

Early childhood educators' knowledge of cognitive development: Does it relate to their classroom management?

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Introduction

- Previous reviews of literature suggests that interactions with teachers and students aids with social, self-regulatory and cognitive development (Hamre, 2014). Furthermore, it points that teachers who receive training on teacher-child interactions improve in these areas.
- Use of strategies such as (a) giving students choices about rules and consequences; (b) giving them some decision making powers about they complete academic work; (c) making assignments more interesting, relevant, and motivating; and (d) encouraging interaction among them -- defined as "effective classroom management" -- leads to high degree of success both academically and behaviourally (Alderman & Green, 2011)

Objectives

- The purpose of the present study is to investigate the knowledge of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) in regards to young children's cognitive development, and its possible relationship with effective classroom management.

Predictions

- Increased level of understanding of children's cognitive development will be associated with the use of more autonomy support/student-centered classroom management strategies (i.e., instructional management; IM) and less behaviour management strategies (BM).

Methodology

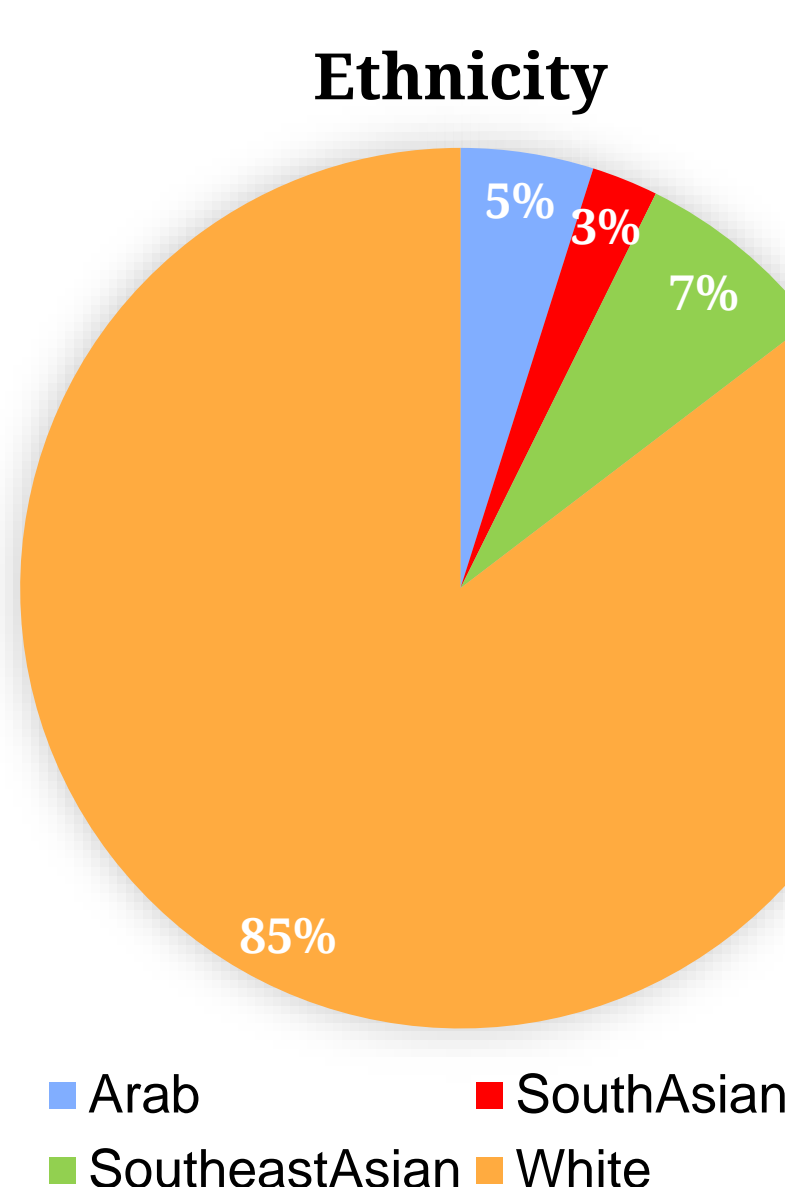
Participants

- 46 RECEs ($M_{age} = 32.59$): 24 teaching in Junior/Senior Kindergarten (JK/SK); others teaching preschoolers ($n = 9$), toddlers ($n = 7$), infants ($n = 5$), and Grade 1 or more ($n = 1$).

