INTRODUCTION

• Approximately 20% of children develop some sort of behavioral or mental health problem that requires treatment, but the majority of them do not receive the services they need (Hoagwood, 2000).
• When children and teens suffer from poor mental health, they are at a higher risk of falling behind intellectually as well (Masi & Cooper, 2006).
• Identification of predictors of a parent’s decision to seek professional mental health services is important because that information could be utilized to develop programs or interventions that can increase access to services and awareness of mental health needs of children.

METHOD

• Research Question: Do socioeconomic status and other predictors of mental health service utilization still predict utilization after the effects of problem type and severity are statistically controlled?
• Sample: Child Development Project (Dodge, Bates, & Petit, 1990). Community sample with wide range of socioeconomic status; 585 families from Bloomington, IN, Nashville, TN, & Knoxville, TN.
• Predictor Variables: Gender, Ethnicity, Parental Separation/Divorce through age 10, Socioeconomic status (SES) at age 10, Family stress through age 10, Externalizing/Internalizing problems at age 10.
• Outcome Variable: Parental report of treatment seeking at age 12. (N for parental report of concern = 168, N for parental report of receiving professional help = 107)

RESULTS

Professional vs. No Help
- Bivariate Associations - Those who sought professional help were significantly: higher in internalizing and externalizing behaviors, higher in stress, and more likely to be boys than girls.
- Logistic Regression – Boys and children with more externalizing behaviors were significantly more likely to get professional help.

Professional vs. Other Help
- Bivariate Associations – Those who sought professional help over other help were more likely to have a higher SES and more likely to be boys than girls.
- Logistic Regression – The only significant predictor (p < .05) was SES; those with a higher SES were more likely to get professional help.

DISCUSSION

• Externalizing problems are more noticeable → more likely to seek help than no help.
• No matter how severe the child’s problems are, higher SES is the only significant predictor for using professional services.
• Possible policy implications – reforms to increase access to mental health services for poor families; what are specific obstacles?

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