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Correlations of preschool attendance and child study team classifications

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CORRELATIONS OF PRESCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND CHILD STUDY TEAM CLASSIFICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

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CORRELATIONS OF PRESCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND CHILD STUDY TEAM CLASSIFICATIONS
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The purpose of the study was to explore possible relationships between children attending preschool and the Child Study Team classifications. Specifically, this researcher hypothesized that children who did not attend any form of preschool before entering Kindergarten were classified at a higher rate than those children who did receive a preschool education. There were a total of 55 participants; there were 28 male and 27 female participants. Students from the psychology pool and at the Academic Success Center at Rowan University were given questionnaires about their preschool attendance, child study team involvement, and their background. Students at the Academic Success Center were handed the survey by the researcher and the psychology pool students took the survey online. Of the total number of participants in the study, 38 were from the Academic Success Center, and 17 from the psychology pool. After a Chi-Square analysis, there was found to be a non-significant relationship between preschool attendance and child study team classification. Therefore, the hypothesis was not supported.

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Need

The achievement gap is proof that our public education system is consistently failing our children and drastically reducing their chances to compete and succeed as adults. Furthermore, in a day and age when the "labeling debate" is a major barrier for convincing parents that their children need to be evaluated by the Child Study Team, it is important for School Psychologists to be aware of every possible factor that could lead to a more stigmatizing label and the achievement gap. Perhaps this labeling debate stems from the fact that most school districts use screening tests to track a student. That is, that they academically screen Kindergarteners to find those who are gifted or those who appear to be delayed cognitively. They then use these findings to place children in special classes designed to optimally help the specific needs of that child. Higher track students are put on a track to success, taking gifted classes and college preparatory classes in high school. The lower track students take mediocre classes early on and business and vocational courses later on. Middle track students fall in between. This tracking system was created with the idea that all students would benefit because each course is tailored to their level of ability. (Anderson and Taylor, 2004) The problem therein lies in the screening progress of young children and that history has seen too many children being placed in the wrong track. Thus, these children had a more stigmatizing label than necessary.

The children getting screened come from many different backgrounds. And perhaps, those children who had the opportunity to go to preschool are more likely to be tracked

higher than those who did not. There is a skew in the data showing that more low-socioeconomic children are on lower tracks. This may be due to them not having the opportunity to attend preschool. Therefore, tracking and screening seem to lead to an achievement gap.

If preschool helps children overcome certain risk factors, then School Psychologists or other Early Intervention professionals can then refer clients to a preschool program to avoid long-term learning disabilities. Proving that preschool is effective could potentially prevent children from being unduly classified and ease the burden on school budgets. Research conducted for this study points to a trend in at-risk children being able to overcome learning disabilities with early intervention.

If there were a correlation between low socioeconomic students being classified more than middle to high socioeconomic students, it would show that there is another bias in evaluating children for learning disabilities. Perhaps then there would be more government funding for childcare to allow for all children to have an equal opportunity. There are currently several studies funded by the government just for that reason. And since the NCLB legislature is so geared at closing the achievement gap, there will be more scrutinizing of the system that would create an achievement gap.

Therefore, there is a need for this study to determine if there are any correlations between preschool attendance and future academic success, which may indicate responsibility for the achievement gap.

Purpose

Taking all of that into consideration, this study attempted to see if there were any correlations between preschool attendance and classification rate. This study looked at this in a retrospective way, by surveying college students on their history. This study could have potentially found correlations between preschool attendance and grade performance in later years, between preschool attendance and socioeconomic status, and between socioeconomic status, grade performance, and classification rate. Hypothetically, even race and gender effects could have been seen. Research has shown that quality of childcare is very important in determining whether or not it will reverse learning disabilities, but this study was looking to see if at least any form of childcare would make a difference in avoiding classifications.

