

Differences on Emotional and Behavioral Problems Among 10-12 Years Old Children – Parents' Report

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Abstract

Aim: To explore the differences in age and gender on emotional and behavioral broad band scales of children 10-12 years old. It was hypothesized that there will be differences between girls and boys and between ages. **Methods:** We used CBCL (6-18 years) the 2001 edition (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001) to collect the data. Descriptive statistics, chi-square test, Pearson correlation, T-test, and ANOVA were used to explore and analyse the differences. The sample included 236 children (123 or 52.1% boys and 113 or 47.9% girls), with a mean age of 11 years (SD .835). From 236 parents participated in the study, 92 of them or 39.0 % were mothers, while only 144 of them or 61.0 % were fathers. The parents voluntarily completed the questionnaire. **Results:** There were found no differences on broad band scales of emotional and behavioral problems, regarding the age and gender of children.

Keywords: children, emotional and behavior problems, differences, parent.

Introduction

Behaviour problems are most often defined as internalizing problems, which are expressed through anxiety, depression and withdrawal and externalizing problems, expressed as hyperactivity and aggression (Achenbach, 1991; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000; Dearing et al, 2006). Externalizing behaviour problems include a group of behaviour problems which children express in the external environment (Campbell, Shaw, & Gilliom, 2000; Eisenberg et al, 2001). In literature, externalizing problems consist of disruptive behaviour, hyperactivity and aggressive behaviour (Hinshaw, 1987), while Campbell (1995, 2002) presents them through aggressive behaviour, noncompliance and hyperactivity.

Referring to the fact that externalizing problems at preschool age are considered as the most widespread mental health disorder, the empirical study of these problems has increased the interest and the attention of researchers (Campbell, 1995). This interest was reinforced by the correlation between the early onset of externalizing problems and behaviour problems in middle childhood and adolescence (Campbell, 1995; Tremblay, Pihl, Vitaro & Dobkin, 1994; Patterson, Reid & Dishion, 1992; Farrington, 1991).

Internalizing problems are considered to include behaviours such as withdrawal, anxiety, refraining and depressive behaviour, i.e. behaviours that affect the child's internal psychological environment more than his/her external world. In other words, this cluster of behaviour problems includes 'neurotic' and 'over controlled' behaviours (Campbell et al, 2000; Eisenberg et al, 2001; Hinshaw, 1987).

Various studies suggest that internalizing problems, although considerably less studied, may emerge during the first years of life (Luby, Hefelfinger, Mrakotsky et al, 2003), and such problems are relatively stable in time (Bongers, Koot, Van der Ende, Verhulst, 2003; Sterba, Prinstein, Cox, 2007). Internalizing problems are usually manifested through anxiety, withdrawal and sadness (Campbell, 1995; 2002)

Our study aimed to: (1) to explore the differences on emotional and behavioral problems [broad band scales] regarding the age and gender of children. It was hypothesized that there will be differences between girls and boys and between ages in several scales.

Methodology

The study sample

The sample included 236 children (123 or 52.1% boys and 113 or 47.9% girls), with a mean age of 11 years (SD .835) (range: 10-12 years). 86 of them (36.4%) were in the fourth grade; 72 of them (30.5%) were in the fifth grade and 78 or

33.1 % from the total number of children were in the sixth grade. In the chi-square test, no important differences were reported in the distribution of the percentages of gender and grade representation in this study.

From 236 parents participated in the study, 92 of them or 39.0 % were mothers, while only 144 of them or 61.0 % were fathers. In the chi-square test, there were important differences reported in the distribution of the percentages of parent's gender and their employment rates. The parents voluntarily completed the questionnaire.

Table 1

Descriptive data for children by gender, grade, place living and by gender and employment status for parents.

	Valid Nr.	Percentile	Chi-square test
Male	123	52.1	
Female	113	47.9	$\chi^2 (1) = .424, p = .515$
Village	7	3.0	
City	229	97.0	$\chi^2 (1) = 208.831, p = .000$
Grade 4	86	36.4	
Grade 5	72	30.5	$\chi^2 (1) = 1.254, p = .534$
Grade 6	78	33.1	
Fathers	144	61.0	
Mothers	92	39.0	$\chi^2 (1) = 11.458, p = .001$
Father employment	173	73.3	
Mother employment	89	37.7	$\chi^2 (1) = 9.646, p = .002$

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation for family income, member of family, number of children; parents age and level of education and childrens age.

