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An ecological intervention in situations of peer rejection in first and second grades of primary school.

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GREI
Interuniversity Research Group on Peer Rejection in School Context

Introduction

Peer rejection is a common experience in childhood but it might become chronic and have a long-term adverse impact in the absence of intervention. As rejection is associated with a wide variety of externalizing, internalizing and academic problems, early interventions in primary education seem advisable (García Bacete et. al., 2014).

A two-year intervention against peer rejection was conducted during first and second grades in 4 primary schools in Castellon (Spain). The programme of intervention consisted of 12 components assigned to four main blocks; the first two blocks included classroom-wide intervention while the other two blocks addressed more specifically the situation of the rejected children.

Method

The intervention sample, 233 six-to-eight year old students (54.5 % boys, 9 classrooms, first to second grade), was compared to the comparison group of 243 students (50.2% boys, 10 classrooms).

Objectives

The present study adopted the objective of firstly promoting a positive social classroom context which enhanced acceptance, help and positive cohabitation in peer relationships, fostering the acquisition, practice and generalization of social skills , in order to further improve the situation of the rejected children by means of specific and guided interactions with their peers.

INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Universal Intervention

Generating contexts that foster positive relationships of acceptance and prosocial behavior

Component 1
Communication research team –teachers and teacher education

To make the teachers aware of the interpersonal processes that occur in the classroom, as well as to enhance their autonomy and resources for promoting the socio-emotional development and resolving the problems that arise (Levin & Nolan, 2004).

Component 2
Teacher-student relationships

To make the teachers aware of their own preferences and behavioral patterns, and help them to generate positive expectations for all their students

(Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005)

Component 3
Peer relationships

- Permanent strategies, e.g. "Talk it out"

- Classroom rules, e.g. " I put myself in your shoes"

- Analysis Group Social Dynamics

(Harrist & Bradley, 2003)

Component 4:
Social reputation
Because reputational processes are factors that influence the choice of who we decide to interact with and how the relationships will be.
E.g. "El cazo de Lorenzo" (Lorenzo's case)

Component 5
Communication teacher-parents
Promoting the participation of the families and the family-school cooperation

(Forest & García Bacete, 2006)

Learning and practicing social skills, peer acceptance and prosocial behavior

Component 6
Children's and young people's literature
That provides scenes in which the characters behave and interact in various ways.

Component 7
Social-emotional learning

The students work on classroom basis on the following social-emotional skills: prosocial behavior: assertiveness; emotional management and behavioral adjustment; problem solving in interpersonal conflicts.

Component 8
Cooperative learning
Cooperative learning structures

RoundTable   AllWrite Consensus

(Kagan & Kagan, 2009)

Specific Intervention

Working with the rejected children

Component 9
Focusing the universal intervention on the rejected children
E.g.: cooperative teams are formed keeping in mind the needs of each rejected student, classroom rules are developed to combat the common forms of exclusion and help the rejected students adopt positive alternative behaviors on a regular basis, etc.

Component 10
Friendship Learning

Consists of 8-10 play sessions between two students, one of them rejected, of 35-45 minutes each session, with the aim of helping the child coordinate different social perspectives and use better social strategies

(Selman, 1980; Karcher, 2007)

Working with the teachers and families of the rejected children

Component 11
Workshops for parents

Parents learn how to teach their child social skills and help her/him make friends and be a good friend to her/his peers .

Component 12
Parents-Teacher Empowerment

Between the teacher, the child's parents and a member of the research team.

Analytic strategy

The data were analyzed using the procedure of cross tables (IBM SPSS statistics 19.0). the rate of rejected children in the two groups, Comparison and Intervention, at Time 1, beginning of 1st grade, was compared to the rate at time 2, end of the 2nd grade.

Results

The results showed a significant decrease of the rate of rejected children in the intervention group, from 12.1% at Time1 to 8.6% at Time 2, while this rate remained stable in the comparison group (13.1% at T1 and 13.3% at T2). However, the most relevant change referred to the stability of rejection (table 1). In the intervention sample only a third of the children who were rejected at T1 was still rejected at T2 (chronicity of rejection: 36.4%), while in the comparison sample the stability of the rejected students was almost 3 children of 5 (chronicity of rejection: 57.7%).

Conclusions

The good outcomes achieved in the present study support the conviction that peer rejection must be combatted by means of universal and multicomponent interventions (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011).

Table 1. *Stability of the sociometric type from time 1 to time 2 in Comparison and Intervention groups*

Group	Sociometric type T1		Sociometric type T2					
			Average	Preferred	Rejected	Neglected	Controversial	Total
Comparison	Average	N	124	12	10	3	2	151
		%	82.1	7.9	6.6	2.0	1.3	100.0
	Preferred	N	13	11	0	0	2	26
		%	50.0	42.3	.0	.0	7.7	100.0
	Rejected	N	7	2	15	0	2	26
		%	26.9	7.7	57.7	.0	7.7	100.0
	Neglected	N	4	0	2	0	1	7
		%	57.1	.0	28.6	.0	14.3	100.0
	Controv	N	2	0	0	0	0	2
		%	100.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0
Intervention	Average	N	120	12	5	5	3	145
		%	82.8	8.3	3.4	3.4	2.1	100.0
	Preferred	N	11	11	0	0	1	23
		%	47.8	47.8	.0	.0	4.3	100.0
	Rejected	N	13	0	8	0	1	22
		%	59.1	.0	36.4	.0	4.5	100.0
	Neglected	N	3	0	1	0	0	4
		%	75.0	.0	25.0	.0	.0	100.0
	Controv	N	5	0	0	0	2	7
		%	71.4	.0	.0	.0	28.6	100.0

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