



Effects of early and middle childhood prevention programs on adult crime

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Questions:

- What are the long-term effects of prevention programs conducted during early and middle childhood on adult crime?
- What are the characteristics of effective prevention program





Background

- Antisocial behavior is relatively stable
- Disruptive behavior early in life predicts serious delinquent and antisocial behavior during childhood, adolescence and early adulthood



Early childhood programs

- Target: parents
- Aim: to enhance parents' social support, to foster positive parenting and parent-child interaction



Middle childhood programs

- Target: child
- Aim: to reduce disruptive /antisocial behavior



Selection criteria:

- The prevention program was administered during early and middle childhood
- The outcomes are assessed during adulthood
- The outcomes: delinquency or criminal offending
- The study had a high quality research design



Early childhood programs



Chicago Child-Parent Center Program

<i>Description</i>	school-based educational enrichment and comprehensive family services
<i>Length</i>	2 years (preschool intervention) to 6 years (additional school intervention)
<i>Participants</i>	low income families
<i>Age at start</i>	3-4 years
<i>Design</i>	quasi- experimental; ($n_E = 888$; $n_C = 480$)
<i>Control group</i>	alternative childhood programs (full-day kindergarten)
<i>Age outcome</i>	24 years
<i>Results</i>	<p>PCCPC participants had lower rates of felony arrests (17% vs 21%), convictions (16% vs 20%), and incarceration (20% vs 26%) than comparison group.</p> <p>No differences were found for violent arrest and violent crime conviction.</p> <p>School-age intervention had no additional effects.</p>

Abecedarian

<i>Description</i>	child-centered, full- day educational child care
<i>Length</i>	5 years
<i>Participants</i>	low-income, African American children
<i>Age at start</i>	4 months
<i>Design</i>	RCT; ($n_E = 53$; $n_C = 51$)
<i>Control group</i>	nutritional supplements; supportive social services as needed
<i>Age outcome</i>	21 years
<i>Results</i>	No significant differences in misdemeanor conviction (14% vs 18%), felony conviction (8% vs 12%), or incarceration (14% vs 21%).



High/Scope Perry Preschool Program

<i>Description</i>	center-based program, home visits by teachers, parent group meetings
<i>Length</i>	1 or 2 years
<i>Participants</i>	low parental education and SES, low child IQ test score
<i>Age at start</i>	3 to 4 years
<i>Design</i>	RCT; ($n_E = 58$; $n_C = 65$)
<i>Control group</i>	no program
<i>Age outcome</i>	40 years
<i>Results</i>	The program group had fewer lifetime arrests (36% vs. 55%), fewer arrests for violent (32% vs. 48%), property (36% vs. 58%), and drug crimes (14% vs. 34%) than the control group. The program group was sentenced to fewer months in prison.

Early childhood programs: Conclusions

- Positive effects for 2 out of 3 programs (exception ABC)
- Two programs that included both preschool and school intervention (CCPP ABC) both show that preschool interventions affect outcome more than did school-age interventions.



Middle childhood programs



Cambridge-Sommerville Youth Study

<i>Description</i>	individualized, multimodal: counselors for family problems, tutoring in academic subjects, medical or psychiatric attention, summer camps
<i>Length</i>	5 years
<i>Participants</i>	both “difficult” and “average” boys
<i>Age at start</i>	5-13 years
<i>Design</i>	RCT; $n_E = 253$; $n_C = 253$
<i>Control group</i>	no program
<i>Age outcome</i>	42-50 years
<i>Results</i>	<p>No differences between the program group and control group on having a juvenile (28% vs. 26%) or adult criminal record (both 66%).</p> <p>Men in program group who had criminal record were more likely to have two or more convictions compared to men in the control group.</p>



Montreal Longitudinal Experimental Study

<i>Description</i>	home-based parent training, school-based social skills training (prosocial skills and self-control), teacher support
<i>Length</i>	2 years
<i>Participants</i>	both “difficult” and “average” boys
<i>Age at start</i>	7 years
<i>Design</i>	RCT; $n_E = 69$; $n_C = 181$; 645 norm group
<i>Control group</i>	no program
<i>Age outcome</i>	24 years
<i>Results</i>	<p>Marginal difference ($p=.06$) between program and control group with regard to criminal records (22% vs. 33%).</p> <p>Clinical significance: boys in the program group had similar rates of criminal records as the low-risk group, whereas the control group had significantly higher rate of criminal record than the low-risk group</p>