	Mean	SD
Children Age	10.97	.835
Parents age	40.36	5.89
Fathers education level	12.76	2.50
Mothers education level	11.61	2.81
Family income €	519.87	290.72
Family members	5.49	1.64
Children numbers	2.85	1.15

Instruments and data collection

The CBCL the 2001 edition (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001) contains 118 items items rated 0-1-2 (0 = *not true (as far as you know)*; 1 = *somewhat or sometimes true*; or 2 = *very true or often true*) plus 1 open-ended problem items, that describe the behaviour of children and adolescents between the ages of 6 and 18 years. Empirically based syndrome scales scored from the CBCL 6-18, are: Anxious/Depressed, Withdrawn/Depressed, Somatic Complaints, Social Problems, Thought Problems, Attention Problems, Rule-Breaking Behavior, and Aggressive Behavior. The CBCL scales have been shown to have a consistency of .890

The procedure of data analysis

The statistical package SPSS for Windows, version 19 was used to analyse the quantitative data collected. During the analysis a specific code was used for the identification of information for each child and parent. Descriptive statistics, chi-square test, Pearson correlation, T-test, and ANOVA were used to explore and analyse the differences, correlations of interest variables in the study on broad band of emotional and behavioural scales.

Results

To characterize the sample population, the outcome variable was stratified by demographic variables. Table 3 shows the difference in number, mean scores and standard deviations by age, gender and parenting style

Table 3

Number, Mean scores and standard deviations for broad band scales by age.

	10 years			11 years			12 years			Total children		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Internalizing	86	1.46	.80	72	1.47	.78	78	1.38	.71	236	1.44	.77
Externalizing	86	1.10	.43	72	1.06	.30	78	1.05	.22	236	1.07	.33
Total Problems	86	1.24	.63	72	1.16	.47	78	1.19	.56	236	1.20	.56

Table 4

Number, Mean scores and standard deviations for broad band scales by gender.

	Gender	N	M	SD
Internalizing	F	113	1.45	.75
	M	123	1.43	.78
	F+M	236	1.44	.77
Externalizing	F	113	1.08	.37
	M	123	1.06	.31
	F+M	236	1.07	.33
Total Problems	F	113	1.22	.58
	M	123	1.18	.54
	F+M	236	1.20	.56

Table 5

The inter correlation between broad band scales.

		INTER	EXTER	TOTAL
Internalizing	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
Externalizing	Pearson Correlation	.430**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
Total problems	Pearson Correlation	.690**	.570**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The t-test analysis did not revealed differences in broad band scales regarding the gender. The results obtained through ANOVA indicated not significant differences. As shown in the Table 3, younger children (10 years old) had a very similar mean in almost all broad band scales as older children (11 and 12 years old), . The results obtained were: for internalizing $F(2) = .311, p = .733$; for externalizing $F(2) = .533, p = .587$; for total problems $F(2) = .393, p = .675$.

Discussion

The study suggests that there will be gender and age differences regarding the broad band scales. Our results did not show statistical differences between boys and girls in none of the scales. There were not found significant different in ages. The results from table 3 and 4, shows that all children gain similar results in almost all scales.

From the results, specifically the correlations obtained, while statistically significant in the direction, were moderate. There were positive and moderate to high relationship between internalizing and total problems, as well as between externalizing and total problems.

The average values of total are not markedly different to those found in other studies. The scores in this study are slightly higher, but consistent with previous research. The lack of significant differences was unexpected.

Although more research is needed to develop a better understanding of the emotional and behavioural problems among 10-12 years old children, the present study is an important endeavour in this direction. The aim is to provide a picture of children's emotional and behavioural problems. This would include investigating emotional and behavioural problems in different contexts as assessed by parents, teachers as well as by self-reports. Moreover, it would also encompass exploring various environmental factors to assess their influence on different types of emotional and behavioural problems. Furthermore, researchers can also obtain urban and rural samples to have a better understanding of the types of problems that children face in different physical environments. Each of these goals will ultimately assist in the development of a broader picture of emotional and behavioural problems among our children in this age group.

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