Hypothesis

The theory for this thesis was based on experience this researcher had had working in a partial-care preschool program prior to attending Graduate School. Working on transitioning preschoolers into Kindergarten suggested that the skills children need to ascertain before entering Kindergarten have increased over the past decade. Hypothetically, children who do not attend preschool are at a disadvantage because they cannot properly prepare for Kindergarten. If one is not properly prepared for Kindergarten, then perhaps they will be playing catch up with the other children. Intelligence tests for school aged children are designed to assess verbal and performance abilities. They evaluate performance on tasks designed to measure the child's general fund of information, vocabulary, social judgment, language, reasoning, numerical concepts, auditory and visual memory, attention, concentration, and special visualization. (Cohen and Swerdlik, 2005) Some research has

suggested that phonemic training contributes to the development of accurate concepts of reading in the preschool child and makes the child less confused when confronted with formal reading instruction in school. (Olofsson and Lundberg, 1985) Hypothetically, this could lead teachers and Child Study Team members to falsely believe that a child would have learning disability, when in reality they are just being exposed to the information for the first time and are taking more time to learn it compared to others. Therefore, this researcher hypothesized that there would be a strong inverse relationship between preschool attendance and classification rates. It is also hypothesized that ethnicity, caregiver situations, and socioeconomic status issues will show influence on that inverse relationship.

History

There has always been a great debate of nature versus nurture, or whether intelligence was due to biology or environmental factors. Psychologists now believe that intelligence stems from both genetic factors and environmental factors. However, this was not always the case. The term preformatism is telling of the fact that scientists used to believe that all living organisms were formed at birth. (Cohen and Swerdlik, 2005) Therefore, your intelligence was formed at birth and it was unable to be improved upon. It was thought that there was no cure for low IQ. Another popular term at the time was predeterminism. That is that you were born with all of your characters and attributes, and especially intelligence. (Cohen and Swerdlik, 2005) It was viewed as an unchanging pre-determined characteristic and no amount of learning could change it. There is currently now the interactionist view in that intelligence is an interaction between heredity and environment. (Cohen and Swerdlik, 2005) These environmental factors can include culture, race, gender, socioeconomic status, parental

educational level, housing circumstances, location, or type of school. The interactionist view is important in our discussion due to the fact that it is important to understand that a child's intelligence is being formed or molded during those early years in which intelligence testing is most likely to be administered.

In the classic 1966 study by Harold M. Skeels, he displayed scientific evidence that environment effects intelligence. In the 1930's, Skeels worked in an orphanage as a psychologist. Since it was during the Great Depression, many of the parents of the children had to turn their children into the orphanage because they could not afford to keep them. This meant that most of the children in the orphanage were of average intelligence. However, this orphanage was a systematic orphanage and did not provide much interaction to the babies. So Skeels took some of the children to a facility for mentally retarded women down the road to provide motherly interactions for the children. The effects of his study are famous, because the results showed that children who only attended the orphanage had lower intelligence, and children who were nurtured by the mentally retarded women had higher intelligence. When he released his findings in 1966, it showed that nurturance has a direct effect on the intelligence of a child, and consequently, that environment has an effect on intelligence. This is important because the fact that environment has been shown to effect intelligence is the reason preschool exists. And overtime, as will be explained in chapter 2, the quality of preschool has shown to have differential effects on intelligence outcomes. In addition, Cohen and Swerdlik name several environmental factors that affect a child's intelligence. These are the presence of resources, parental use of language, parental expression of concern about achievement, and parental explanation of discipline policies in a warm and democratic home

environment. (2005) For those children who do not get this at home, preschool would be even more important and effective in increasing intelligence.

Taking all of this into consideration this study intends to build on that research and determine if preschool has a more important role that thought previously, preventing a child from being wrongly diagnosed with a learning disability.

Operational Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the term preschool is going to be defined as any experience that a child has in a structured and nurturing group setting, including daycare in an approved facility. It is also defined as serving three to four-year-olds. While other research has shown that the quality of the preschool care is a strong predictor to success, this study is going to see if there are any correlations pertaining to any preschool experience, regardless of the quality. A caregiver is going to be defined as any adult who gives physical or emotional care to that child. It does not have to refer to the parent or guardian, but any competent adult that cares for the child and usually does so on a regular basis.

