

“Home Sweet Home”: Effects of Home Environment on Children's Behavior Development from Infancy to Fifth Grade

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Introduction

Infant and toddler years are crucial for behavior development, which impacts the likelihood of a successful adulthood. The environment that a child is raised in can predict future behavior, such as parental responsiveness, ex. paying attention to the child or being in-tune with the child's emotions, increases the likelihood of a child developing adaptive social skills (Caldwell & Bradley, 1984). Responsivity and acceptance in the home are associated with promoting the development of positive behaviors (Bradley, 1993). If positive behaviors can be predicted by the environment, then behavior problems may be predicted as well. One of the most serious behavior problems comes from externalizing behavior, such as aggression, which has been shown to be related to the lack of self-regulation development (Calkins & Fox, 2002).

Purpose

This project aims to determine how the supportiveness of the early home environment, as measured by the HOME at 36-months, predicts child behavior problems in 5th grade.

Methods

Sample

Extant longitudinal data from the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (EHSREP)
2,958 children and their families

Male
51%

Female
49%

Measures

Supportiveness of the Home Environment:

Measured using the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment at 36 months (HOME; Caldwell & Bradley, 1984)

Child's Behavior Problems:

Specifically examining externalizing behavior. Measured using the Child Behavior Checklist in the 5th grade (CBCL; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000).

Results



Better overall home environments at 36 months predicted fewer externalizing behavior problems in 5th grade.
 $r = -0.13, p < .001$



Better internal physical environments at 36 months predicted fewer externalizing behavior problems in 5th grade.
 $r = -0.10, p < .01$



Better external environment at 36 months predicted fewer externalizing behavior problems in 5th grade.
 $r = -0.06, p < .05$



Better learning environment at 36 months predicted fewer externalizing behavior problems in 5th grade.
 $r = -0.06, p < .05$

At 36 months
At 5th Grade

HOME Total Score
Overall Home Environment
 $M = 27.23; SD = 4.79$

CBCL Externalizing Aggressive Behavior
 $M = 8.01; SD = 7.95$

HOME Internal Physical Environment
Safety and Cleanliness of Home
 $M = 7.82; SD = 1.50$

HOME External Environment
Safety and Cleanliness Outside of Home
 $M = 12.33; SD = 2.44$

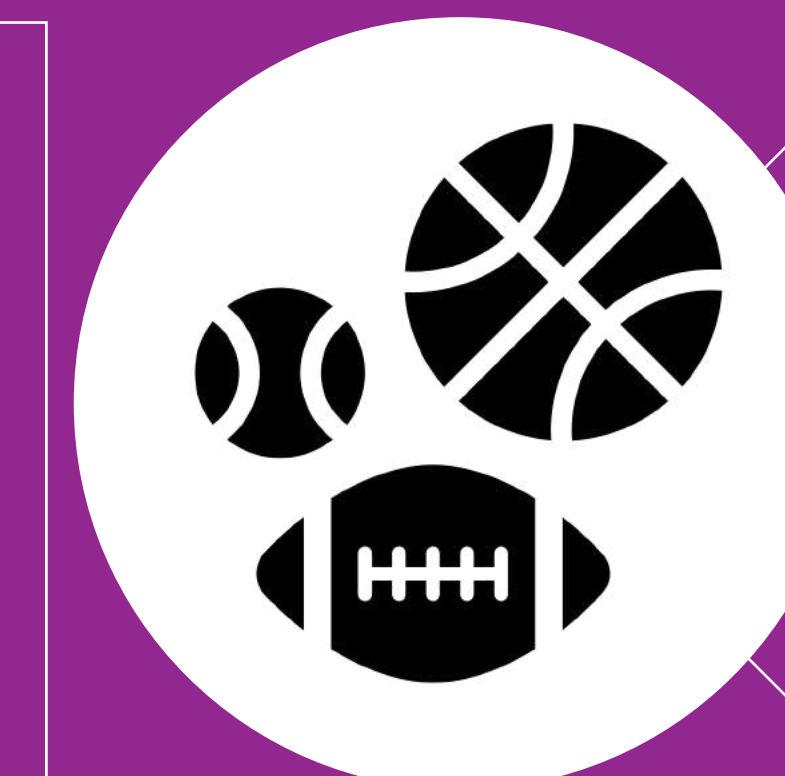
HOME Learning Environment
Access to Age-Appropriate Materials
 $M = 10.49; SD = 2.02$

HOME Parental Warmth
Expressions of Positivity to Child
 $M = 2.53; SD = .83$

Discussion



If behavioral traits can be predicted by a supportive home environment, early intervention can help decrease the likelihood of maladaptive behaviors.



Home visitors can use the HOME for non-judgmental dialog with parent(s) to discuss ways to help boost developmental support.