the presence of a half standard deviation above or below the average change scores)

Analysis
- A three-way ANOVA was used to determine whether experimental condition (treatment, control), Time (waves 1-4 of data collection), and partnership quality change (high, low) interact to influence students’ adaptive skills and externalizing behavior.

Procedure
- Participants assigned to the treatment condition received (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2008), a structured indirect intervention focused on improving student behavior and enhancing family-school partnerships to promote continuity and collaboration in support of student functioning across systems.
- The CBC process lasts 8-12 weeks.

Results
- On average students who experienced CBC and whose parents reported a high level of improvement in the quality of their partnership with teachers showed a greater rate of improvement in teacher-reported adaptive skills, $F(3, 74) = 6.11, p = 0.0009$, and social skills, $F(3, 74) = 4.23, p < 0.008$, than students in the other groups.

Discussion
- Parent-teacher partnership quality appears to moderate the effectiveness of CBC.
- Positive changes in the parent-teacher partnership—as perceived by parents—may provide a catalyst for maximal uptake of the treatment (CBC) and the improvement in student behavior.
- Contrary to the hypothesis, parent perceptions of improvement in the quality of their partnership with teachers did not moderate CBC’s effectiveness for addressing parent-reported behaviors.
- Parents may not have perceived their children’s behavior to be as problematic as did teachers and in turn did not observe change in their children’s behavior over time.
- Parent-teacher partnership may be most influential on in-school behavior because schools tend to be more rigid in behavioral expectations than homes.
- The longitudinal nature of the study suggests that parent-teacher relationships from the previous year moderated the effect of CBC on long-term student behavior even when rated by other teachers.
- Once parents experience a high-quality parent-teacher partnership in the context of behavioral intervention (i.e., CBC) they may be more likely to continue to promote their children’s in-school behavior in partnership with their children’s new teachers.

Limitations and Future Directions
- Future analyses should employ the more sophisticated, hierarchical linear modeling in order to account for cross-classification and the nesting of students with teachers and schools (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).
- The manner in which the partnership-quality measure was dichotomized (i.e., half standard deviation above or below the average change score as cutoffs on the PTRS joining subscale) resulted in those participants whose partnership quality change scores were closest to the mean being excluded from analysis.
- It remains unclear how parent-teacher relationships which were positive at baseline and remained positive (resulting in low change) influence student behavior change.