

Preschool Attendance and Children's Extraversion Skills

Dominique Leatherman

California State University, Chico

Preschool Attendance and Children's Extraversion Skills

Children who attend preschool have shown significant increases in their cognitive and social developments than those who did not attend. Between the years 2008-2010, "53 percent of U.S. children who were 3 and 4-year-olds did not participate in preschool" which suggests that there is a decrease in extraversion skills for children by not interacting with peers and teachers (Molland, 2012, p. 1). Extraversion is defined as an outgoing personality trait such as being very talkative or enjoying to be around other peers. In the past, there has been more research done on preschoolers' cognitive and social developments than on preschoolers' extraversion. This study was designed to specifically examine the effects preschool attendance has on a child's extraversion and to see if the child will become more outgoing as the length of time the child attends preschool.

McCabe and Frede (2007) reviewed studies designed to assess whether preschool attendance increases or decreases challenging behaviors. Challenging behaviors are behaviors that interrupt a child's development, learning, and play. For example, challenging behaviors can be aggression, kicking, hitting, and throwing objects at other children, other things, or towards themselves. Several studies demonstrated how challenging behaviors can be diminished in a child through attending high-quality preschools which has been shown to lower crime rates as an adult and to increase the chances of graduating high school and going to college. High quality preschools help to lower the risk of emotional, physical, and cognitive restraints particularly for children in low-income families. In contrast, other studies have found a positive relationship between challenging behaviors observed in preschools and an increased risk of later aggression, antisocial behavior, substance abuse, and delinquency (McCabe & Frede, 2007). In some cases preschool attendance has also been associated with lower achievement in social skills, reading,

and math performance in the classroom due to the quality of the preschool. This also may be due to the lack of maternal care of enrolling children into a preschool program.

Hanson (2006) describes research comparing preschool children's social development, reading, and math skills to those who did not attend preschool. The results of studies conducted at universities within California indicated that preschool attendance decreased classroom motivation and social skills (i.e., externalizing behaviors, interpersonal skills, and self-control in engaging classroom tasks). A related study showed behavioral problems can increase when children experience non-maternal care. Children placed in preschool for more than 15 hours per week appeared to have shown more challenging behaviors than children who did not attend preschool. This suggests that enrolling children into a preschool program, away from his or her mother can contribute to negative outcomes for the child (Hanson, 2006). However, some research has shown that attending preschool can have positive outcomes on a child's life by preparing them for school.

Anderson, Shinn, Fullilove, Scrimshaw, Fielding, Normand, and Carande-Kulis (2003) reported that there are positive relationships among socio-emotional and cognitive skills and school readiness. Studies have shown that placing children in a preschool program, such as Head Start, can enhance children's school readiness and support at-risk children in poverty. In this study, a systematic review development team, which represented the Task Force on Community Preventive Services, worked directly with preschoolers to improve children's cognitive and social skills. The results showed several increases in child health screening, family, cognitive, and social outcomes that were associated with preschool attendance after participating with the development team. The study showed that early education programs improved a child's school readiness and decreased health and social outcomes that were

associated with preschool attendance after participating with the development team. The study showed that early education programs improved a child's school readiness and decreased health and social risks through the development of cognitive and social skills (Anderson, et al., 2003). Preschool programs have the potential to improve socio-emotional development and can decrease internalizing and externalizing behaviors through trained staff.

Pickens (2009) investigated whether children improve their socio-emotional development through interacting with trained preschool teachers and parents. There were 15 randomly selected preschools that included 296 children. The participants were split into an experimental group and a control group with 16 trained teachers and 6 non-trained teachers. Teachers rated the preschoolers' social cooperation, interaction, independence, externalizing and internalizing problem behaviors at the beginning and end of the school year. The results indicated that the preschoolers in the experimental group showed positive socio-emotional behavior (i.e., social cooperation, interaction quality, and social independence) while negative internalizing and externalizing behaviors diminished. This suggests that social and emotional programming can enhance preschoolers' school readiness (Pickens, 2009). Attending preschool increases a child's social adjustment by interacting with their peers and teachers which can enhance their personality level.

Hattwick (1936) compared children's personalities through the attendance of a nine month preschool program and six week preschool program. The study focused on whether there was a difference in a child's personality through attending preschool. The group consisted of 106 two to five year old children of similar backgrounds (i.e., chronological age, sex, nationality and race, and economic level). Both groups were rated by three nursery school teachers on their personality and routine habits. The findings suggested that three year olds from the nine month

preschool program benefitted more through routines while four year olds from the nine month program showed more social adjustment techniques and work habits in preschool. These results indicated that there was an increase in social adjustment and routine habits and decreases in inhibited behavior through preschool attendance in the nine month preschool program than in the six week preschool program (Hattwick, 1936). Children's social adjustment can decrease inhibited behaviors and allow children to gain a sense of social competence through the development of positive social skills.

