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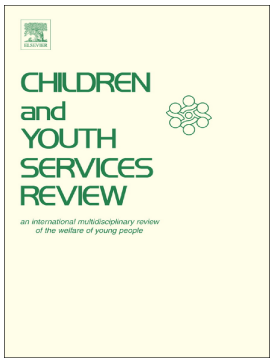

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Predictors of Early Elementary School Suspension by Gender: A Longitudinal Multilevel Analysis

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Abstract

Despite the large body of work demonstrating the detrimental effects of school suspension, there are notable gaps in the research regarding predictors of this form of discipline in early elementary school, and particularly in how these predictors may vary by gender. This longitudinal study was designed to address these gaps by exploring kindergarten and first grade predictors of one and three years later school suspension. The final sample consisted of 3,495 kindergarten and 1st grade elementary school students who were referred to a truancy program from 348 public schools. Multilevel logistic regressions were conducted to control for cluster effects of individual school on students' suspension outcomes; findings indicate common and unique risk factors for suspension by gender. For both boys and girls, being Black and being rated by teachers as disruptive predicted future suspension. In addition, teacher-rated aggression for boys and lack of parental involvement for girls were significantly associated with a greater likelihood of suspension. Finally, a teacher's assessment of child behaviors in early elementary school predicted suspension in later. The findings highlight the potential of addressing the predictors of suspension in the early school years as one effective strategy to prevent future school suspension.

1. Introduction

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