Seattle Social Development Project

<i>Description</i>	teacher training, child social and emotional skill development, and a parent training
<i>Length</i>	4 years for full-intervention group, and about 1,5 year for late-intervention group
<i>Participants</i>	children from high-crime areas in Seattle
<i>Age at start</i>	6 years (full-intervention group); 11 years (late-intervention group)
<i>Design</i>	$n_{E \text{ full-intervention}} = 144$; $n_{E \text{ late-intervention}} = 256$; $n_C = 205$
<i>Control group</i>	no program
<i>Age outcome</i>	21 years

Results Full-intervention participants were less likely to be involved in a high variety of crime (3% vs. 9%), have sold illegal drugs in the past year (4% vs. 13%), and have an official lifetime court record (42% vs. 53%).

Only one effect was found for the late-intervention participants: they were less likely to have sold illegal drugs than controls (6% vs. 13%).



The Good Behavior Game

<i>Description</i>	classroom management
<i>Length</i>	2 years
<i>Participants</i>	school children in poor to lower middle class, mainly African American urban areas
<i>Age at start</i>	6 years
<i>Design</i>	RCT; Cohort 1: $n_E = 238$; $n_C = 165$; Cohort 2: $n_E = 208$; $n_C = 157$
<i>Control group</i>	a reading achievement program or the standard program
<i>Age outcome</i>	19-20 years
<i>Results</i>	<p>Significant reduction of the rates of violent and criminal behaviour among males in persistent high aggressive, disruptive trajectory (34% vs. 50%). For the other two less aggressive trajectories (stable low and escalating medium group) and for females, the impact of the program was not significant.</p> <p>In Cohort 2 (replication with lower fidelity in delivering the program), the effects were not significant.</p>



Middle childhood programs: Conclusions

- Mixed results: program's effectiveness might be dependent on participants' and/or program's characteristics.
- More effective for some participants than for others. (example: the Good Behavior Game)
- It is crucially important that the program is carried out as intended. (Montreal study, Good Behavior Game)
- Program's timing and intensity might also influence the effectiveness. (SSDP)



