

JUST SIX
QUESTIONS

RESEARCH
SUMMARY



The Effectiveness of Mentoring Youth with Externalizing and Internalizing Behavioural Problems On Youth Outcomes and Parenting Stress: A Meta-Analysis

Key Details

KEY WORDS

Mentoring, Mentorship, Parenting Stress, Family Functioning, Intervention Research

POPULATION GROUP

Youth with Disabilities or Special Needs

STEPPING UP THEMES

Health & Wellness
Strong, Supportive Friends & Families

RESEARCH ORIGIN

USA

SOURCE

Academic

“Mentoring programs that target children with significant behavioural and emotional problems may function as an additional service to improve youth outcomes and family functioning” (p. 213).

1. What is the research about?

This research is about the effectiveness of mentoring programs for children who experience externalizing and internalizing problems. Externalizing problems refer to behaviour-related issues, including aggression, ADHD, and drug/alcohol use. Internalizing problems refer to emotion-related issues, including depression, social anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. The research looks at the effects of mentoring on both improving youth outcomes and reducing parental stress. Parents of children who experience these issues have higher levels of stress than other parents. Previous research has suggested that mentoring can have a positive effect on youth wellbeing, emotional functioning, and academic success; however, there isn't much information about its effectiveness with youth experiencing the issues described above. The author's goal was to determine how effective mentoring is for youth with externalizing or internalizing issues and their parents, as well as to determine what specific parts of mentoring programs contribute to their effectiveness.

2. Where did the research take place?

This research review took place in the United States.

3. Who is this research about?

This research focuses on youth who experience either externalizing or internalizing problems, and their parents.

4. How was the research done?

The author began by searching for relevant studies in research databases using keywords; from this method, over 50 potential articles were found. Next, each article was carefully examined to see whether it fit the author's criteria (e.g. only including youth under age 18, only including youth who have an externalizing or internalizing issue, and specifically featuring a measure of parental stress). Based on this process, five final studies were selected. The author then completed a statistical analysis of the measures used in each study to determine how effective various aspects of each mentoring program were in improving youth outcomes and/or reducing parental stress.

5. What are the key findings?

- Overall, the review found that mentoring programs may be an effective approach for children with externalizing or internalizing issues, including as an addition to other interventions.

- The review also found a reduction in stress for parents whose children were being mentored, as compared to those whose children did not receive any mentoring support.
- In terms of specific factors, one-on-one mentor programs were not found to be more effective than group mentoring models for these children, though more research is required to determine why.
- In addition, programs that focused solely on mentoring (as opposed to combining mentoring with tutoring, parental education, etc.) were found to be more effective.
- There were also a couple of unexpected findings. Mentoring programs in which mentors did not receive ongoing training were found to be more effective than those in which mentors did. Similarly, mentoring programs in which mentors did not receive supervision were more effective than programs that did include supervision. As these findings are based on a small number of studies, they must be read with caution, as more research is needed to expand on these findings and determine what contributed to them.



La Valle, C. (2015). The effectiveness of mentoring youth with externalizing and internalizing behavioural problems on youth outcomes and parenting stress: A meta-analysis. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 23(3), 213-227. DOI: 10.1080/13611267.2015.1073565

6. Why does it matter for youth work?

Overall, this study shows that mentoring programs can contribute to positive outcomes for children who are experiencing externalizing or internalizing issues. In addition, it seems that parental stress is reduced for parents whose children participate in mentoring. In creating mentoring programs, youth workers may want to consider including a parental involvement component as a way to reduce parental stress and improve family functioning.