Kavcic, Podlesek, and Zupancic (2012) examined social adjustment in relation to family, personality, and preschool factors to see if there were differences in the child's social competence, and their externalizing and internalizing behaviors. There were 304 three year old children who participated. Teacher assistants and preschool teachers completed the measures of the children's externalizing and internalizing behaviors. The results indicated that there was a decrease in externalizing and internalizing behaviors while social competence and social adjustment increased due to personality. (Kavcic, et al., 2012).

The purpose of this study is to examine the length of time a child is in preschool and the child's extraversion skills. There is little research done on children's extraversion skills while attending preschool compared to the numerous amounts of studies done on cognitive outcomes. The potential benefits of preschool attendance for children's social development has been under researched in the past. The hypothesis of this study is children's extraversion skills will increase the longer children are in preschool and will allow children to become more outgoing through preschool attendance.

Method

Overview

The study will examine whether children's extraversion skills increase through preschool attendance. This is a quasi-experimental study because the child's parent determines whether their child attends preschool or not. Thus, children attending for more than three months will be compared to children who attended preschool for three months or less. This study used a between subjects approach that compares two groups based on group differences. The independent variable is the length of time a child is in preschool and is to be measured through a self-report survey, which is completed by a child's parent. Group one will attend preschool for three months or less while group two will attend preschool for four months or more. The dependent variable is the extraversion skills and is to be measured through a Likert-type scale questionnaire which will be completed by a teacher and a researcher at the ordinal level.

Procedures

Prior to the beginning of the study, approval was obtained by the Institutional Review Board from the California State University of Chico. To recruit preschool children, written consent is to be sent to the superintendents of Northern California preschools. Four preschools will be chosen to participate in the study. Further written consent describing the study's purpose and goals will be sent home with the child for their parent to sign and return back to school the next day. The researcher is the only one who is allowed to access the data making the study confidential. The data collected will be sealed in an envelope in a safe place for nobody else to access. The participants can stop at any point during the study with no consequences upon the participants. Written consent will be received before any questionnaires begin. Risks are minimal in the study and there are no perceived benefits for the child's participation.

Participants

The study includes a probability cluster sample of 500 children from 4 preschools in Northern California in order to obtain a wide range of information and to keep the study accurate. In group one, there are 92 3 year olds, 110 4 year olds, and 48 5 year olds with 45% Caucasian, 35% Hispanic, 15% African American, and 5% Asian. In group two, there are 102 3 year olds, 98 4 year olds, and 50 5 year olds with 40% Caucasian, 28% Hispanic, 22% African American, and 10% Asian. In both groups there are 50% female participants and 50% male participants.

Measures

Participants will receive a four item demographic question survey regarding the participant's age, ethnicity, gender, and length of time of the child's preschool attendance. There will be a 14 item pre-test and post-test Likert-type scale questionnaire that examines the child's social characteristics along with interactions with other children and adults. A teacher and a researcher will complete the questionnaires. In the observational analysis, *Relation of Nursery School Attendance to Social Relationships*, Hattwick (1936) observed general social characteristics such as fears strange people, objects, places or stays close to adults. Reactions to other children included five questions such as avoids play with other children and refuses to share. One additional item was included in the questionnaire, '*Acts shy around other children*' and will have an asterisk (*) in the questionnaire to represent that it was added. In the reactions to adults section, there are five questions such as ignores requests and looks for praise. The questionnaire is in a fixed format. The anchors of the 4 point Likert-type response scale are 1(never), 2(sometimes), 3(often), and 4(always). The lower scores represent higher levels of extraversion skills. Quantitative data is to be used in the study. The researcher will add up the

scores and check off what they observe when examining the children's behavior. Inter-rater reliability will be used in this study.

Data Analysis

The study's hypothesis is that children who attend preschool will have an increase in extraversion skills. The statistical test that will be used in this study is an independent sample t-test. The study is designed to compare two groups (i.e. preschool attenders and children who attended preschool for three months or less) to see if there is a group difference in extraversion skills.

