The Effect of Teacher’s Invitations to Parental Involvement on Children’s Externalizing Problem Behaviors: An Examination of a CBC Intervention

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Introduction

Behavioral Problems in Childhood

- Behavioral problems in childhood are associated with academic difficulties including in-school suspensions (Ramey, Herman, Petrak, & Falco, 2008), high school dropout (Wan, Brindlinger, Larson, & Timbs, 2005), and low academic grades and achievement scores (Bub, McCartney, & Willitt, 2007; Lopes, 2007).
- Students with disruptive behavior problems demonstrate higher rates of social risk factors than their non-disruptive peers, including school maladaptation, antisocial activity, substance use, sexual activity (Schofield, Bierman, Himovitz, & Nix, 2008), and conduct problems (Ramey et al., 2008).
- Given the relationship between children’s disruptive behaviors and negative outcomes, it is important to investigate effective interventions that can help to ameliorate disruptive behavior problems.
- Systemic variables within and between home and school settings contribute to the development and manifestation of behavioral problems (Reid et al., 2002); thus, interventions need to involve parents and teachers alike.

Teacher Invitations for Parental Involvement

- Parental involvement in children’s education is associated with a variety of positive child outcomes (Baroudi, 2004; Domus, 2002; El-Niaki, Budman, & Verras-Drinal, 2010; Mia, 1999; Marcon, 1999; Muidel & Reynold, 1999).
- When parents feel that schools are open and willing to support their involvement, parents are more likely to prepare for a review (see Howes-Dempsey, Walker, Sundell, Whetsel, & Wilkins, 2009).
- One important influence on parents feeling welcome in their child’s school is their teachers’ specific invitations to become involved (Anderson & Minka, 2007; Mubeen, 2007; Howes-Dempsey, Walker, Sundell, & Whetsel, 2007).
- Specific teacher invitations to parental involvement can take many forms including encouraging frequent teacher-parent communication about the child, suggesting ideas for practicing school work at home, or promoting home/community activities relevant to the child’s learning (Howes-Dempsey, Walker, Jones & Reed, 2002).
- Although much research has investigated the relationship between teachers’ invitations and parental involvement, little research has examined the moderating role of teachers’ invitations on children’s outcomes.

Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC; Sheridan & Krasowski, 2008)

- CBC is a strength-based, indirect model of service delivery wherein parents and teachers collaboratively participate in a joint problem-solving process to promote positive behavioral outcomes for children. It is effective for decreasing children’s disruptive behavior problems, enhancing family-school partnerships, and increasing parent participation in educational decision-making (Sheridan et al., 2009).
- Goals of CBC are to: (1) address children’s behavioral and learning needs; (8) increase parent engagement in education; and (3) facilitate a positive family-school partnership.
- CBC provides a clear opportunity to establish communication and working partnerships among family and school systems (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001).
- Communication between families and schools may be eliminated in several ways, e.g., multiple and frequent opportunities for invitations from the teacher to the parent for school involvement.
- The role of teacher outreach and invitations within the context of CBC has not been explored, despite the fact that direct and ongoing connections between the teacher and parent are of interest within the CBC model.

Research Question and Hypothesis

- Purpose: To examine the relationship between changes in teachers’ invitations to parental involvement in response to a CBC intervention and changes in children’s behavior.

- Research Question: Is the effect of CBC on children’s disruptive behavior (i.e., hyperactivity, aggression, conduct problems) moderated by changes in teachers’ invitations to parental involvement?

- Hypothesis: CBC will have a more positive effect on children’s behavioral outcomes relative to a control group when teachers increase their invitations for parental involvement.

Participants

- 207 kindergarten through 3rd grade students and their parents (n = 207) and teachers (n = 82) from schools in a moderately-sized Midwestern city and surrounding communities (see Table 1).
- Fifty-one percent of CBC and 41% of the control teachers increased their invitations in response to parents.
- Participating children were identified by teachers as having concerns related to disruptive behaviors e.g., aggression, non-compliance.

Methods

- Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD) Age</td>
<td>6.45 (1.08)</td>
<td>34.77 (8.04)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD) Experience in Years</td>
<td>9.38</td>
<td>10.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Study Design and Analytic Plan

- Larger study was a randomized experimental design with assignment to: Conjoint Behavioral Consultation condition: 1 structured, indirect service delivery system involving a behavioral consultant who works with groups of 2-3 family members and teachers, or Control condition: School support as typically provided by school personnel, including school psychologists, counselors, and specialists.
- A multi-level modeling technique, taking into account the nested structure of the data (time nested within individuals and individuals nested within teacher) was used to test the moderating effect of teacher invitations to parental involvement on the effect of CBC in decreasing problem behaviors.
- Models were estimated separately for Hyperactivity, Aggression, and Conduct Problems subscales of the BASC-2. A significant moderating effect was indicated by a significant three-way interaction between time, condition, and change in teacher invitations.