The Child Study Team is a team of school professionals who develop an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) for children who are having difficulty with schooling. The team consists of a School Psychologist, School Social Worker, and a Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant. The School Psychologists is the member of the Child Study Team who evaluates the child's intellectual capacity. When this team creates an IEP for a student, a parent or guardian is part of the process and is considered a part of the team. The term classified is used my Child Study Team members to refer to a child who has been diagnosed by the Child

Study Team as having a learning disability. The general definition of a learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997) Some disorders included in this definition are perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and development aphasia. Some disorders not included as a learning disability are learning problems that are the primary result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

Assumptions

This researcher assumed that any preschool experience would have a positive impact on a student. It was also assumed that homes with only one caregiver are a family in low socioeconomic status. A home with only one caregiver was also assumed to use familial care instead of daycare or preschool for their children. In addition, it was assumed that the students would accurately answer the survey, requiring them to remember whether or not they attended preschool.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. First of all, it was a retrospective study, which may suggest that the answers provided were not accurate, as the students may have had trouble remembering that far back. The population that was surveyed had several limitations; such as there was not an accurate representation of the population in the sample

size. Members of the study disproportionately were members of high socioeconomic status and Caucasian. Another limitation of the study was that students might have been confused by the survey, and did not answer questions accurately. A final limitation of this study was that it includes daycare as a preschool experience. As has been stated before, it is the quality of preschool that has a high correlation with future academic success. If this study includes daycare as preschool, it might skew the positive effects of the overall preschool sample, as daycare would not be considered a quality preschool experience.

Summary

In summary, this study hoped to widen the awareness of the effects that preschool can have on an individual's academic career. If a child study seam tracks children into specialized program to early on, they may be including environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage into the category of learning disabilities.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The first five years of a child's life are a very eventful time. These preschool years contain many marked changes and are a time of constant learning. In the mid-1970s, Congress passed a law that mandated that children aged three and older, suspected of having physical or mental disabilities, must be professionally evaluated. (Cohen and Swerdlik, 2005) This is because if a child has a learning disability, it should try to be caught as soon as possible to ward off further damage. Intervening at such a young age is best because that is when children will have the best possibility to overcome a learning disability or minimize the damaging effects. Most evaluations are done to find problems with reading, writing, and listening to prevent problems at school. (Parke and Locke, 2001) In trying to determine if there is a disparity in learning between children who do attend preschool and those who do not, research for this thesis includes finding out what preschool aged children are developmentally capable of, if preschool can avoid learning disabilities in later years, and are those who do not go to preschool at a significant disadvantage.

What are Preschool-Aged Children Developmentally Capable of and What Skills Do They Learn in Preschool?

Children start to learn cause and effect relationships at 8 months old, when they start to cry to get a parent to come to them. By 3 years old, the brain is 90% of its adult weight. (Mikitish, 2008) Preschoolers are aged 3 to 5 years old, and are therefore attending these

programs during the time that the brain is forming cognitive connections for the rest of their lives. This is a critical time period for those children, and as discussed in the history section of chapter 1, environment influences intelligence. It is easy to see that children who are from impoverished home environments might be at a disadvantage for finding their IQ potential. Therefore, children who do not attend preschool, versus children who had enriched environments, are at a higher risk for lower intelligence.

Children learn many social, cognitive, and emotional skills in those early years. In general, children learn math skills, reading skills, and attention skills in preschool. (Duncan, Claessens, Huston, Pagani, et al., 2007) As their minds grow, they are capable of building on what they learned previously and increase their knowledge bank.

Most important is cognitive and language development during these years (Society for Research, 2000). Results obtained through the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development on their study of Early Childhood Care; show that quality of childcare was a reasonably consistent predictor of children's cognitive and language performance. (2000) In another study, results also indicate that higher quality childcare was related to a child's higher measures of cognitive development, language development, and communication skills. (Burchinal, Roberts, Riggins, Zeisel, Neebe, and Bryant, 2000) These skills, mainly language and communication, are the skills that children need as building blocks for future academic success. If they do not have a solid language and communication base, their language and reading skills will be delayed.

There are several studies that show that repeated exposure of phonemes to preschool aged children at risk for reading delays can help those children to overcome them and read at an age appropriate level. (Ball and Blachman, 1988; Warrick, Rubin, and Rowe-Walsh,

1993; Byrne, Fielding-Barnsley, and Ashley, 2000; Hatcher, Hulme, and Snowling, 2004; Lonigan, 2006) Olofsson and Lundberg suggest that phonemic training contributes to the development of accurate concepts of reading in preschool aged children. Furthermore, they suggest that it could potentially make that child less confused when confronted with formal reading instruction in school. (1985) If a child were less confused, then perhaps they would keep up with the development of their peers, and not be mistaken as having a learning disability when it comes to reading. Hatcher, Hulme, and Snowling concluded from their study that a preschool program that has a high phonemic component to their curriculum is sufficient enough for most 4 year olds to master the alphabetic principle and to read effectively. (2004) Reading skills are essential for young children, as most school curriculums are based on the children reading successfully. Topics such as science, social studies, language arts, and now even math require students to read text and problems in order to conduct schoolwork.

