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Study Summary Form Fields

I. Citation Info

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Title of Study
The effects of a school-based cognitive-behavioral intervention program on the depression scores of sixth-grade students: A comparison outcome study

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Keywords

Abstract
The effects of a school-based cognitive-behavioral intervention approach on the depression scores of sixth grade students were examined in the study. Two hundred and
one sixth grade students served as participants in one of four experimental groups: treatment group, attention-placebo group, delayed treatment group, and no treatment control group. All groups, except the control group, participated in the school-based program called "learned optimism." The learned optimism program is an eight-week curriculum-based program designed to assist adolescents in developing a more optimistic self-explanatory style that contributes to resiliency and positive mental health. All participants completed the Children's Depression Inventory (CDI) on three occasions: before the learned optimism program began (pretest), immediately after the first eight-week program was terminated (posttest 1) and eight weeks later, after the second eight-week program was terminated (posttest 2/follow-up). The results were unexpected. They showed only a significant difference on CDI total scores between the treatment group and delayed treatment group immediately following both groups' participation in the learned optimism program. No significant differences on CDI total scores were found at any other time between or within any of the four groups. Some significant differences were found on CDI subscales between the treatment and delayed treatment groups, but not in the expected direction. Results from an informal questionnaire completed by participants showed that most liked the learned optimism program and it made them feel happier. Plausible explanations for the findings were discussed along with limitations of the study and recommendations for future research in this area.

II. Study Description

*Intervention Description*

- Name of the program/study condition:
  - Learned optimism, a cognitive-behavioral treatment approach
- Main purpose or general description:
  - “Designed to assist adolescents in developing a more optimistic self-explanatory style that contributes to resiliency and positive mental health”
- Theoretical background:
  - “Seligman’s (1990) reformulated learned helplessness theory (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978) which postulated that depressed children and adults hold a pessimistic explanatory style that is a contributing causative factor for depressive symptoms”
- Components:
  - Teachers trained during six hour program on curriculum of learned optimism program
  - Eight-week, curriculum-based program
  - “Participants in the treatment and delayed-treatment groups were divided into groups of 10 and met once a week for one class period (50 minutes). The classroom teachers divided their own classes into groups of 10 to ensure heterogeneous groups.” (p. 88)
• “The researcher met with the attention-placebo group in their classroom once a week for one class period. The researcher presented various scenarios involving ethical social dilemmas adolescents encounter, and then facilitated a group discussion of possible solutions to the problems presented. This was an open-ended discussion, and no problem-solving techniques or strategies were taught. This group participated in a learned optimism treatment program during the second eight-week period of the study.” (p. 88-89)
• Control group followed regular class curriculum
• Previous studies / evaluations:

**Implementation Elements**
Content elements:
Pedagogical strategies:
• Development of an optimistic self-explanatory style

**Research Question(s) / Hypotheses**
1. “There will be no significant differences (p < .05) in depressive symptoms, as reported on the Children’s Depressive Inventory, among the learned optimism treatment group, attention-placebo group, delayed treatment group, and no treatment control group at Posttest 1 (following the first learned optimism treatment program).”
2. “There will be no significant differences (p < .05) in depressive symptoms, as reported on the Children’s Depressive Inventory, between Pretest and Posttest 1 scores within any of the four groups.”
3. “There will be no significant differences (p < .05) in depressive symptoms, as reported on the Children’s Depressive Inventory, among the learned optimism treatment group at Posttest 1, the attention-placebo group and delayed treatment group at Posttest 2, and the no treatment control group at Posttest 1.”
4. “There will be no significant differences (p < .05) in the number of depressive symptoms, as reported on the Children’s Depressive Inventory, between Posttest 1 and Posttest 2 within the attention-placebo group and delayed treatment group.”
5. “At an eight-week follow-up, there will be no significant differences (p < .05) in depressive symptoms, as reported on the Children’s Depression Inventory, between the learned optimism treatment group and no treatment control group.”
6. “There will be no significant differences (p < .05) in depressive symptoms, as reported on the Children’s Depressive Inventory, between Pretest, Posttest 1, and an eight-week follow-up in the treatment group and in the no treatment control group.”
Research Methods

Sample Description:

• Total N final sample: 201
  o Treatment group (learned optimism): 85
  o Attention-placebo group: 23
  o Delayed-treatment group: 56
  o No-treatment control group: 26

• Composition:
  o Gender: equal males and females
  o Location: Tucson, AZ
  o Grade: 6th
  o Ethnicity: Caucasian, Black, Hispanic
  o SES: low

Measures:

• “Children’s Depression Inventory (CDI) – 27 item self-report measure of severity of depressive symptoms (Kovacs, 1985b)”
  o Based on Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, 1967)
  o Five factors: Negative Mood, Interpersonal Problems, Ineffectiveness, Anhedonia, and Negative Self-Esteem
  o Internal reliability from mid- to upper-.80s; test-retest reliability range from .38 to .87 (p. 86)

Procedures:

• Design:
  o Quasi-experimental

• Times of assessment:
  o Pretest, Posttest 1, Posttest 2
    ▪ CDI completed at pretest, immediately after first eight-week program ended (posttest 1), and again eight weeks later following the end of the second eight-week program (posttest 2)

• Assignment method:
  o Level of assignment: classrooms
  o “Placement into a group was determined by the class in which the student was enrolled during a particular class period (e.g., Social Studies, fifth period). All learned optimism groups met during fifth or sixth period” (p. 85)

Research results

Hypothesis 1

• Baseline – no significant differences between groups
  o No differences among the five CDI subscales
• Posttest 1 – no significant differences between groups
o One significant difference in Ineffectiveness Scale (treatment > delayed treatment)

Hypothesis 2
• No significant differences between Pretest and Posttest 1 in any groups
  o No differences among the five CDI subscales

Hypothesis 3
• Treatment group CDI scores were significantly higher than delayed treatment group
  o Significant differences on Ineffectiveness (treatment > delayed treatment) and Negative Self-Esteem (treatment > delayed treatment) subscales

Hypothesis 4
• No significant differences between Posttest 1 and Posttest 2 for attention-placebo and delayed treatment groups
  o No differences among the five CDI subscales

Hypothesis 5
• No significant differences at eight-week follow-up between treatment and control groups
  o No differences among the five CDI subscales

Hypothesis 6
• No significant differences from Pretest to Posttest 1 to Posttest 2 between treatment and control groups
  o No differences among the five CDI subscales

• Reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) listed on p. 101

Summary of results
Overall, the learned optimism program did not reduce depressive symptoms of participants

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<th>OUTCOME VARIABLE</th>
<th>SIGNIFICANCE</th>
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<th>P VALUE</th>
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<td>Depression (CDI score)</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>&gt; .05</td>
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Study limitations
• Non-random assignment
• Varying time periods of administration within a school year
• Content of learned optimism program not specifically targeted to depressive symptoms
• Only one instrument to assess outcome (CDI)
• Small number of depressed participants

*Outcome Variables Taxonomy*
Depressive symptoms

*Program Association*
Learned optimism program