Children's chores improve brain function
14 June 2022

The study looked at parents and guardians of 207 children aged between 5 and 13 years. In mid-2020, the parents/guardians were asked to complete questionnaires on the number of chores their children completed daily and their child’s executive function.

The researchers found that engagement in self-care chores, such as making themselves a meal, and family-care chores, for instance making someone else a meal, significantly predicted working memory and inhibition (the ability to think before acting), after controlling for the influence of age, gender and presence or absence of a disability.

While previous research has shown that engaging children in age-appropriate chores can increase feelings of autonomy and is associated with improved prosocial behaviors and greater life satisfaction, this is the first study to look at the association between regular chores and child cognitive development, particularly executive functioning.

Executive functions are commonly defined as: working memory; the ability to monitor and manipulate temporary information; inhibition, the ability to inhibit automatic responses or suppress irrelevant information to focus on a task; and shifting, the ability to move focus between tasks.

"Typically, these skills begin to develop in early childhood and continue to develop into late adolescence and early adulthood," Tepper said.

"Impairments or delays in executive functioning development can lead to difficulties in the ability to self-regulate, plan, and problem solve as adults, having implications later in life on reading performance and mathematical ability, as well as predicting overall academic achievement in later childhood."

Early development of executive functioning has also been linked to engagement in tertiary...
education and improved physical health and better financial status in adulthood.

"Research indicates it may be possible to improve executive functions by developing individualized learning activities and routines," Tepper said.

"We hypothesized that children who engaged in more household chores would have better inhibition and working memory. Our findings likely reflect that most chores require individuals to self-regulate, maintain attention, plan, and switch between tasks, thereby supporting the development of executive functioning."


Provided by La Trobe University

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.