

Transitioning from Kindergarten to Primary School

Exploring the Links between Children's Self-regulation Skills, Socio-emotional Competence and Academic Outcomes

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KEY IMPLICATIONS

- Children identified as at-risk for self-regulation difficulties at Primary 1 entry had poorer math and self-regulation skills than their peers at Primary 3.
- Children at-risk for self-regulation difficulties benefit from having more social-emotional learning (SEL) opportunities at home and in school.
- More local research is needed to identify potential targets for intervention to help children at-risk for self-regulation difficulties.

BACKGROUND

Self-regulation skills refer to abilities that control and direct one's attention, thoughts, emotion, and action (McClelland & Cameron, 2012). Children with good self-regulation skills are better able to remember instructions, attend to lessons and stay on task. They also display appropriate classroom behaviours which support the development of positive relationships with teachers and peers. In other words, these skills are key contributors to school readiness (Blair & Raver, 2015). Given the critical role of self-regulation skills for successful adaptation to

primary school, it is important to consider the extent to which children entering Primary 1 with self-regulation difficulties are at risk for further difficulties in the subsequent years and whether there are factors that mitigate the negative effects of poor self-regulation skills.

FOCUS OF STUDY

We examined the extent to which adjustment difficulties faced by children identified as at-risk for self-regulation difficulties at Primary 1 persist beyond that to affect child outcomes at Primary 3. Our findings will contribute to a better understanding of the developmental outcomes of these children and shed some light on the role of individual (children's intelligence mindsets) and contextual factors (parents' failure mindsets, implementation of SEL programs in schools) in helping children optimize their development.

KEY FINDINGS

Children identified as at-risk for self-regulation difficulties at entry to Primary 1 also had weaker math, reading and self-regulation skills, as well as more socio-emotional difficulties at Primary 1. Whereas group differences in math and

self-regulation skills continue to persist at Primary 3, differences in reading skills and socio-emotional difficulties were no longer apparent.

Children at-risk for self-regulation difficulties benefit from having more SEL opportunities at home and in school. However, contrary to expectations, these children exhibit more self-regulation difficulties if their parents embrace a more enhancing view of failure.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

This study contributes to our understanding of the influence of early self-regulation difficulties (at entry to primary school) on children's outcomes at Primary 3. Our findings have also provided some insights into factors that may be important in our local context to better support and facilitate the development of self-regulation skills during these formative years. Importantly, our findings highlight the merit of continuing investigations in this exciting and promising area of research to identify potential targets for intervention to help children at-risk for self-regulation difficulties.

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 134 Primary 3 students, who had participated in the Singapore Kindergarten Impact Project, were involved in this study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Measures of children's beliefs about intelligence (is it malleable or fixed?), parents' beliefs about failure (is failure an enhancing or debilitating experience?), and implementation of SEL programs (teachers' attitudes about SEL, the extent to which SEL programmes are integrated into daily home and school activities) in schools were obtained at Primary 2. Measures of children's academic, self-regulation and socio-emotional outcomes were obtained at Primary 3 through child-administered tasks, and parent and teacher questionnaires.

REFERENCES

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