



Research Week 2020

Low parental criticism prospectively predicts the development of self-efficacy in children

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Keywords

Self-efficacy, self-efficacy in children, parental criticism, ADHD, resilience

Abstract

Introduction

Self-efficacy is a central component to mental wellness and resilience across the lifespan (Bandura, 1997; Muris, 2002; Prince-Embury and Saklofske 2013; Joët., Usher, & Bressoux, 2011). Family environment, including positive parental support, is related to the development of self-efficacy (Prince-Embury and Saklofske 2013; Dyvorsky and Langberg, 2016). At the group level, children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have low self-efficacy, but little is known about mechanisms supporting development of self-efficacy in this group. Here, we focus on parental criticism—one important aspect of the parent-child relationship—and its prospective relationship to self-efficacy in children with and without ADHD. We hypothesize that low parental criticism in early childhood will prospectively predict higher self-efficacy in later childhood and adolescence.

Method

606 children (nADHD=509) ages 7-11 years old underwent a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation, including parent and teacher standardized rating scales, parent clinical interview, and child cognitive testing. Evaluation was repeated annually for three years. Parental criticisms were coded from five-minute speech samples (FMSS). Child self-efficacy was measured via California Q-sort items selected based on self-efficacy items from the Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents.

Results

Children with ADHD had lower self-efficacy ($M=4.92$, $SD=1.16$) compared to those without ADHD ($M=6.16$, $SD=.97$) at baseline, $p<.001$ and at Year 3, $p<.001$). Baseline self-efficacy predicted Y3 self-efficacy, $b=.67$, $p<.001$. In addition, lower levels of parental criticism at baseline predicted greater self-efficacy at Y3, $b=-.08$ $p=.023$ after controlling for baseline self-efficacy.

Conclusions

Findings confirm that low parental criticism prospectively predicts higher self-efficacy, an important component of resilience, even after controlling for baseline self-efficacy. Results help clarify processes contributing to development of self-efficacy and provided a treatment target for building resilience. Improving parent-child relationships, and specifically attenuating parental criticism in early childhood, may be one way to increase self-efficacy and build resilience in children with ADHD.