

Effectiveness of a Universal Prevention Program to Enhance Emotional Understanding and Regulation in School Students: Examining the Extended Effects on Implicit and Explicit Affect

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Abstract

In recent years, children have encountered various health and adjustment challenges. To address these, we developed "TOP SELF" (Trial Of Prevention School Education for Life and Friendship), a series of universal prevention programs designed to improve children's health and adjustment. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a specific program within this series, focusing on enhancing emotional understanding and regulation in 6th-grade students. Participants were 69 sixth-grade students from two public elementary schools in Japan. They completed three questionnaires at three distinct time points: prior to the program (Time 1), immediately following the program (Time 2), and one month after the program (Time 3). The instruments used were the Implicit Positive and Negative Affect Test for Children (IPANAT-C) to assess implicit affect, the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule for Children (PANAS-C) to measure explicit affect, and the Understanding and Regulating Emotions Scale for Children (URES-C) to evaluate explicit emotional coping strategies, such as the ability to identify, understand, and regulate others' emotions. Results showed that the program significantly benefited students who initially exhibited low positive affect or high negative affect, as evidenced by improvements in their post-program scores. Notably, while no significant main effects were observed in the URES-C scores across the three time points, significant reductions in negative affect were recorded in the PANAS-C and IPANAT-C scores. Further research is necessary to assess the long-term effectiveness and broader impacts of this program.

Keywords: implicit affect; explicit affect; emotional coping strategies; universal prevention programs; school students