There are many activities that are essential in preschools that have hidden teaching for children. Such as story time, where children learn the basic concepts of reading, such as reading left to right and what letters and words actually are and that they should be distinguished from numbers. When children do puzzles, they are learning to improve fine motor skills, concentration, and hand eye coordination. And doing them independently help children to practice problem-solving skills. Arts and crafts also help children to work on fine motor skills and hand eye coordination, but when children talk about their work it gives them practice with language and self-expression. When a child plays with blocks they are learning number concepts, shapes, comparing and contrasting sizes, as well as spatial skills. When children do circle time, and sit down as a group and talk about their day, they learn to sit

patiently, something all Kindergarteners must know! This also gives them a chance to practice talking in front of others and learning social skills about answering questions. And finally, outdoor time may look like chaos, but there are many things a child learns from this activity. First they learn about their bodies and what they are capable off. Children constantly push the limit to learning and master balance, coordination, and develop their muscles. In addition, group activities on the playground teach children cooperation. (LeeKeenan and Flynn, 2008)

Can Attending Preschool Avoid Learning Disabilities in Later Years?

Children, who are identified as having learning disabilities early on in their school career, tend to carry them through adolescence and adulthood. (Kuder, 2008) There is evidence to suggest that if a child receives intervention early enough, they can overcome or eradicate their learning impairment. As stated previously, phonemic training in children at risk for reading delays can erase that disparity. Learning disabilities can develop early on for children, with some being apparent shortly after birth. Others, like reading and writing difficulties do not emerge until the time a child uses these skills in school. If a child was introduced to these skills in preschool, a disability in this area could be caught early on.

Research has shown that there is definitive evidence that high-quality childcare can enhance the cognitive and language development of children from families who display an impoverished home environment. (Howes, Burchinal, Pianta,Bryant, Early, Clifford, and Barbarin, 2008) For these children, who attend intensive programs, long-term effects were seen into adulthood with children having higher IQ's, educational level, and employment rates, as well as lower contact with law enforcement. (Campbell, Ramey, Pungnello,

Sparling, & Miller-Johnson, 2002, as cited in Society for Research, 2003) In addition, for children from low-socioeconomic status families, quality of childcare was found to be a stronger predictor of outcomes than for children of middle-socioeconomic status families. (Society for Research, 2003) Many government funded early intervention programs exist because of the scientific evidence that early intervention can eradicate delays, especially for high-risk children. In an article in Early Childhood Research Quarterly, a study by Winsler, Tran, Hartman, Madigan, Manfra, and Bleiker, concluded that early intervention center-based programs in a community are beneficial for preparing ethnically diverse children for Kindergarten. (2008)

Some children are referred to the Child Study Team due to continual behavioral disruptions and anger management issues. However, a child's ability to regulate their emotions and attention is learned through the context of social relationships and is also affected by the quality of care. (NICHD Early Childcare Research Network, 2003) Therefore, children exposed to social situations in preschool, could potentially avoid being mistaken as having a behavioral disorder later on in school.

Some research suggests that the most a child carries their preschool skills are second or third grade. That is, if a child is lacking in cognitive development due to poor quality preschool or no preschool attendance at all, that difference will not appear in a child's cognitive ability past the third grade. However, the psychological effects of being delayed early on could affect an individual for the rest of their lives. Considering that it is often to remove a child from a track, or to un-diagnosis a learning disability, there could be lasting effects through the rest of the child's academic career and beyond.

Are Children Who Do Not Attend Preschool at a Disadvantage?

