Co-Occurrence and Non-Overlap among Behavioral and Health-Related Problems in Preschool Children

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Abstract

Integrating mental health and healthcare services increases the reach of healthcare while reducing costs and stigma associated with seeking mental health services. To provide such services for preschool aged children we must first understand how behaviors related to healthy lifestyle and mental/behavioral health overlap. This study examined the relationship between behavior problems, sleep duration, screen time, and eating patterns and assessed the frequency of co-occurring problems in these areas. Because of the importance of parenting across these domains, the association between parent disciplinary strategies and the co-occurrence of behaviors in the different problem areas was assessed. MANOVAs revealed that there was a relationship between several problem areas. Excessive screen time was associated with a higher intensity of behavior problems, inadequate sleep duration, and less healthy eating patterns. A high intensity of behavior problems was associated with higher screen time use. Inadequate sleep was associated with higher screen time use and less healthy diet. High intensity behavior problems and excessive screen time use were also related to less effective parenting styles. And lax parenting styles predicted more co-occurring problems. Findings suggest support for addressing these problem areas using an integrative health care approach.