

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG ANGER, STRESS, COPING, AND SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS: BASELINE DATA FROM THE PASS PROGRAM

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Anger, Stress, School Connectedness

Purpose: High trait anger, high stress, poor coping, and ineffective methods of expressing anger have been identified as risk factors for the development of disease. The presence of these risk factors in childhood can lead to the development of diseases such as hypertension in adulthood and, in children, compromised immune functioning, respiratory illnesses, increased blood pressure levels, school absenteeism due to illness, and negative social behaviors such as aggressiveness. The purpose of this presentation is to discuss baseline data from the first cohort of a four-year federally funded intervention of anger and stress management in 9 and 10-year old children. Specifically, the purpose is to characterize relationships between levels of anger, patterns of anger expression, stress, perceived resources for coping, and school connectedness.

Method: These findings represent the pretest measurement of the first of three cohorts of a two-group pretest-posttest with repeated measures, experimental design. Four elementary schools in one southeastern rural county were randomly selected and assigned to experimental or control conditions. From the four schools, a sample of 166 (83% of possible students) 9 and 10 year-old 4th participants whose parents gave consent, who had no medical conditions which prevented physical activity, and who assented were enrolled; 84 males, 76 females, 106 Caucasian, 54 African American, 2 Other. In order to reduce subject burden and decrease unreliability due to fatigue, baseline measurements were obtained over three days during the 5th week of the 1st academic quarter at each school. Participants completed instruments to assess: Trait anger (Jacobs Pediatric Anger Scales), patterns of anger expression (Jacobs Pediatric Anger Expression Scales), school connectedness (School Connectedness Scale), stress and perceived coping resources (Coping Resources Inventory Scales for Educational Enhancement). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlational analyses.

Findings: Among the positive associations noted were trait anger and anger-out; trait anger and stress; anger-out and stress; school connectedness and perceived social confidence; and anger-reflection/control and perceived behavior control. Among the negative associations noted were: stress and school connectedness, perceived behavior control and trait anger, school connectedness and anger-out; anger-out and perceived behavior control; anger-reflection/control and trait anger; trait anger and school connectedness; and trait anger and perceived social confidence.

Discussion: Trait anger and patterns of anger expression are related to stress and perceived resources for coping. School connectedness is associated with perceived resources for coping, stress, trait anger and patterns of anger expression. Stress and perceived resources for coping in children may need to be considered when dealing with anger and patterns of anger expression in children. Health care providers may need to consider whether the child feels connected to their school in interventions for anger and stress.