Now that we understand that preschool can have a significant positive effect on children and their intelligence, are there any possible disadvantages for at-risk children who do not go to preschool? According to the previous statements, one could conclude that children who do not go to preschool and come from impoverished environments could be more likely to be classified by the Child Study Team. The research tends to support the fact that children, who do not go to Preschool, and those who attend a low-quality childcare, are at a disadvantage when they start Kindergarten, and for years after. A misdiagnosis is harmful to these children because even if they are given the wrong label, the labeling effect will still take place. This labeling effect is described as the way that surrounding people react to the label that a child is given. If a child is given a gifted label, teachers and parents will treat that person as such and have higher expectations for them. (Anderson and Taylor, 2004) The opposite is also true, if a label is given to a child of a disability, teachers and parents will treat the child as such. This can help a child if they really need the help, however, if a child is smarter than the label given to them, it could have adverse effects. Students live up to their expectations, low or high, so this child, who could potentially succeed greatly, does not because of the labeling effect. (Anderson and Taylor, 2004) This is coupled with the situation of the teacher expectancy effect. It has been found that a student performs at the level that a teacher thinks they will perform at, independent of their real cognitive ability. (Anderson and Taylor, 2004) Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson studied this effect in 1968. They told teachers which students were "spurters" (those who would increase their academic performance throughout the year) and which were not, but not tell the teacher that they picked those students at random and it did not actually reflect their cognitive abilities. At the

end of the school year, the Rosenthal and Jacobson found that those children that the teacher thought were "spurters" were the ones who actually made progress throughout the year, regardless of their actual cognitive abilities. This shows that what teachers think of a student truly affects their school performance, since those "spurters" were totally chosen at random. (Anderson and Taylor, 2004)

The key importance here is that those who are exposed to enriched learning or a school-type experience in early years, will have a solid base from which to excel. They can build the language and reading skills that children from impoverished environments will not. Oral language and early reading skills are one of the most important predictors of children's later school achievement. (Connor, Son, Hindman, and Morrison, 2005) However, an important factor regarding special education is the fact that there are disproportionately more African Americans and Hispanics in special education programs. (US Department of Education, 2006) Why are African Americans, and now even Hispanics, disproportionately numbered in special education programs?

There is a need for intelligence testing for children to help determine which child needs specialized services, or which child needs to be challenged more. This is done to prevent future difficulties in the child's education, which we have established is very important. Intelligence testing can determine what educational deficits a child has and consequently can determine the best course of education for the child. However, there have been some issues with children getting less than fair treatment stemming from cultural biases in intelligence testing. It appears as though children who have an enriched upbringing, that is attends preschool and is exposed to learning and academics in the first few years of life, tend to perform better on intelligence exams than those children who did not. The problem is that

those children, who are not exposed to resources early on, seem to be disproportionately African American and Hispanic children, a possible answer to our question above. Consequently, African American and Hispanic children could receive lower scores on intelligence tests more often than white children. Not to say that all African American and Hispanic children are not exposed to learning early on, but it is a mere consequence of the culture of poverty. Most families in a poor community need both parents working, but time and time again, the men in these communities are not reliable. These men could be in jail or just with another family. This then leaves single mothers to try to fend for themselves and they are put into a position of being unable to afford daycare. It ends up that a family member is usually the one to watch the children and therefore, these children are not being exposed to structured settings or disciplined learning. Greenspan reports that family care is low quality or varied at best, when compared to the quality of a preschool. (2003) These young single African American mothers need to work but childcare is often in the way of gainful employment. (Milwaukee, 2007) And so a relative, usually their mother, watches the child or children because it is hard for a working single mother to afford daycare. Chase-Lansdale conducted a study to determine if the grandmother's who are watching their daughter's young children created a quality experience for those children in preschool years. She found that for those preschool children who stayed with maternal family suffered from a poor learning environment. She found negative effects of the parenting style of both the grandmother and mother. (1994) Furthermore, low socioeconomic rearing environments which is disproportionally African American, fail to provide stimulation and experiences that seem necessary for optimal cognitive abilities compared to whites. (Moore, 1986) In addition, Davis (1999) states the fact that low-income families cannot afford educational

resources. Families more economically better off can afford computers, educational toys, books, and educational games.

