Suspended or Expelled Students May Face Mental Health Issues Later

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Many schools suspend and sometimes expel students who misbehave. But now, new findings published in the journal Psychological Medicine suggest that banishing kids from academic institutions could heighten their risk for mental disorders later on, reports The Guardian.

For the study, researchers at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom reviewed responses from the country's child and adolescent mental health surveys. The evaluations included information from more than 5,000 children, their parents and teachers. (Kids previously diagnosed with a mental health disorder were excluded from the analysis.)

Findings revealed that troubled children and kids with learning disabilities and mental health issues were more likely to be excluded. But this punishment also increased distress among individuals within three years. In addition, researchers found that banishment from school—even if only temporary—could contribute to a range of mental disorders, including depression, anxiety and behavioral disturbance.

"For children who really struggle at school, exclusion can be a relief, as it removes them from an unbearable situation with the result that on their return to school they will behave even more badly to escape again," said Tamsin Ford, PhD, a child and adolescent psychiatrist at the university's medical school and the study's lead author. "As such, it becomes an entirely counterproductive disciplinary tool, as it encourages the very behavior it intends to punish. By avoiding exclusion and finding other solutions to poor behavior, schools can help children's mental health in the future as well as their education."

Researchers proposed finding alternatives to exclusion to discipline students with behavioral challenges in order to help them enjoy better mental health in the future. Additionally, scientists stated that well-timed support to kids in school might also improve teacher productivity and school effectiveness.

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