

Children at risk for psychopathology: The influence of some parent psychopathology dimensions

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding the development of children at risk for adjustment problems is an important aspect of developmental psychopathology research. It provides a basis for identifying and helping children before their problems reach the level of serious disturbance. Parental mental health seems to be an important risk factor for development of psychopathology symptoms in their children.

Children of parents with psychopathology symptoms are at greater risk for a variety of forms of psychological dysfunction.

There is ample evidence of the association between parental mental disorder and children's maladjustment (e.g. Beardslee, Versage & Gladstone, 1998; Boyle & Pickles, 1997; Phares & Compas, 1992; Watt et al., 1984).

AIMS

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between children's and parent's psychopathology symptoms. Also the effects of gender (both children and their parents) on psychopathology symptoms (among children and their parents) were assessed.

PROBLEMS

To examine how are different parental psychopathology symptoms (somatization, obsessive-compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation and psychoticism) specifically associated with different aspects of children's symptoms (anxious/depressed, withdrawn/depressed, somatic complaints, social problem, thought problems, attention problems, rule-breaking behavior and aggressive behavior).

To assess gender differences in ratings of children's and parent's psychopathology symptoms.

METHOD

Participants and procedure

The research was conducted on the sample of 102 schoolchildren aged 12 to 15 years (66 girls and 36 boys) and their mothers and fathers (N=204) aged 32 to 61 years.

Measures

- *Youth Self-Report – YSR* (Achenbach, 2001) consisted of 8 syndrome scales: anxious / depressed, withdrawn / depressed, somatic complaints, social problem, thought problems, attention problems, rule-breaking behavior and aggressive behavior.

- *BSI - Brief Symptom Inventory* (Derogatis, 1993) consisted of 9 primary symptoms dimensions: somatization, obsessive-compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation and psychoticism.

RESULTS

The first problem of this study was to examine the relationship between parental and children's psychopathology symptoms. Zero-order correlations (Pearson's r) between nine parents symptoms dimensions (somatization, obsessive-compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation and psychoticism) and eight children syndrome (anxious/depressed, withdrawn/depressed, somatic complaints, social problem, thought problems, attention problems, rule-breaking behavior and aggressive behavior) were calculated.

The correlation matrix between all psychopathology variables included, is displayed in Table 1.

Correlations between parent psychopathology symptoms and children psychopathology symptoms (N=102), $p < 0,05$

Children \ Parents	Parents								
	Somatization	Obs-compulsive	Interpe. sensitivity	Depression	Anxiety	Hostility	Phobic anxiety	Paranoid ideation	Psychoticism
Anx/depress	0.00	0.02	-0.08	-0.01	-0.07	0.04	-0.06	-0.01	0.00
Withdra/dep	0.02	-0.03	0.01	0.17	0.03	0.11	-0.01	0.07	0.07
Som. compl	-0.11	-0.12	-0.11	-0.18	-0.12	-0.10	-0.05	-0.08	-0.11
Soc.problems	0.08	0.09	0.06	0.12	0.09	0.13	-0.03	0.21*	0.07
Thought probl.	0.13	0.10	0.02	0.09	0.06	0.13	0.09	0.14	0.10
Attenti. prob.	0.13	0.14	0.16	0.09	0.08	0.19	0.05	0.20*	0.14
Rule-break.	0.05	0.09	0.12	0.06	0.11	0.04	0.11	0.09	0.03
Aggressive beh.	0.07	0.15	0.21*	0.12	0.17	0.19	0.16	0.18	0.15

The obtained correlation coefficients lead to a sequent conclusion: there were some significant correlation between different dimensions of parental and children psychopathology: paranoid ideation of parents was positively associated with social problem and attention problems among children, and interpersonal sensitivity of parents was positively associated with aggressive behavior among children.

In order to assess gender differences in psychopathology symptoms among children and their parents analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted.

The results obtained by ANOVA show gender differences only on subscale rule-breaking behavior in children sample: boys have higher results on this scale than girls. In parents sample the difference occurred in somatization scale indicating that mothers have higher results than fathers. These results are partially in line with previous research.

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