



## Transition to Primary School of Children in Economic Disadvantage: Does a Preschool Teacher Training Program Make a Difference?

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### Abstract

Transition to school may be experienced as a critical event for both children and their families. Within an ecological framework of transition, the scope of the concept of school readiness in recent years has decentered from the child to the environment, including the readiness of (pre)school education to develop core skills in children. This study aims to understand the extent to which preschool teachers' completion of training in the Incredible Years®-Teacher Classroom Management program (IY-TCM) during children's last preschool year has an impact when children transition to primary school, and how this contributes to reducing differences between children with and without economic disadvantage. Forty-four teachers from classes with a high percentage of students in economic disadvantage completed questionnaires about 192 five/six-year-old children. Results from cross-sectional analyses showed that children whose preschool teachers attended the IY-TCM program, when compared to children whose teachers did not, were significantly higher in social skills, adaptation to school and school achievement at the end of the first term, and had parents more involved in education but with a lower bonding with the teachers (medium to large effect sizes). Although not statistically significant ( $p = .08$ , Hedge's  $g = .29$ ), results of longitudinal analyses are trending in the expected direction, suggesting that the IY-TCM could help to reduce socio-economic disparity. Results are discussed bearing in mind the importance of a preschool education that addresses the development of self-regulation and social skills in children, and the value of both initial and continuous training for preschool teachers.

**Keywords** Transition to school · Preschool teachers training · Incredible Years® Teacher Classroom Management (TCM) ·

- **Follow-up** of a previous RCT that analyzed the impact of the IY-TCM on the behavior of economically disadvantaged Portuguese children (Seabra-Santos, Gaspar et al., 2018).
- From the **sample** of the previous study we followed children who transitioned to primary school in the subsequent school year ( $n = 192$  five/six-year-old children).
- **Main findings (1)**: Children whose preschool teachers attended the IY-TCM program, when compared to children whose teachers did not, were evaluated by their primary school teachers as significantly higher in social skills, adaptation to school and school achievement at the end of the first term, and had parents more involved in education but with a lower bonding with the teachers (medium to large effect sizes).

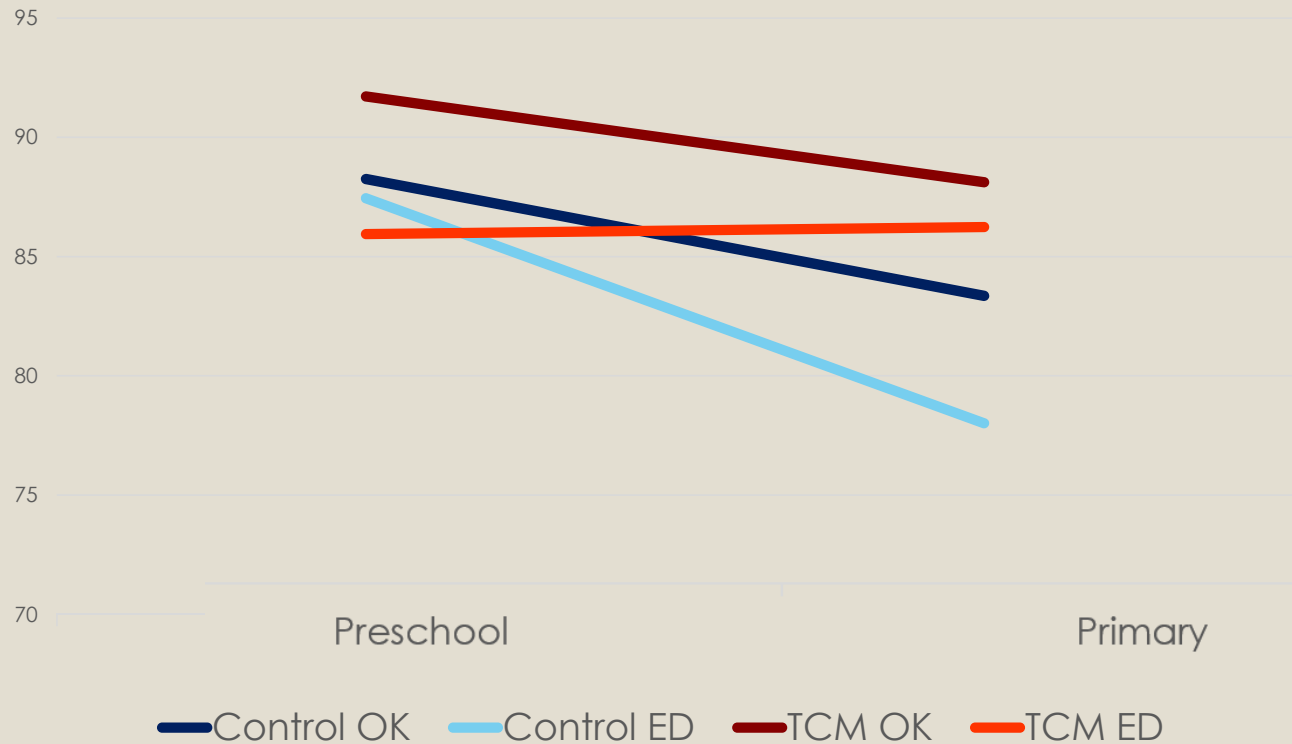
**Table 2** Comparison between IY-TCM and control groups: children and parents' outcomes

	IY-TCM <i>M</i> (SD)	Control <i>M</i> (SD)	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
<b>PKBS-2</b>				
Social Skills—total	87.32 (11.50)	81.03 (14.11)	3.35**	.56
Social Cooperation/Adjustment	28.28 (4.37)	26.39 (5.37)	2.65**	.39
Social Interaction/Empathy	24.84 (4.45)	22.31 (5.62)	3.43**	.50
Social Independence/Assertiveness	34.20 (4.28)	32.34 (5.24)	2.67**	.39
Problem Behavior—total	30.14 (24.19)	32.82 (22.18)	− 0.79	.12
Externalizing	20.39 (17.25)	21.69 (17.97)	− 0.51	.07
Internalizing	9.76 (8.87)	11.09 (7.38)	− 1.13	.16
Adaptation to School	21.20 (3.33)	18.83 (3.57)	4.73**	.69
School Grades (1st term)	9.99 (1.85)	8.53 (2.44)	4.68**	.67
<b>INVOLVE-T</b>				
Parental Involvement in Education	24.70 (3.89)	22.96 (4.50)	2.84**	.41
Parental Involvement with School	15.29 (4.22)	16.17 (5.28)	− 1.28	.18
Teacher Bonding with Parent	10.08 (2.73)	11.77 (3.49)	− 3.75**	.54

*PKBS-2* Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Scale-Second Edition

\*\*  $p < .001$

## SOCIAL SKILLS



**Main findings (2):** The lines corresponding to children in the IY-TCM condition with and without economic disadvantage (red) come closer, while lines corresponding to the control group (blue), diverge. Although the difference is not statistically significant ( $p = .08$ ), the results of this longitudinal analyses suggest that the IY-TCM could help to reduce socio-economic disparity.