

INTERNALIZING DIMENSIONS PROFILES OF CHILDREN REFERRED FOR EXTERNALIZING BEHAVIOURS IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

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Abstract

Externalizing behaviours are among the most common and challenging childhood disorders. These behavioural traits are often associated with less obvious internal states, such as anxiety, depression or personality disorders, which are commonly ignored by mental health professionals. Recognizing and assessing these mood states in terms of anxiety level and depressive symptoms (especially self-esteem) and personality traits may help mental health specialist to design more effective interventions. 24 children aged 8 to 14 referred to school psychological services for disruptive behaviour disorders were compared to a control group, paired by age, gender and intellectual efficiency. Parents and teachers completed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) in order to assess disruptive behaviours. Manifest anxiety, depressive symptoms, personality traits were assessed using respectively the Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale (R-CMAS), the Multiscore Depression Inventory for Children (MDI-C), and the Hierarchical Personality Inventory for Children (HiPIC). Children with externalizing disorders presented many discreet indices of affective distress as higher level of physiological anxiety, sad mood, instrumental helplessness, social introversion, pessimism and lower level of conscientiousness and benevolence. These results should encourage child and adolescent's clinicians to screen for psychological vulnerabilities during a holistic psychological assessment including self-report questionnaires and child interviews in addition to the classical parents or teachers' questionnaires.

Keywords: externalizing behaviours; internalizing disorders; personality

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