GENERAL CONCLUSIONS



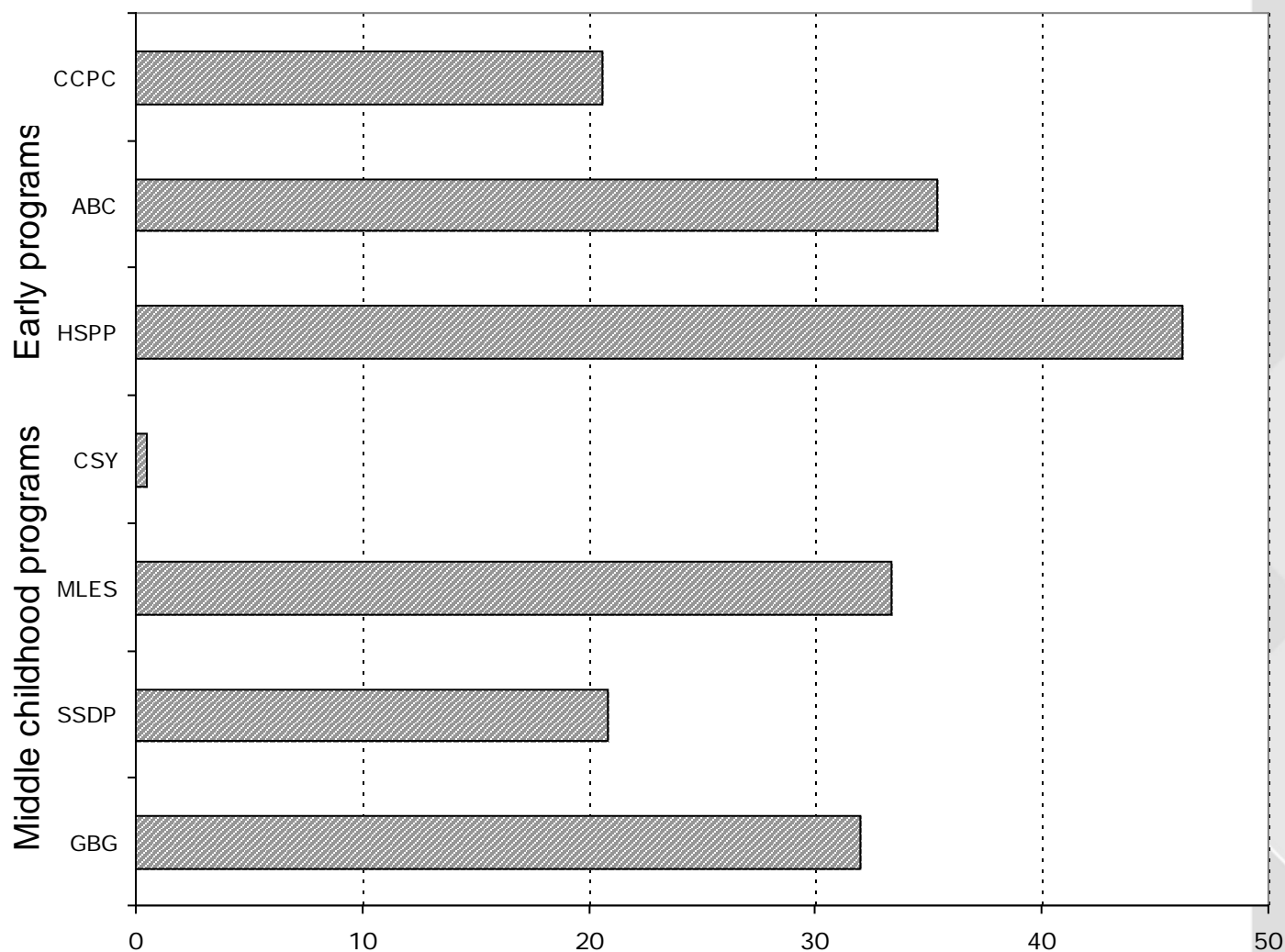


Figure 1. The effects of prevention programs on adult crime (% difference in the percentage recidivists in program and control group at follow-up)

- Limited number of studies, small sample sizes, most programs have been developed for specific groups, potential selection bias for long-term follow-ups.
Thus: impossible to make definite statement
- In general: it appears that these programs had some beneficial effects: out of 8 evaluations, the experimental groups did better than the control group in 7 cases

Explaining findings

Child factors:

- Early childhood: cognitive-scholastic skills, aiming to increase school commitment, decrease school failure and increase the rate of high school graduation
- Middle childhood: social skills (interpersonal problem solving, self-control and anger management skills, perspective taking) and on value education



Explaining findings

Family factors:

- Early childhood: more information; emotional and instrumental support
- Middle childhood: skills for managing child rearing challenges: conveying clear expectations to the child, providing a supportive and affectionate environment, enforcing rules by appropriate use of awards and punishment, monitoring child behavior, negotiating disagreements

Important: Do not overestimate effects

- Positive effects only for some of the outcomes
- Positive effects only for some participants
- Although there are improvements, participants often do not function at 'norm' level
- Effects on educational achievement and mental health later in life appear more consistent than effects on crime

Possible moderators

- Combination of focus on child and family: larger effects than sole focus on the child
- A more tight focus on specific risk factors for antisocial behavior might improve the effectiveness of these programs
- Programs might work best for those who are worst off
- Timing (starting early in childhood) and quality of implementation improve the programs' effectiveness

Dutch situation

- Many programs
- Little information on short-term effectiveness, no information on long-term effectiveness
- Early childhood programs: HIPPI (Opstap) and PPP (Kaleidoscoop)
- Middle childhood programs GBG (Taakspel)

Future directions

- Before broad implementation, (early) prevention programs should be tested rigorously on a small scale
- Large scale implementation should be accompanied with a long-term (preferably up to adulthood) RCTs
- Participant and program characteristics as moderators
- Study effective ingredients (mediators)
- (More) Dutch studies are needed!!!



Thank you for your attention!

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