ASSESSING ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT: A BRIEF, PSYCHOMETRICALLY SOUND MEASURE FOR USE IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

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Background: Assessing educational outcomes in high-risk populations is crucial for defining long term functional outcomes. Standardised tests are costly and time-consuming for large-scale investigations. A valid and reliable teacher-report measure would be advantageous.

Aim: To assess the psychometric properties of the 'Teacher Academic Attainment Scale' (TAAS).

Methods: Participants comprised 340 children aged 10-11 years (n=187 born extremely preterm [< 26 weeks] and n=153 born at term) were assessed using the reading and mathematics scales of the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test-II (WIAT-II), a Gold Standard measure. Class teachers completed the TAAS, a 7-item questionnaire for assessing academic attainment. The TAAS was also completed at 6 years of age for 266 children.

Results: Cronbach's alpha=0.95 indicated excellent internal consistency, and a significant correlation (r=0.77, p< 0.001) between TAAS scores at 6 and 11 years indicated good long-term test-retest reliability. Significantly higher TAAS scores for term vs. preterm children demonstrated discriminative validity. TAAS scores at both 6 and 11 years were significantly correlated with WIAT-II reading (r=0.69 & r=0.75, p< 0.001) and mathematics (r=0.75 & r=0.82, p< 0.001) scores demonstrating good predictive and concurrent validity, respectively. TAAS scores < 2.5 were good predictors of learning impairment in reading (sensitivity 93% specificity 78%) and mathematics (sensitivity 90% specificity 87%).

Conclusions: The TAAS is a brief, psychometrically sound teacher-report of academic attainment that yields both continuous and categorical outcomes. It provides a highly reliable, valid, cost- and time-efficient outcome measure for large-scale multi-site studies both within and across countries.