

Self-Regulation and School Readiness: Mediating Role of School Relationships

Abstract:

This study aims to investigate the link between self-regulation, school readiness, and school relationships. It is suggested that children's self-regulation influences their school relationships (e.g., child-teacher and peer), which in turn affects their school readiness. Participants of the study are 195 preschool children. School readiness is assessed by the teachers' rating and direct assessment. While the temperamental aspect of self-regulation (i.e., effortful control) is obtained from teachers, executive functions are assessed with three behavioral measures. In addition, teachers fill out child-teacher relationships and peer relationships scales for children as potential mediators. Findings show that certain aspects of self-regulation account for variance in the school readiness independent of measured intelligence. Although working memory and attentional shifting aspects of executive functions predict the direct assessment of school readiness, school relationships do not mediate between executive functions and school readiness. Furthermore, the attentional focusing aspect of effortful control not only predicts the teacher-rated school readiness directly but also predicts it through the partial mediation of children's prosocial and anxious behaviors towards peers. Findings will be discussed within the scope of school readiness with possible implications.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, School Readiness, Self-regulation, School Relations

Extended Summary

Growing body of evidence has shown the importance of self-regulation during early childhood on school readiness and later school success (e.g., Blair, & Razza, 2007; Fitzpatrick, McKinnon, Blair, & Willoughby, 2014; Jahromi, Zeiders, Updegraff, Umaña-Taylor, & Bayless, 2017). Although the role of self-regulation on school readiness has been well-documented, researchers have recently begun to investigate the ways in which self-regulation may affect school readiness. Eisenberg, Valiente, and Eggum (2010) hypothesized a model proposing school relationships as one of potential mediators between self-regulation and school readiness. The present study aims to test the hypothesis that self-regulation has effects on school readiness through school relationships. Since effortful control and executive functions have been viewed as complementary components of self-regulation after Blair and Razza's (2007) study, measures of both are included in the present study. Moreover, Kiuru et al. (2015)

indicated that considering child-teacher relationships and peer relationships together is important while investigating the role of school relationships. Therefore, school relationships are examined through relationships with teachers and peers together.

Participants of the study are 195 preschool children. School readiness is assessed by the teachers' rating and direct assessment. The temperamental aspect of self-regulation (inhibitory control, attentional focusing and attentional shifting of effortful control) is obtained from teachers while executive functions are assessed with three behavioral measures (i.e., inhibitory control, attentional shifting and working memory tasks). In addition, teachers fill out child-teacher relationships and peer relationships scales to report on the closeness and conflict of the child-teacher relationships and the peer relationships (e.g., aggressive, prosocial, asocial, excluded by peers, anxious, and hyperactive) as potential mediators. In the research, multiple regression analysis is conducted to determine whether children's self-regulation and school relationships predict their school readiness. In addition, the mediating role of school relationships is examined within the models.

Findings show that certain aspects of self-regulation account for variance in the school readiness independent of measured intelligence. Besides, the age of children is the only significant demographic variable accounting variance. Findings also suggest that although the working memory and the attentional shifting aspects of executive functions predict the direct assessment of school readiness, school relationships do not mediate between executive functions and school readiness. Moreover, the attentional focusing aspect of effortful control not only predicts the teacher-rated school readiness directly but also predicts it through the partial mediation of children's prosocial and anxious behaviors towards peers. That is, the attentional focusing promotes children's prosocial behaviors and buffers their anxious behaviors towards peers, which in turn affects school readiness. Findings will be discussed within the scope of school readiness with possible implications.

References

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