CBC Implementation

- Within each CBC classroom, a consultant met with the teacher and 2 teacher and 2 consultant members and teachers; or
- Control condition: School support as typically provided by school personnel, including school psychologists, counselors, and specialists.
- The consultant worked with the teacher and 2 consultant members to identify and define needs, settings, and goals; conduct functional behavior assessment, discussion, information gathering; and selected strategies to change behavior.
- Plan Development (Planning for Success) — discussed information collected by parents and teachers about identified behavior(s), developed a plan to address student needs; collected plan data (responses) discussed ways to support the plan at home and school; and gathered information.
- Plan Evaluation (Checking and Rechecking) — discussed progress made toward goals; evaluated the plan(s); and determined needs for plan continuation and/or changes.

Measures

- **Teacher Report of Invitations to Parental Involvement (TIPP; Howes-Dempsey, Walker, Jones & Reed, 2002):** A 16-item, 6-point Likert-type scale assessing teachers’ reports of their invitations to parents for involvement during the school year.
- Pre- and post-scores from pre- to post-test were calculated for teacher invitations. Positive change refers to a 1 SD increase in TIPP from pretest to posttest; negative change refers to a 1 SD decrease in TIPP from pretest to posttest.
- **Behavior Assessment System for Children, 2nd edition (BASC-2; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004):** 4 subscales: 4-point Likert scale measuring emotional and behavioral disorders in children.
- Pretest, post-test, mean and standard deviations for the study variables are presented in Table 2 by experimental conditions.

Results

- **Table 2. Means (Standard Deviations) of the Study Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>CBC</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BASC-2 Hyperactivity</td>
<td>70.02</td>
<td>67.79</td>
<td>68.83</td>
<td>65.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASC-2 Aggression</td>
<td>67.52</td>
<td>65.74</td>
<td>64.98</td>
<td>61.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASC-2 Conduct Problems</td>
<td>65.46</td>
<td>64.12</td>
<td>62.14</td>
<td>59.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Teacher Invitation to Parent Involvement | 4.00 | 3.88 | 3.79 | 3.81 |
- On average, teacher invitation scores did not change from pre-test to post-test for both CBC (M = 65; SD = 65) and control (M = 68; SD = 58), indicates the change in teacher invitation scores were of interest for the purpose of this study question.
- Children in the CBC condition whose teachers increased their invitations to parents relative to the control condition were observed to show greater decreases in Aggression and Conduct Problems as compared to children in the control condition.
- Based on two-tail significance tests, three-way interactions were statistically significant for: 
  - **Aggression:** γ = -0.59; (209) = -1.96; p < .05 (Figure 1); and
  - **Conduct Problems:** γ = -0.52; (176) = -1.51; p < .10 (Figure 2).
- Three-way interaction was not statistically significant for Hyperactivity: γ = -2.18; (203) = -0.95; p > 0.10.

Discussion

- Teacher’s invitations to parents may be the first step toward facilitating positive involvement in children.
- The present study investigated the role of teacher invitations within CBC on teacher-invited parent involvement and child outcomes.
- Previous work (Hoover-Dempsey, 2005) has suggested that school personnel take the first step in reaching out to parents. The present study provides empirical support for proactive teacher-initiated child outcomes under conditions whereby teachers increase their active invitations to parents.
- As a model of intervention facilitated by a third party consultant, the role of teachers within CBC and its influence on child outcomes has not been studied in this study.
- This study investigated the role of active outreach on the part of the teachers to improve certain child outcomes, with a highly interactive process.
- **CBC:** provides a context within which teachers can begin to make active and outward invitations to increase parental involvement. The structured problem solving model, with evidence-based interventions embedded within the process, provides clear strategies to engage parents, and may provide teachers with the tools to motivate their students.
- Although not studied directly, CBC may influence teachers’ views about parental involvement and their behaviors via a vicarious increase and ongoing participation. Teacher beliefs and attitudes about parent involvement may be more difficult to change than their behaviors; change in invitation frequency may be the first step toward facilitating positive perceptions.

Limitations and Future Research

- The study relied on self-reports of teachers’ beliefs related to parental invitations. In order to capture the experience of students and parents, future research should investigate additional teacher outreach behaviors more fully.
- This study investigated the role of teacher invitations within CBC on disruptive behaviors in children. This is a teacher-related measure that may operate differently for other contexts such as school or parent-involved interventions. Future research should investigate the interactions among teacher, teacher invitations, and child outcomes that are topographically and functionally distinctive.
- Teacher demographic/interventional characteristics were not taken into account in this investigation. It is possible that teacher variables such as years of experience, level of training, history with parents, and general attitudes and beliefs may contribute to their invitation behaviors, and should be considered in future studies.

References available upon request, please contact the first author at mcouuts@unl.edu

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