

Child temperament and school readiness: The moderating role of the quality of mother-child cooperation

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine the moderating role of the quality of mother-child cooperation in the relations between children's temperamental activity level and their school readiness. Child temperament and the quality of mother-child cooperation were measured at 2 years. Children's cognitive school readiness was measured in kindergarten. Analyses suggested that the quality of mother-child cooperation moderated the link between children's activity level and school readiness. The lower the quality of mother-child cooperation, the more children's activity level was detrimental to their cognitive school readiness.

INTRODUCTION

Child activity level represents the general level of emotional expression in children. Research has shown that it was related to children's cognitive school readiness problems (Nelson et al., 1999).

The objective of this study was to examine if mother-child cooperation could moderate the links between children's temperamental activity level and their school readiness.

The quality of mother-child relationships could play a protective role in child cognitive problems (El-Sheikh et al., 2003).

METHOD

Measures and procedure

❖ **Activity level:** Toddler Behavior Assessment Questionnaire (TBAQ; Goldsmith, 1996)

- T1: 2 years
- Questionnaire completed by mothers
- Movements of limbs, trunk, locomotion in a variety of everyday situations.

❖ **Relationships quality:** Mutually Responsive Orientation scale (MRO; Aksan et al., 2006)

- T1: 2 years
- Based on a 10-minute mother-child structured play sequence
- Harmonious communication
- Emotional atmosphere
- Mutual cooperation

❖ **Cognitive school readiness:** The Lollipop Test (Chew & Morris, 1984)

- T2: Kindergarten
- Individually administered screening measure
- Identification of colors and shapes and copying shapes
- Picture description, position, and spatial recognition
- Identification of numbers and counting
- Identification of letters and writing

Participants

- 100 mother-child dyads (47 girls)
- Average family income: 70,000\$ to 90,000\$
- Average education of mothers: 16 years
- Participants are mostly Caucasians

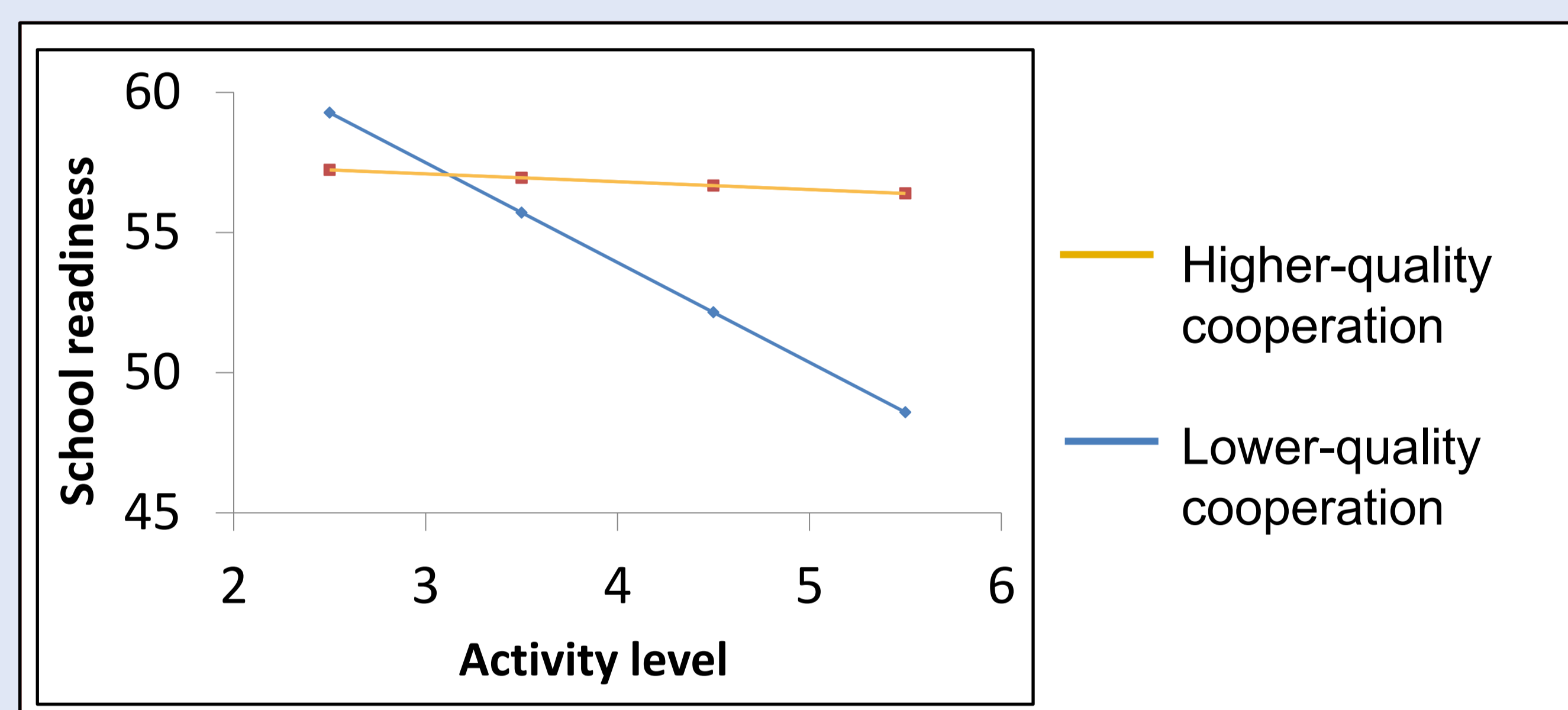
RESULTS

Correlations			
	1	2	3
1. Activity level	...	-.21*	-.23*
2. Cooperation	18*
3. School readiness			...

* $p < .05$.

Activity level and mother-child cooperation predicting child cognitive school readiness			
	β when first entered	β in final model	R^2
Block 1: Activity level Cooperation	-.21* .20*	-.27** .19*	.10
Block 2: Activity level X Cooperation	.21*	.21*	.15

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$



The quality of mother-child cooperation moderated the link between children's activity level and school readiness, such that the lower the quality of mother-child cooperation, the more children's activity level was detrimental to their cognitive school readiness.

DISCUSSION

The quality of mother-child cooperation was protective against the otherwise deleterious effects of activity level on school readiness.

These findings suggest that assessing child temperament and the quality of mother-child relationships early on in development may help identify children at risk for experiencing cognitive difficulties at school entry, allowing for prompt intervention before difficulties crystallize.

Limitations and future studies:

- The sample size restricts generalization and power
- Children's activity level was reported by their mother only
- A more comprehensive assessment of child school readiness in larger samples is warranted

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