

DIFFERENCES IN EXTERNALISING PROBLEMS AMONG PRESCHOOL CHILDREN: IMPLICATIONS FOR PARENTS

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Abstract

Social and emotional development in young children has to do with how young children feel about themselves, how they behave and how they relate to others, specially people who matter to them, for example, parents, teachers, and friends. One area that has attracted increasing research attention focuses on children's behavioural and socio-emotional adjustment or psychological well-being, which is generally indicated by the extent of their manifestation of behaviour problems. Behaviour problems have often been conceptualised along two broad spectrums: internalising problems which are expressed in intrapersonal manifestation, such as anxiety, depression and withdrawal; and externalising problems which are demonstrated in interpersonal manifestation, such as hyperactivity and aggression. Considering the long-term effects of externalizing behavior problems on children's later academic performance, it can be conjectured that disparities in children achievement may be rooted in developmental characteristics in early childhood. This study investigated the variability in externalizing behavior problems among preschool children. There were 160 participants parents who voluntary completed a socio-demographic questionnaire, and rated their child's behavior on the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (2-5 years). The children consisted of 84 boys and 76 girls. It was found that parents perceived both girls and boys as highly oppositional and aggressive, and generally speaking, differences were few. Boys were reported to exhibit higher rates of externalizing problems than girls.

Key words: *externalizing problems; internalizing problems, behaviour problems, gender differences.*