But how long can the disadvantages of not attending preschool carry on? Potentially, it is infinite. The situation described above could lead to a secondary chain of events that could easily end in criminality and create a cyclic pattern of underachievement. There has been research that links low IQ scores with delinquency, and it is mostly male delinquency. () Therefore, single mothers are having children who grow up to slip into the same roles of the previous generation. There is almost no progress being made. Poverty is a vicious cycle that is hard to get out of and can take more than a generation to complete. It does not help that the schools could possibly be treating these children unfairly. It appears as though young African American children need all the help they can get. In a study conducted by Hall and Kaye (1977) they looked at early cognitive development in young boys from four different subcultures and found discrepancies in scores. They postulated that it was the home or school environment of the black child was to blame. They stated that their environmental conditions did not foster abilities such as the white children's conditions did. They even felt compelled to add their own anecdote to the study, noting that they personally observed the deplorable home situations of some of the black children, and personally asked themselves how the children could have learned anything at all. Hypothetically, children who do not go to preschool, face several disadvantages that could potentially carry on for the rest of their lives. Theoretically, these children are being diagnosed because of their status in life, and not because of a real disability. According to the Nations Report Card (2005), when comparing standardized test scores for minorities who reach the 12^{th} grade, they score the same on English, math, and science as 13-year-old white students. When comparing highest level or

performance, African American and Hispanic students are more likely to drop out of high school in every state. Of those students who do go on to college, black and Hispanic young adults are only half as likely to earn a college degree as white students. So there is clearly an achievement gap, and the new President is focused on erasing it. Hopefully, there will be a change and all students will finally become equal.

Summary

In summary, while direct educational effects from preschool are not proven past the third grade, other systemic influences put in place by not attending preschool and being unduly classified, do carry on past the third grade and that is why this research is important.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of students from several resources within the University. Survey participants statistics are as follows: 55 total participants, 27 female, 28 male, 43 Caucasian, 5 Latino American, 4 African American, 2 identified themselves as other, and 1 Asian American participant. There were 38 total surveys collected from Academic Success Center, 17 from the psychology subject pool online through SONA.

Measures

The measure used for this research was a survey that the researcher created to specifically investigate preschool attendance and classification rates. (See Appendix) Since the survey was created specifically for the purposes of this study, and was created by this researcher, there was no available data on the reliability or validity for this study.

Design

There is no explicit independent or dependent variables since only correlations were investigated. This researcher handed the survey to students in the Academic Success Center during the last week of the fall semester and the first week of the spring semester. This was done as to not interfere with testing time periods and at a time when students would be less stressed. The survey was also accessed online through the SONA system at Rowan University, for applicants in the subject pool to participate. This was available to students in the spring semester. Based on the answers provided, this researcher then analyzed the data to

see if there were any possible correlations between preschool attendance and classification rates of those students.

Hypothesis

This researcher hypothesized that a correlation linking preschool attendance and classification rates, in an inverse relationship, would emerge. Meaning, that as preschool attendance increases, classification numbers would decrease.

Analysis

The statistical analysis that was used was a chi-square analysis and was done on the SPSS computer program at Rowan University.

Summary

In summary, this researcher attempted to create a sample of students that were representative of an elementary education student population, which would include a high percentage of classified special education students. In order to do that, students who were known to have been classified needed to be sought out, hence the resource of the Academic Success Center being used to survey students. Many special education students transition into employment or community colleges instead of going to four-year universities.

Chapter 4: Report of Data

Introduction

The hypothesis of the study is that there will be an inverse relationship between preschool attendance and child study team classification. In other words, if a participant attended preschool then they would hypothetically not be classified by and child study team, and vice versa, if a child did not attend preschool then they would most likely be classified by a child study team.

Results

Of the 55 participants in the study, 43 reportedly went to preschool, and 12 did not. From the entire sample, 17 participants were classified by a child study team and 38 were not. After a cross-tabulation analysis, of the 43 who went to preschool, 30 of them were not classified by a child study team, but 13 were classified. From the 12 participants who did not go to preschool, only 4 were found to be classified by a child study team. After running a Pearson Chi-Square analysis the p value is .837. This would indicate that the data was non significant. (See table 4.1)

	Classified by Child Study Team			*Totals*
Preschool Attendance		Yes	No	
	Yes	13	30	**43**
	No	4	8	**12**
Totals		**17**	**38**	***55***

Table 4.1 Results of Chi-Square Analysis

Discussion

The data for this sample did not support the hypothesis. While it was positive that thirty of the participants who did got to preschool were not classified, but the fact that only four participants who did not go to preschool were classified dispels the hypothesis.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore possible relationships between children attending preschool and the Child Study Team classifications. Specifically, this researcher hypothesized that children who did not attend any form of preschool before entering Kindergarten were classified at a higher rate than those children who did receive a preschool education. There were a total of 55 participants. Students from the psychology pool and at the Academic Success Center at Rowan University were given questionnaires about their preschool attendance, child study team involvement, and their background. After a Chi-Square analysis of the data collected, there was found to be a non-significant relationship between preschool attendance and child study team classification. Therefore, the hypothesis was not supported.

