

Harsh Discipline and Later Disruptive Behavior Disorder in Two Contexts

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Abstract : Objective: To address whether harsh discipline is associated with disruptive behavior disorders (DBD) in Puerto Rican children over time. Background: Both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies report that rates of DBD vary by gender, age and other demographics, being more frequent among boys, later in life and among those who live in urban areas. Also, the literature supports the direct, positive association between harsh discipline and externalizing behaviors. Nevertheless, scholars have underscored the important role of race and ethnicity in understanding discipline effects on children. The impact of harsh discipline in a Puerto Rican population remains to be studied. Methods: Sample: This is a secondary analysis of the Boricua Youth Study which assessed yearly (3 times) Puerto Rican children aged 5-15 in two different sites: San Juan (Puerto Rico) and the South Bronx (NY), N=2951. Participants that did not have scores of harsh discipline in the 3 waves were excluded for this analysis (N=2091). Main Measures: a) Harsh Discipline (Parent report) was measured using 6 items from the "Parental Discipline Scale" that measures various forms of punishment, including physical and verbal abuse, and withholding affection; b) Disruptive Behavior Disorder (Parent report): Parent version of the Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children-IV (DISC-IV) was used to assess children's conduct disorders; c) Demographic factors: Child gender, child age, family income, marital status; d) Parental factors: parental psychopathology, parental monitoring, familism, parent support; e) Children characteristics: Controlling for any diagnostic at wave 1 (internalizing or externalizing). Data Analysis: Logistic regression was carried out relating the likelihood of DBD to harsh discipline along waves controlling for potential confounders as demographics, child and parent characteristics. Results: There were no significant differences in harsh discipline by site in wave 1 and wave 2 but there was a significant difference in wave 3. Also, there were no significant differences in DBD by site in wave 1 and wave 2 but there was a significant difference in wave 3. There was a significant difference of discipline by gender and age in all the waves. We calculated unadjusted (OR) and adjusted (AOR) and 95% confidence intervals (95%CI) showing the relation between harsh discipline at wave 1 and the presence of child disruptive behavior disorder at wave 3 for both South Bronx and Puerto Rico. There was an association between harsh discipline and the likelihood of having DBD in The Bronx (AOR=1.76; 95%CI=1.13-2.74, p.013) and in Puerto Rico (AOR=2.17; 95%CI=1.28-3.67, p.004) having controlled for demographic, parental and individual factors. Conclusions: Context may be an important differential factor shaping the potential risk of harsh discipline toward DBD for Puerto Rican children.

Keywords : disruptive behavior disorders, harsh discipline, puerto rican, psychological education

Conference Title : ICSRD 2020 : International Conference on Scientific Research and Development

Conference Location : Chicago, United States

Conference Dates : December 12-13, 2020