References

- Anderson, L. M., Shinn, C., Fullilove, M. T., Scrimshaw, S. C., Fielding, J. E., Normand, J., Carande-Kulis, V. G., & The Task Force on Community Preventive Services (2003). The effectiveness of early childhood development programs: A systematic review. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 24(3S), 32-46. doi:10.1016/S0749-3797(02)00655-4
- Hanson, Jr., R. (2006). Preschool inhibits children's social development. *Protection Association*. Retrieved from <http://www.childandfamilyprotection.org/eceart060120.html>
- Hattwick, B. W. (1936). The influence of nursery school attendance upon the behavior and personality of the preschool child. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 5(2), 180-190.
- Kavcic, T., Podlesek, A., & Zupanacic, M. (2012). The role of early childhood personality in the developmental course of social adjustment. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 36(3), 215-225. doi:10.1177/0165025439183
- McCabe L. A., & Frede E. C. (2007). Challenging behaviors and the role of preschool education. *National Institute for Early Education Research: Preschool Policy Brief*, (16). Retrieved from <http://www.nieer.org/resources/factsheets/20.pdf>
- Molland, J. (2012). More than half of us kids do not attend preschool. *Care2 Make a Difference*. Retrieved from <http://www.care2.com/causes/more-than-half-of-us-kids-do-not-attend-preschool.html>
- Pickens, J. (2009). Socio-emotional programme promotes positive behavior in preschoolers: *Child Care in Practice*, 15(4), 261-278.

Appendix

Table of Contents

Subject	Page(s)
<hr/>	
1.Parent Consent Letter-----	11
2.Child and Family Survey-----	12
3.Relation of Nursery School Attendance to Social Relationships Questionnaire-----	13-14

Dominique Leatherman
Child Development Department
California State University, Chico
Chico, California, 95929-0220

December 11, 2013

Dear Parent:

The purpose of this study is to examine whether attending preschool increases a child's extraversion skills. Currently, there is a lot of the research done on both of these topics, however very little done when compared together. I, as the researcher, am conducting this study on behalf of the California State University of Chico. The child's participation is voluntary. Participation in the study includes a short child family survey regarding the child's age, gender, ethnicity, and length of time in preschool. The survey should take three to five minutes to complete. The child would also participate in a questionnaire that would be completed by a researcher and a teacher at the beginning and the end of the study. The questionnaire would be completed in the classroom and divided into three categories. The child will be observed by their general social characteristics, their reactions to other children and their reactions to adults.

Risks during the study are very minimal upon your child's participation. There are no benefits for your child's participation. The information collected through the survey and questionnaire will be kept confidential and hidden away in a sealed envelope. The researcher will be the only one to access the data and information collected. Your child may stop during at any time during the study with no penalties. Please sign below and return it to the researcher or the child's teacher in an envelope to maintain confidentiality.

If you have any additional questions, concerns, or would like more information about this study, please contact Dominique K. Leatherman, (530) 898-4696, California State University, Chico. Thank you for your cooperation.

First and last name of parent (please print): _____

Signature of parent: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher: Dominique K. Leatherman

Date: December 11, 2013

Child and Family Survey**Name of Child:** _____**Date:** _____

Please complete the Child and Family Survey to the best of your knowledge and return this document back to the researcher or the child's teacher in a sealed envelope. Please circle your answers below.

1)What is your child's gender?

Female

Male

Will not specify

2)How old is your child?

Three

Four

Five

Will not specify

3)What is your child's ethnicity? (Circle as many that apply)

Caucasian

African American

Latino/Hispanic

Asian

Other (Specify):_____

Will not specify

4)How long has your child attended preschool?

Less than three months (Specify): _____

More than three months (Specify): _____

Thank you for your participation.

Relation of Nursery School Attendance to Social Relationships Questionnaire

Please complete the questionnaire to the best of your knowledge at the beginning of the study and at the end of the study. When finished, please give the questionnaire back to the researcher in a sealed envelope. Please circle your answers below.

Name of child: _____

Date: _____

Name of observer: _____

General Social Characteristics

1)Fears strange people, objects, places

(1)Never

(2) Sometimes

(3) Often

(4) Always

2)Shrinks from notice

(1)Never

(2) Sometimes

(3) Often

(4) Always

3)Stays close to adults

(1)Never

(2) Sometimes

(3) Often

(4) Always

Reactions to Other Children

1)Avoids play with others

(1)Never

(2) Sometimes

(3) Often

(4) Always

2)Gives in too easily

(1)Never

(2) Sometimes

(3) Often

(4) Always

3)Refuses to share

(1)Never

(2) Sometimes

(3) Often

(4) Always

4)Acts shy around other children*

(1)Never

(2) Sometimes

(3) Often

(4) Always

5)Grabs toys

(1)Never

(2) Sometimes

(3) Often

(4) Always

6) Attacks others

(1) Never

(2) Sometimes

(3) Often

(4) Always

Reactions to Adults

1) Ignores requests

(1) Never

(2) Sometimes

(3) Often

(4) Always

2) Seeks attention by showing off

(1) Never

(2) Sometimes

(3) Often

(4) Always

3) Asks unnecessary help

(1) Never

(2) Sometimes

(3) Often

(4) Always

4) Looks for praise

(1) Never

(2) Sometimes

(3) Often

(4) Always

5) Criticizes others

(1) Never

(2) Sometimes

(3) Often

(4) Always