In summary, the results of this study do not support previous research. This may have been due to several limitations, with the most significant limitation being the population that was surveyed. This researcher agreed with previous research. As discussed in chapter 2, this researcher argued that while there may not be direct educational effects due to students who do not have the opportunity to attend preschool, there may be long lasting side effects of the consequences that a school system places on those children.

Discussion

The hypothesis of this study and of past research revolves more around students who are diagnosed between the first day of Kindergarten and the last day of third grade. This is

when there would be the biggest influence on learning by pre-Kindergarten experience. Research has shown that there are minimal direct learning effects from preschool on students past the third grade. According to the theory put forth by this researcher, surveying the college student population could have been relevant due to the students answering in retrospect. However, most of the students who would fit the hypothesis would not be in a college population. Therefore, this study did not access a representative or ideal sample. In an attempt to make the sample as representative as possible, students from the Academic Success Center were surveyed. This did not appear to be successful, as this population also appeared skewed.

Conclusions

Previous research showed that socioeconomic status is more of a factor than race when analyzing the overrepresentation of minorities in special education. Certainly those students who were surveyed for this thesis at Rowan University would reflect middle to high socioeconomic status. This was reflected in the results, as the majority of students from the Academic Success Center are most likely from middle to high socioeconomic status. Of the students from the Academic Success Center who were classified, the majority did go to preschool.

Recommendations

This researchers recommendation for future research mostly pertains to the sample. Perhaps survey students in elementary school, who would have more reliable answers due to third parties also being surveyed and a more diverse population, would increase the validity

of the study. One could also compare Abbott District students to other districts to make socioeconomic status effects more robust. A larger sample size would also be ideal for a future analysis.

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APPENDIX A

Thesis Survey

Thank you for participating in this study. This study is trying to determine if there are any links between preschool attendance and future academic achievement and is being conducted for a Master's Thesis by Joanellen Fenimore. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you do not need to answer every question. All answers will be kept anonymous. Answering this survey indicates that you understand this paragraph and the terms of this study. Please fill out the questions to the best of your knowledge. If you have any questions you may contact Joanellen Fenimore at 856-299-3121.

1. Are you over the age of 18?
    a. Yes
    b. No

2. What year of college are you in?
    a. Freshmen
    b. Sophomore
    c. Junior
    d. Senior

3. What is your gender?
    a. Male
    b. Female

4. Did you attend a preschool program before entering Kindergarten?
    a. Yes
    b. No

5. What was your grade average in Middle School?
    a. A student
    b. A-B student
    c. B student
    d. B-C student
    e. C student
    f. C- D student

6. What was your grade average in High School?
    a. A student
    b. A-B student
    c. B student
    d. B-C student
    e. C student
    f. C-D student

7. Were you ever classified by the Child Study Team?
    a. Yes

b. No

8. Did you ever have an IEP, or Individual Education Plan?
   a. Yes
   b. No

9. What caregivers lived with you in your home when you were 3-5 years old?
   a. Single Parent
   b. Both parents
   c. Single Parent and extended family
   d. Both parents and extended Family

10. Did you ever attend a preschool-disabled program?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I don't' know

11. What caregivers lived with you in your home when you were 6-14 years old?
   a. Single Parent
   b. Both parents
   c. Single Parent and extended family
   d. Both parents and extended Family

12. What caregivers lived with you in your home when you were 15-19 years old?
   a. Single Parent
   b. Both parents
   c. Single Parent and extended family
   d. Both parents and extended Family

13. If you were ever classified by a Child Study Team, do you feel that you benefited from it?
   a. Yes
   b. No

14. What ethnic group do you feel most identifiable with?
   a. African American
   b. Asian American
   c. Latino American
   d. Euro-American, Caucasian
   e. None of the above

15. Do you have a favorable view of School Psychologists?
   a. Yes

b. No
c. I have no feelings about them either way
d. I don't know who they are

16. Did you ever receive Early Intervention Services?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I don't know

17. Did you ever take Special Education classes?
    a. Yes
    b. No