

Influence of parental/classroom characteristics on fourth graders' affective transition expectations

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Primary school transition is a normative, critical life event which students approach with affectively toned expectations. These expectations can be characterized by their affective valence (positive/negative) and, independently, by their affective intensity (high/low). The theory of critical life events supposes that, besides personal characteristics, positive previous experiences and support from relevant others lead to a more positive anticipation of future situations. Consequently, we assume that, besides fear of social evaluation and general ability self-concept, also perceived parental support and positive school related experiences at primary school influence the valence and the intensity of the expectations concerning secondary school.

The assumed relationships were studied by path analyses based on a sample of 881 students. The data used were collected with fourth graders at the end of their last term at primary school.

The analyses confirm our assumptions. Parental support as well as school related experiences are important predictors of affective expectations concerning the transition to secondary school. However, not all facets proved to be equally important. In the parental context, emotional support is the strongest predictor of the affective valence and cognitive support proved to be a significant direct predictor of the intensity of affect. In the school context, a cognitively activating instruction is the strongest predictor of the affective intensity. Valence of affective expectations is strongest predicted by pressure to perform.

The implications of these results will be discussed with regard to parental and instructional context as a potential to affectively strengthen the students for the transition into secondary school.