- Highest degree held: 31 diploma, 7 B. Ed., 4 B.A., and 4 M. Ed.

General Procedure

- Participants completed 30 minutes long online questionnaires via Qualtrics (a Canadian Server)
- Participants were compensated with \$10.00 e-gift cards by entering their email address upon completion of the survey.



Instruments

1. Initial part of questionnaire that asks participants about their demographics (e.g., age, sex, profession, education background, years of teaching experience etc.)
2. Secondary part of questionnaire that requires participants to select the youngest age at which they think most children will correctly "pass" a given cognitive task of *Theory of Mind* (ToM: Wellman & Liu, 2004); *Executive Functioning* (EF: Carlson, 2005); and *Future Thinking* (FT: Bélanger, Atance, Varghese, Nguyen & Vendetti, 2014; Busby & Suddendorf, 2005)
3. Final part of questionnaire asking about participants classroom practices (i.e., Behaviour and Instructional Management Scale-Short form; Martin & Sass, 2010).

Results

Relationship between RECE's knowledge of cognitive development and classroom management according to their level of education

Degree	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Diploma	1. C. Management		.27	.89**	.05	-.30 ⁺	.01	-.09
	2. IM			-.21	.05	.01	.17	.12
	3. BM				.02	-.30 ⁺	-.08	-.15
	4. ToM					.18	.31	.71**
	5. EF						.22	.61**
	6. FT							.78**
	7. All cog. dev.							
B.A.	1. C. Management		.87	.97*	-.48	.83	.54	.75
	2. IM			.73	-.36	.99**	.55	.98*
	3. BM				-.49	.67	.49	.57
	4. ToM					-.30	-.96*	-.26
	5. EF						.50	.99**
	6. FT							.49
	7. All cog. dev.							
B.Ed.	1. C. Management		.26	.99**	-.22	-.57	-.65	-.68 ⁺
	2. IM			.10	-.47	.27	-.81*	-.46
	3. BM				-.15	-.63	-.54	-.63
	4. ToM					.06	.37	.71 ⁺
	5. EF						.23	.63
	6. FT							.74 ⁺
	7. All cog. dev.							
M.Ed.	1. C. Management		.95 ⁺	.96*	.26	.98*	-.52	.50
	2. IM			.82	.07	.99**	-.25	.58
	3. BM				.41	.89 ⁺	-.72	.39
	4. ToM					.16	-.27	.58
	5. EF						-.37	.56
	6. FT							.29
	7. All cog. dev.							

** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$ + $p < .10$

Discussion

- There are some significant and/or marginally significant association between RECE's knowledge of children's cognitive development and their classroom management strategies.
- The BIMS has been found to be a reliable measure for from elementary to high school classrooms (Martin & Sass, 2010).
- All RECEs tend to use more IM (87%) than BM (53%) but use them simultaneously.



Conclusion

- Unable to conclude that knowledge of cognitive development has a definitive impact on all aspects of classroom management with RECES.
- The significant and/or marginally significant findings show that this association should be investigated further.

Future Directions

- Find measure that is applicable to behavioral measures with younger children (under the age of 6)
- Explore interaction of BM and IM within the classroom further with a more suitable measure.

References

- Alderman, G., & Green, S. (2011). Social powers and effective classroom management: Enhancing Teacher-Student relationships. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 47(1), 39-44.
- Hamre, B. K. (2014). Teachers' daily interactions with children: An essential ingredient in effective early childhood programs. *Child Development Perspectives*, 8(4), 223-230.

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