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Family involvement for children with disruptive behaviors: The role of parenting stress and motivational beliefs[☆]

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Abstract

Children with disruptive behaviors are at risk for adverse outcomes. Family involvement is a significant predictor of positive child behavior outcomes; however, little research has investigated parent psychological variables that influence family involvement for children with disruptive behaviors. This study investigated the role of parental motivational beliefs (i.e., role construction and efficacy) as a potential mechanism by which parenting stress impacts family involvement for families of children with disruptive behaviors. Results indicated that parent role construction mediated the relation between parenting stress and all aspects of family involvement examined (i.e., home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and home–school communication). Parent efficacy mediated the relation between parenting stress and home-based involvement only. Parents of children with disruptive behaviors reporting stress may experience negative beliefs about their role and efficacy to support their child's education, which may thereby negatively influence their actual

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involvement. Therefore, parent motivational beliefs may serve as an important point for intervention to support involvement of families of children with disruptive behavior.

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Students with disruptive behaviors pose a significant concern for families, schools, and society. Specifically, students with disruptive behaviors experience a greater number of academic difficulties including in-school suspensions (Reinke, Herman, Petras, & Ialongo, 2008), high school drop-out (Vitaro, Brendgen, Larose, & Trembaly, 2005), as well as lower academic grades and achievement scores (Bub, McCartney, & Willett, 2007; Lopes, 2007). These students also demonstrate higher rates of risk factors including school maladjustment, antisocial activity, substance use, sexual activity (Schofield, Bierman, Heinrichs, & Nix, 2008), and conduct problems (Reinke et al., 2008). Because students with behavior problems are at increased risk for experiencing a variety of negative life outcomes, it is vital to identify risk and resiliency factors and the mechanisms by which such factors exert their influence.

Family involvement is defined as the active engagement of family members in activities and behaviors at home and at school to benefit their child's learning and development (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000). Family involvement in children's learning is related to a number of positive academic, psychological, social, and behavioral outcomes for all children, including those with disruptive behaviors (Aeby, Manning, Thyer, & Carpenter-Aeby, 1999; Barnard, 2004; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Ma, 1999; Marcon, 1999; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Trusty, 1999). Family involvement activities have been shown to prevent children's behavioral problems (Domina, 2005) and are associated with positive academic outcomes, including increased academic achievement and motivation for schoolwork (e.g., Comer & Haynes, 1991; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994), lower rates of grade retention, lower drop-out rates, higher on-time high school graduation rates, and higher rates of participation in advanced courses (e.g., Barnard, 2004; Ma, 1999; Marcon, 1999; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Trusty, 1999). Furthermore, students with disruptive behaviors whose family participated in an intervention to increase family involvement demonstrated improved grade point averages, attendance, and reduced drop-out rates relative to students participating in a standard program (Aeby et al., 1999), indicating the powerful effect of family involvement on student outcomes. Particularly, the frequency and quality of family–school communication have been identified as an important predictor of child social and academic functioning in school (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999).

1. Conceptual model

Given that family involvement at home and school is the outward manifestation of parents' behaviors in support of their child's education, it is important to understand the mechanisms by which parenting factors have their effect on involvement. Numerous parent and family characteristics have previously been identified that contribute to family

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