Teacher Behaviors Toward Children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Predict Peers' Initial Liking and Disliking Impressions in a Summer Camp Setting.

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Abstract

Psychological studies traditionally focus on problem behaviors and clinical diagnoses of children to explain their liking and disliking by peers. Children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), in particular, often display problem behaviors resulting in their social impairment. However, adults' behaviors toward a child are an understudied factor that may also affect the impressions that peers form about that child. Participants were 137 previously unacquainted children ages 6.8–9.8 (24 with ADHD and 113 typically developing children) in a 2-week summer day program, along with their camp teachers. Data were analyzed via longitudinal social network analyses that controlled for children's ADHD diagnostic status and disruptive and internalizing behaviors. Results suggested that camp teachers' observed highlighting of children's personal strengths predicted these children receiving more liking nominations from peers and, for children with ADHD, fewer disliking nominations over the course of camp. Camp teachers' highlighting of behavioral compliance was not associated with peers' impressions of children. Camp teachers' public correction of children predicted these children's receipt of fewer liking nominations, among children with low disruptive behavior. Camp teachers' discreet corrections did not show this effect. Specific adult behaviors toward children, when displayed in front of peers, may influence peers' liking and disliking impressions.